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The Perceptions of Beginning Secondary Teachers about their Professional Learning Experiences in the Solomon Islands Context

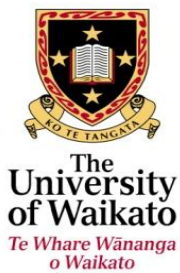
**A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy
in
Teacher Education**

**at
The University of Waikato**

by

PATRICIA RODIE



2011

ABSTRACT

This thesis was designed to investigate the professional learning experiences of beginning secondary teachers (BSTs) in the Solomon Islands context. The study sought to interpret and document the lived experiences of a cohort of BSTs who graduated from the Diploma in Secondary Teaching programme at the School of Education, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SOE-SICHE) in 2007. The focus of the study was on the sense of preparedness of the BSTs at the end of their initial teacher education, and their induction and professional learning experiences during the first two years of their teaching careers. The aim of the study was to find out how prepared the secondary teacher graduates from SOE-SICHE felt at the end of their teacher education programmes, the kind of professional support they needed as beginning teachers, and whether Solomon Islands secondary schools have adequate professional support systems in place to promote early career learning and development for beginning teachers. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will add to the body of knowledge in the field of teacher learning and professional development experiences of beginning teachers from a Pacific Island, Melanesian, socio-cultural context.

Existing studies on teacher learning and development have been conducted mainly in economically developed western countries, which are significantly different from a developing Pacific Island nation such as the Solomon Islands. This study is the first of its kind to be conducted in the Solomon Islands. There is growing recognition in the literature that teacher learning and professional development should be linked to learning experiences that match teachers' socio-cultural contexts (Flores, 2004). Proponents of such a view contend that learners assimilate new information better when their learning experiences are based on the integration of what they already know and the new phenomena and ideas with which they come in contact (Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978b; Wertsch, 1997). Hence, there is a need for education systems to provide effective learning opportunities and professional support for teachers that are relevant to the teaching and learning contexts in which they are going to find themselves during their teaching careers (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). It is also important

to note that initial teacher education (ITE) programmes cannot fully prepare beginning teachers for their teaching roles. Rather, teachers should be viewed as learners who need ongoing professional support throughout their teaching careers (Loughran, 2007; Murdoch, 1979). Two phases of teacher professional learning that are considered to have significant impact on teachers' practice and retention in the profession are induction and continuing teacher professional development (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a). Therefore, it is vitally important that pedagogies used during these phases are not only well supported and resourced by school systems but also appropriate to teachers' socio-cultural contexts (Anthony, Bell, Haigh, & Kane, 2007a). There is ample research evidence to suggest that ITE does have an impact on the quality of teaching in the classroom and students' learning achievements (Cochran-Smith, 2003).

This research took an interpretive qualitative case study research approach, drawing on social constructivism and socio-cultural theoretical perspectives to make meaning of the professional learning experiences of beginning secondary teachers in the Solomon Islands context. The experiences of the 11 BSTs who participated in this study informed the collective case of BSTs' experiences in Solomon Islands secondary schools. The study explored the experiences of the BSTs in the five secondary schools where they were posted, in light of the personal and contextual factors that might have influenced their perceptions about their initial teacher education, induction, and professional learning experiences. The primary sources of data were a questionnaire and three in-depth semi-structured interviews, each of which lasted 50 to 60 minutes. The data analysis process was based on the interpretive qualitative research methodology adopted in the study. Content analysis techniques were used to identify emerging themes, and interpretive phenomenological analysis techniques were then used to interpret and make meaning of the relationships within and between the key themes that emerged.

This study highlighted the BSTs' perceptions of their sense of preparedness and professional learning experiences from initial teacher education through to their second year of teaching. The findings of the study suggest that the BSTs felt

inadequately prepared in some aspects of their teaching roles, and needed guidance and support from their school communities. The lack of formal induction and planned professional development opportunities for beginning teachers in the five secondary schools that were involved in this study meant that they were deprived of the kind of advice and guidance needed by new teacher graduates at the beginning of their teaching careers. The findings also suggested that beginning teachers had little opportunity to observe, reflect, and learn from their teaching practices because they were assigned the same teaching load as their experienced colleagues from day one. The BSTs also taught under difficult conditions, given the general lack of teaching resources, crowded classrooms, and lack of specialised classroom facilities and equipment for subjects such as science, home economics, industrial arts, and agriculture. Information and clear guidelines on school processes and procedures were also lacking, including advice about new teacher registration processes and procedures. Such teaching conditions were a major source of anxiety for the BSTs during the first two years of their teaching careers.

The study raises questions about how well secondary teachers are prepared and supported as beginning teachers during their early years of teaching in the Solomon Islands context. It also raises questions about the quality of leadership, school cultures, expectations of individual beginning teachers, the nature of teachers' work, government and societal expectations, and government support for quality teaching and learning in Solomon Islands secondary schools. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will help improve initial teacher education and teacher professional development practices in the Solomon Islands. This thesis argues that there is a need to develop secondary schools as professional learning communities, or 'villages of learning' that promotes and encourages reflective dialogue, ongoing professional conversations, and collaboration between education authorities, school principals and teachers, to enhance teachers teaching practices, and promote students' learning outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to a number of individuals, groups, and institutions, whose direct and indirect support has enabled me to pursue and complete my doctoral studies.

First, my deepest gratitude goes to my chief supervisor; Associate Professor Jane Strachan, and assistant supervisor; Associate Professor Beverley Bell, whose professional and dedicated support and guidance have not only motivated me to complete this thesis but, more importantly, to develop a deeper understanding about qualitative research methods and processes, and my research topic. I would also like to acknowledge professional advice given to me by Catherine Lang in the early stages of my study.

Second, my sincere appreciation goes to Alex, Debbie, Doris, Eugenie, Henry, Jeremy, Josephine, Marcia, Paul, Sophia and Zinnia, who unselfishly offered their time and willingly shared their experiences through the questionnaire and interviews I conducted in this study. Tagio tumas nao long ufala evriwan.

Third, I would like to thank educational institutions and authorities in the Solomon Islands for allowing me access to institutions under their care. I am particularly grateful to the Solomon Islands Government, through the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, for granting me a permit to conduct research in the Solomon Islands.

Fourth, I would like to thank the New Zealand Vice Chancellor's Committee and NZAID for granting me a Commonwealth Scholarship Award. Without their approval, I would not be able to achieve my academic aspiration of obtaining a doctoral degree. Such opportunities are very rare for women in the Solomon Islands.

Fifth, I would like to thank the University of Waikato (UOW) for giving me the opportunity to study in New Zealand. My sincere gratitude goes to the staff at the

UOW Library, Scholarship, Postgraduate, and International Student offices for their advice and support.

Sixth, I would like to acknowledge the support of my professional colleagues at the School of Education SICHE, especially Dr. Joanna Daiwo and Lydia Maeke-Ghemu for their assistance in administering my questionnaire, and continuous words of encouragement. I would also like to thank my professional colleagues at the UOW, Faculty of Education, Postgraduate Students' Centre; especially Telesia Kalavite and Zuwati Hasim for their moral support and words of encouragement from time to time.

Lastly, but not the least, I would like to acknowledge the support and understanding of my immediate family members. I would especially like to pay tribute to my husband, Franco Rodie. Thank you for your understanding and support throughout the highs and lows of our academic journey. I treasure your advice and support, and especially the opportunity you gave me to pursue my academic aspirations. This means a lot to me because only a few Solomon Islands men would allow their wives to advance academically, or in their careers. I would also like to thank my three children Steve, Fiona, and Vanessa, for their moral support and understanding throughout the four years when I pursued my doctoral studies—especially for keeping up with the demands of my academic life.

I thank God for the support I received from my family, and for His faithfulness and provision throughout the course of my four years of doctoral studies.

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, three children, and my parents; my late father, Joshua Aliko Tosi, and my mother, Bethel Pikisini Tosi, who gave me the opportunity to attend school, at a time when education for girls was not a priority in our society. Without their understanding, support, foresightedness, and commitment towards my education, I would not have made it this far.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Teachers deserve all the knowledge and support we can give them. And children deserve the quality education that comes from excellent teachers. This is their birthright.

—Laura Bush, former First Lady of the United States of America—

1.1 Introduction

The above statement underscores the importance of why beginning teachers need to be provided with ongoing professional support, which is relevant to their specific contexts, during the early years of their teaching careers. The intent of this study was to explore beginning secondary teachers' (BSTs) professional learning experiences during the first two years of their teaching. The aim was to provide a framework to better understand the professional learning experiences of these teachers, including their expectations and commitment to teaching in the Solomon Islands context, so that necessary measures can be taken to address the professional learning needs of beginning teachers in Solomon Islands secondary schools. Furthermore, the study was designed to provide insight into and add to the body of knowledge on teacher professional learning and development, the experiences of beginning secondary teachers in a developing Pacific Island-Melanesian context.

In recent times improvement of teacher education practices and continuing professional support for teachers has become a priority agenda item in education reform initiatives. A key concern in teacher education research is the need for appropriate pedagogies to meet teachers' professional learning and development needs in various socio-cultural contexts. In the context of this study, professional learning encompasses all learning experiences encountered by beginning teachers from the pre-service phase through to induction, and all professional development opportunities that they were involved in during their first two years of teaching. Previous research evidence has pointed to the need for education systems not only to provide effective learning opportunities and professional support for teachers but also to ensure that such opportunities are relevant to the teaching and learning

contexts in which teachers are going to find themselves during their teaching careers (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Flores, 2004). Research evidence also affirms the notion that initial teacher education (ITE) programmes cannot fully prepare beginning teachers for their teaching roles. Rather, teachers' professional learning and development is an ongoing process which needs to be sustained and supported with the necessary teaching resources and appropriate pedagogical approaches (Loughran, 2007; Murdoch, 1979). However, recent research has recognised that ITE does have an impact on teachers' classroom practices, and this in turn affects the quality of teaching experienced in classrooms and students' learning achievements (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Furthermore, research has confirmed that teacher induction and continuing professional development are considered the two most important phases of teachers' professional learning and development, as they take place in specific school and classroom contexts (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a).

There is a need for education systems to provide beginning teachers with pre-service, induction, and ongoing professional development opportunities that are not only well resourced but also appropriate for their teaching contexts throughout their teaching careers (Anthony et al., 2007a; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Providing teachers with such programmes can promote teacher effectiveness and influence how long they will remain in the teaching profession (Anthony et al., 2007a; Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005). However, despite the increasing acknowledgement of the importance of induction and professional development for teachers, it is interesting to note that not many countries, especially in the developing world, have made concrete efforts to establish formal induction and professional development programmes for teachers in their school systems (Langdon, 2007).

This study draws on socio-cultural theories of the mind and learning, including social constructivism, in order to make meaning of the experiences of beginning teachers in a specific context. Socio-cultural theorising provides a framework for understanding how people make meaning of their worlds, which is linked to their belief systems, values and dispositions, and is reflected in their actions and

practices (Werstch, 1985). Using a socio-cultural lens to examine beginning teachers' self-perceptions and professional learning experiences gives insights into how they make meaning of their roles as teachers in specific socio-cultural contexts. Indeed, studies conducted by previous scholars have contributed to our understanding of the complexity and diversity of the process of learning to teach, as well as the challenges faced by teachers in various social settings. However, existing studies on teacher learning and development have been mainly conducted in economically developed western countries, which are different in context to a developing Pacific Island nation such as the Solomon Islands. In today's global economy context the Solomon Islands is developed culturally but not economically. The study reported in this thesis acknowledges the diversity revealed by previous research studies on teachers' learning and development. However, it argues that there is a need to consider beginning teachers' voices and expressed needs from a Pacific Island perspective, and more specifically from a Melanesian context. Very little research has been done in the Pacific Island-Melanesian context, on teacher learning and development, despite repeated calls from Pacific Island scholars such as Konai Thaman for Pacific Island educationists to rethink and reconceptualise education in the Pacific, to make it more culturally relevant to the needs of Pacific Islanders. Thaman (2003) has pointed out that:

While much has been written about the impact of colonialism on Pacific economies, ...environments, politics and social structures, ...little attention has been focused on people's minds, particularly on their ways of thinking, their views of who and what they are, and what they considered worthwhile to teach and to learn. (pp. 1-2)

This study was framed within the above premise, with particular intention to include the "voices" of beginning teachers in Melanesia, specifically from the Solomon Islands, in the broader educational discourse. Melanesian countries in the Pacific are those within an archipelago of islands in the South-west Pacific comprising Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and Fiji. Even though the Melanesian context is often sheltered under the 'Pacific' umbrella, Narokobi (1983) in his book *The Melanesian Way* pointed out that in some aspects of their culture Melanesians are fundamentally different to

Polynesians and Micronesians, as well as to Asians, Europeans and Africans. He believes that Melanesians have their own cultures, values, knowledge, and belief systems, which are reflected in their socio-cultural practices. These determine their identity and help them to make sense of the world, and what is happening around them. Hence, there is a need to conduct research that focuses on the experiences of Melanesians, including how beginning teachers in Melanesia learn and develop professionally.

1.2 My research interest

My academic interest in teacher professional learning and development stems from my lengthy involvement in the development of teacher education programmes and the preparation of secondary teachers for Solomon Islands secondary schools. My previous professional experience as a secondary teacher educator, Course Coordinator, and Head of School at the School of Education, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SOE-SICHE), plus my involvement in recent education reform programmes in the Solomon Islands have motivated me to pursue research on teacher education and professional development in the Solomon Islands context. My broad research interest covers aspects of education leadership, teacher education, and professional development from the pre-service phase through to the early years of teaching. In particular, I am interested in how teacher education and professional development practices could be enhanced in specific contexts.

Based on my experience and involvement in the above areas, I have become aware of concerns raised by education policy makers, researchers, teacher educators, school principals, teachers, student teachers, and parents about SOE-SICHE graduates. This includes concerns about their teaching practices, how they behave, and the challenges they face as beginning teachers. I was also made aware of issues relating to teachers' practices and teacher education in the Solomon Islands through recent Solomon Islands education review reports (Taylor & Pollard, 2004; Wrightson, 2005). These reports have highlighted issues relating to teacher absenteeism, lack of commitment and motivation, unprofessional behaviour, lack of induction programmes for beginning teachers, lack of

professional development or in-service education programmes for teachers, late registration of probationers, and poor conditions of service for teachers. Some of these issues and challenges have been discussed and deliberated on by education policy decision-makers, and were prioritised in recent Solomon Islands education strategic plans and frameworks. However, my involvement in the Solomon Islands Education Sector Coordinating Committee, from 2004 to 2006, made me aware that little research-based evidence relating to teacher education and professional development was available to inform the decisions of Solomon Island education policy makers. Hence, as a secondary teacher educator, and teacher education leader, I feel that I have an obligation to help address this paucity. I believe that the information about the experiences of beginning teachers provided by this study will give empirical substance to future education policy decisions, and help address issues raised by the reports previously mentioned.

To develop the basis for this study, I reviewed the literature to justify the need for an investigation into the professional learning experiences of beginning teachers in the Solomon Islands context, and to develop a theoretical basis for enhancing teachers' professional learning and development in contexts that are similar to that of the Solomon Islands. This study was positioned in the Solomon Islands secondary school context, as well as SOE-SICHE, as the key provider of teacher education in the Solomon Islands. Even though SOE-SICHE has undergone several structural and organisational changes since 1958 (Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, 1999), no research has been conducted on the experiences of beginning teachers who have graduated from the various teacher education programmes it offers. Furthermore, there was very little information in the literature on beginning teachers' experiences in the Pacific Islands, or in the Melanesian context. However, there is sufficient evidence in studies conducted in other countries to suggest that teachers begin their teaching careers with a variety of expectations and perceptions of their role as teachers which are influenced by contextual factors in their previous learning environments (Flores, 2001, 2006). Research has also confirmed that beginning teachers in different contexts enter the classroom with different sets of circumstances and backgrounds, and experience different challenges. Furthermore, the work of a teacher is complex and

challenging, regardless of one's background or where one teaches (Kane & Fontaine, 2008). These experiences may influence teachers' sense of preparedness to teach, how they perceive their roles as teachers, their motivation, and the pedagogical approaches they choose to employ in their teaching (Lambeth, 2007). Therefore, there is a need to explore the experiences of beginning teachers in Solomon Islands secondary schools through research, in order to obtain reliable information about their sense of preparedness and the contextual factors that might impede their teaching practices.

1.3 Thesis Summary

My literature search confirmed that there is a gap in research on beginning teachers' voices and expressed needs from a Pacific Island-Melanesian perspective. There is very little research conducted in the Solomon Islands and Melanesia to investigate beginning secondary teachers' professional learning experiences and the contextual factors that might promote or hinder their professional learning and development. Readers of this thesis will find that in my discussions I refer more to US, Australia and New Zealand literature, compared to Pacific Island literature. The reason for this is twofold: first, the majority of teacher educators at SOE-SICHE were educated in one of these three countries. Second, the focus of those studies and the questions they asked were similar to this research, and I noted that some of the lessons learnt can be applied to the Solomon Islands context. Examples include the research by Bill Usher (2010) who found there was a need for collective responsibility and community support for beginning teachers' professional learning and development. He argued that it takes a village to educate a teacher. Another example is the research undertaken by Glenda Anthony and her colleagues (2007), they found that there was a need for pedagogies in teacher education to be context specific and well supported and resourced by school systems. The need for linking theory to practice and ongoing professional support for beginning teachers in specific contexts is emphasised in the scholarship of Linda Darling-Hammond (2006) from the US, John Loughran (2007) from Australia, and Maria Flores (2006) from Portugal.

Although a handful of studies on teacher perceptions were conducted by Pacific Island ‘talanoa’ researchers, the methodologies used and the focus of their studies were different to that of my study. I also noted that the ‘talanoa’ studies focus more the Pacific Islands Polynesian context. While I appreciate that the Pacific Island Polynesian and Melanesian cultures are similar in some ways, I am aware that they are also distinct in many ways. For example, one of the significant differences between the Melanesian and Polynesian cultures is that Melanesia is comprised of many different sub-cultures that are represented by different language groups. In the Solomon Islands we have about 87 different languages; Polynesians on the other hand come from the same Island country, for example Tonga, and they speak the same language and observe the same culture.

Therefore, I justified my study on the basis that there is a need to consider teachers’ voices and expressed needs in our efforts to improve teacher education practices in specific contexts, including the Solomon Islands. Information generated through proper research is also needed to inform teacher education policies and practices in specific contexts. The purpose of my thesis was therefore to explore beginning teachers’ professional learning experiences in a context different to that of developed countries, and to contribute to the fields of teacher learning and professional development new knowledge about the professional learning experiences of BSTs in the Solomon Islands context.

The research design, methods and processes I employed in my study were based on the interpretive qualitative case study research methodology. I chose to use this approach because it suited the nature and purpose of my study. I wanted to explore, interpret and theorise the experiences of Solomon Islands’ beginning secondary teachers in the Solomon Islands context. Hence, I employed case study and phenomenology data generation and analysis methods, because the focus was on the lived experiences of a cohort of BSTs in the Solomon Islands context. My primary sources of data were a questionnaire and three in-depth semi-structured interviews with 11 beginning teachers that were conducted over a two-year period, from 2008 to 2009. I used content analysis and interpretive phenomenological analysis techniques to ensure the perceptions and experiences of the BSTs were

appropriately interpreted, and to minimise researcher bias. The important ethical considerations that were observed in this study include: obtaining access to participants, informed consent, safety of participants, right of withdrawal, privacy/confidentiality/anonymity, and ensuring that there is no conflict of interest on my part, as the researcher, during the collection of data.

The findings of my study suggested that the BSTs felt inadequately prepared in some aspects of their teaching roles, and needed guidance and support from their school communities during their first two years of teaching. This confirmed that the BSTs needed some kind of professional support during their early years of teaching. The findings also indicated a lack of formal induction and planned professional development opportunities for beginning teachers in the five secondary schools that were involved in this study. This meant that the BSTs were deprived of the kind of advice and guidance needed by new teacher graduates at the beginning of their teaching careers. The BSTs also stated that one-to-one mentoring and more opportunities for professional conversation with their experienced teaching colleague as the preferred mode of professional support. The findings also suggested that beginning teachers had little opportunity to observe, reflect, and learn from their teaching practices because they were assigned the same teaching load as their experienced colleagues from day one, and were not given adequate feedback. The BSTs also taught under difficult conditions, given the general lack of teaching resources, crowded classrooms, and lack of specialised classroom facilities and equipment for subjects such as science, home economics, industrial arts, and agriculture in Community High Schools. The study also found that information and clear guidelines on school processes and procedures were also lacking, including advice about new teacher registration processes and procedures. So, lack of professional support, limited teaching resources and poor work conditions were a major source of anxiety for the BSTs during the first two years of their teaching careers.

I believe my study has made some unique contributions to teacher education literature in that it is the first of its kind to be conducted in the Solomon Islands, and Melanesia. In essence, my study adds to the literature on teacher education

and professional development new evidence-based knowledge on the professional learning experiences and sense of preparedness of BSTs in the Solomon Islands context. My study also highlighted the use of the village model as a framework for theorising conditions that would enhance teachers' professional learning and development in the Solomon Islands and Melanesian context. This is a unique and new contribution of my study to teacher education literature. The village model is based on the Solomon Islands village culture and context, and could be an effective model for supporting teachers' learning and professional development. This model of teaching and learning is based on what is already known and utilised in the Solomon Islands context. Hence, I believe it can be easily adopted, as a model for supporting pre-service and BSTs professional learning and development, provided that policies are put in place to support its adoption. The Solomon Islands village context, with its emphasis on collective responsibility is a powerful and effective model for the induction of beginning teachers, in order to ensure they develop a sense of belonging in the profession early in their teaching careers. In the Solomon Islands village context, the chief, head of family units, and members of a family unit have a sense of collective responsibility for family members' learning needs. Similarly, School Principals, HODs and experienced teachers in schools should have a sense of collective responsibility for beginning teachers' learning and professional development in their schools. This is a most unique and valuable contribution of my research to current literature on teacher education.

1.4 Thesis organisation

This thesis is organised into six chapters. Chapter One has provided a brief introduction to the study, and is followed by a review of relevant literature in Chapter Two. Chapter Three outlines the methodology and methods that underpinned this study, and the research processes involved. Chapter Four presents the findings. Chapter Five discusses and theorises the findings, and relates them to the literature, and Chapter Six summarises the entire thesis, paying particular attention to key findings and their implications for education policy makers, teacher educators, principals and teachers in the Solomon Islands.

Chapter Two: Literature Review: This chapter examines and critiques literature relating to teacher learning and development based on the socio-cultural perspective that informs this study. It relates beginning teachers' professional learning experiences to socio-cultural perspectives of learning and development, and examines how their lived experiences may colour their sense of preparedness, and their self-perceptions of their role as teacher. The chapter reviews a number of studies of socio-cultural perspectives in relation to existing knowledge and beliefs of the learner, and how these contribute to the active construction of knowledge and meaning-making by teachers.

Chapter Three: Research Methods and Processes: This chapter describes the research methods and processes that were employed in this study, and the reasons they were chosen. Hence, the interpretive qualitative study approach is presented and justified, as well as two traditions in the qualitative research approach, namely the case study and phenomenology approaches. The chapter also describes the research design, ethical processes and procedures, data collection methods and processes, and data analysis methods and processes used in the study. The chapter concludes by describing the methods used to support the trustworthiness, credibility, authenticity and transferability of the study's findings.

Chapter Four: Findings: This chapter provides a synthesis of the findings. It describes the perceptions of 11 beginning secondary teachers (BSTs) of their ITE and their induction and professional learning experiences during the first two years of their teaching careers. The findings are based on recurring themes that emerged from the questionnaire and interview data gathered between November 2007 and October 2009.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Theorising: This chapter discusses and theorises the case of beginning secondary teachers' ITE and induction experiences in the Solomon Islands context. The chapter focuses on the key findings about beginning secondary teachers' experiences and the meanings attached to their experiences, and theorises how these experiences could contribute to enhanced opportunities

for beginning teachers' professional learning and development in the Solomon Islands by informing policy decisions to bring about positive change.

Chapter Six: Conclusion: This chapter provides an overview of the study design, its methodology and limitations, and a summary of the key findings, and identifies their implications for education policy makers, researchers, teacher educators, school principals, and teachers.

Therefore, this thesis explores not only the professional learning experiences of Solomon Islands beginning teachers, but also how school contextual factors contribute and give meaning to the experiences of beginning secondary teachers in the five community high schools in which they were initially posted. The study recognises that the induction phase of teachers' professional development is a crucial period in a teacher's professional learning, as it influences their practices and how long they remain in the teaching profession.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Research has indicated that teacher professional learning and development is a challenging and complex process, regardless of one's context or background (Kane & Fontaine, 2008). Current research findings point to the need for on-going learning opportunities for teachers to be grounded in pedagogical and ethical teaching practices that are relevant to teachers' socio-cultural contexts, and supported by a collaborative school learning environment (Langdon, 2007). This means professional learning opportunities for teachers need not only to enable them to acquire necessary knowledge and skills but also prepare them for self-directed life-long learning. Such opportunities need to enable teachers to continuously and critically reflect upon their practices, in order to make necessary adjustments to improve on their practices. Scholars such as Jennifer Gore and John Loughran (Australia), Deborah Britzman and Ruth Kane (Canada), Fred Korthagen (Netherlands), Helen Timperley and Beverley Bell (New Zealand), Maria Flores (Portugal), Christopher Day (United Kingdom), and Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Linda Darling-Hammond and John Bransford (United States), to name just a few, are among many who have been involved in educational research and debates that seek to better understand how teachers learn and develop, and how they could be better prepared and supported to meet the multiple challenges they are likely to encounter in different teaching contexts.

This chapter examines the literature relating to teacher learning and development based on the socio-cultural perspectives that inform this study. It relates beginning teachers' experiences to socio-cultural theoretical perspectives of learning and development, and how their lived experiences may impact on their sense of preparedness and their self-perceptions about their professional learning experiences and roles as a teacher. Wertsch (1997) says that a socio-cultural view of the mind gives primacy to the existing knowledge and beliefs of the learner, and to their construction of knowledge and meaning-making, which are embedded in specific socio-cultural contexts. Socio-cultural theorists believe that language

and communication are vital tools in the construction of knowledge and meaning-making by learners, as they are key aspects of social practice and intention and agency in individuals (Vygotsky, 1978b). These aspects of socio-cultural theory, including their implications for teachers' learning and professional development, are discussed in the following sections.

Section 2.2 discusses the role of existing knowledge and beliefs in one's learning and development, and the need for teacher education programmes to consider teachers' motivation for choosing teaching and to focus attention on pre-service teachers' dispositions. Section 2.3 discusses social views of teacher learning. Section 2.4 discusses aspects of teacher professional learning, and pedagogies that would enhance teachers' continuing professional development. Section 2.5 discusses the notion of "community of learning" and the need to create a community of professional learning in schools, in order to enhance teachers' professional learning and development. It also discusses the impact of school culture and leadership on teacher learning and professional development. Section 2.6 summarises the entire chapter.

2.2 The role and importance of existing knowledge and beliefs of the learner

Teachers' prior knowledge encompasses their knowledge about themselves as learners, their interests and strengths, their motivation and desire to learn, and their daily experiences, as well as their knowledge about their subjects, pedagogical approaches, and the curriculum they implement in schools (Galili, Bendall, & Goldberg, 2006). Teacher beliefs include beliefs about students' learning, effective teaching, students' behaviour, and being a good teacher (Gibbs, 2006), amongst many others. Like knowledge, beliefs play a fundamental role in what teachers learn and how they approach teaching in the classroom. Teacher-held beliefs are considered to be important regulators of teachers' professional knowledge and their orientation to teaching (Pajares, 1993). They influence the personal pedagogies or theories that guide teachers' practices, and enable them to make sense of their teaching roles in specific contexts (Nespor, 1987). Bruce (2010) emphasised the fact that "everyone theorises...[or] has a view of how the world works and the nature of reality" (p. 8). Therefore, teachers' personal

theories encompass their views about teaching and learning, particularly of what is involved in a teacher's work. Such views can be linked to teachers' previous experiences regarding their families, gender, culture, and ethnic and educational background. These experiences can influence a teacher's thinking and practices in the classroom. Bell (2010) stresses that in socio-cultural theorising of teaching the focus is on "teacher thinking and action, recognising not only the relationship between mind and action, but also between mind/action and the social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which teaching is done" (p. 23). Hence, in theorising beginning teachers' thinking and action, it is important to consider the socio-cultural and institutional contexts that might influence their thinking and actions. In essence, teachers' existing knowledge and beliefs act as a lens through which they construct and act on new knowledge. Moreover, proponents of the socio-cultural view of learning purport that new knowledge and skills are best learnt in contexts similar to those in which the new knowledge will be used (Werstch, 1985). This means that if teacher education experiences are to be relevant and meaningful to pre-service teachers they should be linked in meaningful ways to teachers' specific contexts and experiences.

Pajares (1992) pointed out that belief is defined in various ways by different individuals and has been used synonymously with other terms such as "attitudes, values, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, preconceptions, dispositions, principles, perspectives" (p. 309). He contended that confusion about the concept of belief is not so much to do with the term itself but centres around the distinction between knowledge and belief: some researchers view knowledge as a subset of belief, while others view beliefs as a subset of knowledge (Leatham, 2004). However, knowledge and beliefs can also be viewed as overlapping but distinctive constructs (Murphy & Mason, 2006). The common distinction between these two constructs is that knowledge consists of ideas or beliefs that are true, can be justified, factual, probably externally verified, and are widely accepted. Beliefs, on the other hand, are ideas that individuals accept as true, or believe to be true, but that often cannot be verified, such as personal opinions (Boldrin & Mason, 2007; Murphy & Mason, 2006; Pajares, 1992). Hence, "belief is based on evaluation and judgement, and knowledge is based on objective facts" (Pajares,

1992, p. 313). In essence, beliefs constitute a form of knowledge that can impact on learners' capability to learn new concepts, and how they apply what they learn in specific contexts (Chapman, 2002).

Furthermore, teacher-beliefs are linked to a complex system of teachers' personal and professional knowledge (Kagan, 1992). Teachers' professional knowledge is generally regarded as comprising beliefs that have been affirmed as true, based on objective proof, or consensus of opinion, and that become more coherent with more experience in teaching (Kagan, 1992; Murphy & Mason, 2006). Hence, teachers' professional knowledge can develop into highly personalised pedagogies, belief systems that inform their perceptions, dispositions, judgment, and behaviour in relation to teaching and learning their particular subjects. Furthermore, teacher-beliefs can be regarded as personal knowledge. Thus teachers' knowledge of the teaching profession is situated in three important ways: "in context (it is related to specific groups of students), in content (it is related to particular academic material to be taught), and in person (it is embedded within the teacher's unique belief system)" (Kagan, 1992, p. 74). Murphy and Boldrin (2006) point out that "meaningful learning is most likely to occur when an individual knows and believes in the object of his or her interest" (p. 307).

For the purposes of this study, "teacher knowledge" refers to all the ideas and concepts about teaching and learning that can be externally verified and confirmed by others, based on repeated actions that teachers accept as true. These include factual ideas which teachers are committed to, based on information learned through their ITE, and professional development programmes. Conversely, "teacher beliefs" refers to personal ideas and opinions about teaching and learning that teachers accept as true, or want to be true but do not require verification, or that cannot be verified. These include strongly observed ideas teachers have about teaching that can influence their behaviour and teaching practices but are personal and cannot be supported by objective evidence.

Clark and Peterson (1986) contended that teachers' theories and beliefs represent a rich store of knowledge that they use to make sense of what goes on in the social

settings of the classroom. They argued that teachers' beliefs form the basis of a complex system of personal and professional knowledge and theories that guide their actions. This includes a well developed web of interconnected ideas teachers hold about schooling, teaching and learning, and which they developed well before they started their initial teacher education programmes (Chapman, 2002). Most of these ideas are believed to have been constructed from teachers' past experiences and actual practices, primarily from their own experiences as a pupil or student, their teaching experiences, and by observing other teachers (Kagan, 1992). Such experiences form the foundation on which teachers develop their own ideals and practices as teachers, and can have a significant impact on their perceptions and judgements, which in turn can affect their pedagogical approaches. Beliefs not only affect behaviour, but also what an individual perceives, or pays attention to, in their environment (Murphy & Mason, 2006). Hence, beginning teachers' self-beliefs about their ability to teach may affect their self-perceptions of their personal teaching efficacy.

Perception can be defined as a "complex system of ideas, feelings and desires, not necessarily well articulated or coherent" (Woolfolk, 1987, p. 105) that is guided by previous knowledge and experiences, and is considered to be a "highly individualistic phenomenon" (Gutkin & Reynolds, 1990, p. 109). On the basis of that definition, 'self-perception' means the way an individual perceives him or herself in specific contexts. In this study, 'self-perception' refers to the ideas, thoughts and feelings beginning secondary teachers have about their ITE programmes, their preparedness to teach, and their experiences during the first two years of teaching. It also relates to teaching efficacy, which here means teachers' beliefs regarding their "ability to organise and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 233). Hence, teachers with high levels of efficacy believe that they have the ability to perform their teaching roles effectively to promote positive learning in students. A strong sense of efficacy can result in "greater motivation, greater effort, and resilience across the span of a [teacher's] teaching career." (Woolfolk-Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006, p. 727). It is important to investigate and understand the self-perceptions

beginning teachers hold about teaching because these will inform the way they theorise their teaching roles and practices; they may influence individuals' instructional choices and decisions, and affect the way they go about teaching in the classroom, because humans construct new knowledge by linking existing knowledge to new stimuli or inputs. As Pajares (1992) puts it, "understanding the belief structures of teachers and [prospective teachers] is essential to improving their professional preparation and teaching practices" (p. 307).

The key point of interest here is that beginning teachers enter the classroom with varying degrees of preparation and experiences, various beliefs, as well as a wealth of knowledge and skills. Hence, they begin their teaching careers with a variety of expectations and perceptions about their teaching roles. It is also important to note that beginning teachers in different cultures enter the classroom with different sets of experiences, circumstances and background, and sometimes through alternative certification routes (Lambeth, 2007). These experiences and situations may influence beginning teachers' notions of their role and their choice of pedagogical approach. Recent debate is considering the need to rethink the purpose of teacher education and to refocus the goal of teacher education from one that aims at changing teacher-beliefs to one that seeks to strengthen pre-service teachers' dispositions. This is because teachers' "professional judgement and professional action" are linked to their dispositions and can influence their moral and ethical teaching practices.

The following subsection discusses the need to take teacher dispositions into account when considering teacher education goals.

2.2.1 Teacher Dispositions

The notion that strongly ingrained beliefs can be difficult, if not impossible, to change (Pajares, 2008) means that there is a need to rethink how best to develop teacher-held beliefs, given their impact on the way teachers approach their teaching roles (Raths & Amy, 2003). This is an area of interest in teacher education literature, and in recent times a number of teacher educators have suggested refocusing the goal of teacher education from that of changing teachers' beliefs to one that aims at assisting teachers to develop "positive learning

dispositions” (Carr & Claxton, 2002, p. 7). In the context of teacher learning and professional development, teacher disposition is defined as “an attributed characteristic of a teacher, one that summarizes the trend of a teacher’s action in particular contexts” (Katz & Rath, 1985, p. 301). It includes their interests and values and their attitudes towards teaching, and represents:

...a trend of a teacher’s judgments and actions in [specific] contexts [and situations]. Further, it is assumed that these dispositions, trends in teacher judgments and actions, develop over time when teachers participate in deliberate professional education programmes. (Johnson & Reiman, 2007, p. 677).

Carr and Claxton (2002) emphasised that although the term “disposition” seems imprecise in some sense, it points to a domain of human attributes that are clearly different from knowledge, skill and understanding. An example they gave was that “there is a difference between being able to read and having a disposition to be a reader” (p. 10). Similarly, teachers may seem capable of taking on their teaching roles, but they may not have the disposition to be a teacher. Rath and Amy (2003) contend that teachers’ dispositions can have substantial influence on the effectiveness of their teaching practices, more than beliefs and knowledge. They argued that it may be worthwhile changing the focus of teacher education institutions from changing beliefs to strengthening dispositions because teacher-beliefs are considered pre-dispositions, and reflect teachers’ disposition to act in specific situations, and in a particular manner.

In fact, the need for rethinking teacher education goals, including the strengthening of teachers’ “professional dispositions”, as Katz and Rath (1985, p. 301) referred to them, and teachers’ “positive learning dispositions” as Carr and Claxton (2002, p. 7) call them, has been echoed over the past two decades by the above-named scholars. Katz and Rath (1985) proposed that teacher education institutions should strongly consider identifying and strengthening teachers’ “professional disposition” as one of the key goals in their teacher education programmes, as some pre-service teachers’ dispositions may be useful in achieving teaching goals and outcomes, while others may inhibit the achievement of those goals and outcomes. They argue that a teacher’s disposition towards a

particular behaviour should not be perceived as a cause of that particular behaviour. Rather, the construct should be seen as “descriptive” and not “explanatory”. This means that a teacher does not praise students because he or she does not have a disposition to be supportive. Rather, a teacher who is observed to frequently use praise and encouragement in different contexts can be seen as having a supportive disposition.

Therefore, if the key purpose of education in the 21st century is to develop the capacity and the confidence of individuals to engage in lifelong learning, as claimed by Carr and Claxton (2002), then it would be more beneficial to change the focus of teacher education from “changing beliefs” to “strengthening dispositions” (Raths & Amy, 2003). This means that there is a need to provide teachers with professional learning opportunities in their specific contexts that would enable them to develop positive dispositions towards teaching as a profession during their ITE and early years of teaching. Raths (2001) points out that a teacher is a professional; and there are elements that differentiate a professional person from one who is not. He proposed three categories that could be used to identify dispositions that teacher education programmes might need to consider, in order to help pre-service teachers develop positive learning dispositions towards their profession. The first disposition is that a professional not only acts with knowledge but also values the knowledge they possess. This means that teacher education programmes need to be designed in a way that would not only enable teachers to value their professional knowledge and skills but also to approach teaching in a professional manner. The second disposition is that professionals reach out to one another, consult each other, and collaborate with their colleagues to advance professional goals. The implication of this for teacher education is that teachers need to learn to share ideas and collaborate with one another at a professional level. The third disposition is that professionals should advocate for clients under their care and ensure that those who are disadvantaged are treated fairly. Ideally, professionals should not be guided by profit motives. Rather, they should be concerned with issues of justice, fairness and the well-being of their clients. This means that teachers need to learn to

execute their roles without discrimination, and in a fair and just manner (Raths, 2001).

Given the backdrop of research information and insights on the impact of teachers' prior knowledge, beliefs, and dispositions on their instructional practices, there is a clear need for teacher education institutions to reflect on and rethink the goals of the programmes they offer. The onus is on teacher education institutions to design programmes that ensure that the teachers they educate not only acquire the knowledge and skills required to teach their specific curriculum areas but, more importantly, that they develop positive dispositions towards their profession.

Teachers' goals, knowledge, beliefs, and values can influence the type of disposition they develop towards their teaching careers, their motivation to teach, and commitment to the teaching profession (Byrnes, 2008). The following section discusses teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as a career.

2.2.2 Teachers' reasons and motivations for choosing teaching

One of the important decisions individuals make during their lifetime is their choice of career. Hence, teachers choose teaching as a career after having gone through some kind of decision-making process. From the day they decided to become a teacher, beginning teachers may have had an image of what a teacher is, and what they wish to achieve from being a teacher. Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) point out that it is "the degree of match between what a person wants from a career, and the extent to which they think a career offers what they want that has a crucial influence on their decision-making" (p. 118); these factors help them decide which career to choose, and how long they will remain in that career. Therefore, beginning teachers choose teaching as a career according to what they hope to achieve through teaching, and what benefit they expect to get from their teaching careers. In addition, these views or expectations may influence how long they will remain in the profession (Kyriacou & Kune, 2007). A number of studies have indicated that teachers' reasons for choosing teaching reflect not only their motivation for becoming a teacher, but also their beliefs, values, attitudes and dispositions towards teaching (Anthony, Bell, Haigh, & Kane, 2007b; Feiman-Nemser, 2001a; Kane & Fontaine, 2007; Kyriacou & Kune, 2007; Richardson &

Watt, 2006). This has important implications for decision-makers and administrators who are involved in the selection of candidates for pre-service teacher education programmes.

Teacher education researchers who included in their studies of beginning teachers investigation of their reasons for choosing teaching noted that these were varied (Brown, 1992; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Wadsworth, 2001). Brown (1992) pointed out that individuals' reasons for choice might be:

...economic in order to satisfy one's basic needs and achieve a sense of security, which are major concerns of most individuals. Alternatively, choice can be based from a feeling that work is a moral obligation, a responsibility one has to society to be a contributing member, to do something that benefits humanity and to repay society for all that it has provided for one. Still other reasons might be concerned with the need to enhance one's identity, self-worth, personal growth and social contact. (p. 185).

The reasons teachers have for choosing teaching as a career can be grouped into three categories: altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). First, teachers might choose teaching as a career for reasons that relate to altruism, or a concern for humanity, such as having a desire to help young people excel academically; they might want to see students succeed and earn a living for themselves, or to help improve living standards in society, or seeing teaching generally as a worthwhile and important job. Second, their reasons may be intrinsic, that is, connected to the job activity itself, such as having the desire to interact with young people, or having a passion for sharing their subject content knowledge and expertise with others. Third, teachers may choose teaching for extrinsic reasons. Such reasons are driven by desires external to the actual job of teaching. These individuals are attracted to benefits and conditions linked to the job itself, such as long holidays, more time for family, secure paid employment, and the status attached to the teaching profession.

Brown (1992) noted in a study of first-year Caribbean teachers that the majority of the participants gave altruistic reasons for choosing teaching. The main altruistic reasons given were “to help others, to impart knowledge, to give something back to the educational system which nurtured them, or to fulfil what they perceive as a God-given mission” (Brown, 1992, p. 188). In more recent studies, it was noted that the reasons given by beginning teachers for their choice of career were mainly altruistic and intrinsic in nature (Kane & Fontaine, 2007; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Wadsworth, 2001). For instance, Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) noted that pre-service undergraduate students they interviewed said they wanted a job which would enable them to contribute to society and where they could help others. Similarly, Wadsworth (2001), who conducted an investigation into why new teachers in New York wanted to teach, noted that 96 per cent of those interviewed stated that they chose teaching because they loved the job and loved to work with children. Richardson and Watt (2006) also noted in their study of first year pre-service teachers’ motivation for pursuing teacher education across three major teacher education institutions in the Australian states of New South Wales and Victoria that the highest rated motivation for teaching by the pre-service teachers was related to “the intrinsic value of teaching, and the desire to make a social contribution, shape the future, and work with children/adolescents” (p. 44).

In a more recent study, Richardson and Watt (2008) noted that studies on teacher motivation that were conducted up to the early 1990s showed that the reasons teachers gave for entering teaching as a career were mainly altruistic, service-oriented, and intrinsic in nature. They concluded that this was due to the traditional notion that teaching was viewed “more as a vocation...[and not] strictly a job” (p. 409). However, they noted that in similar studies that were conducted in different socio-cultural contexts more recently teachers gave extrinsic reasons for choosing teaching. This, they believed, reflected how teachers in recent times are tending to perceive teaching more as a career than a vocation, because of significant changes to the labour market and cost of living. In an analysis of findings from two national studies in New Zealand on the reasons why beginning secondary teachers and experienced teachers choose teaching as a

career Kane and Fontaine (2007) noted that the reasons given by the majority of beginning teachers would be classified as intrinsic reasons. They noted too that there was a marked difference between the reasons beginning teachers gave for choosing teaching as a career at the end of their ITE and then after they had taught for some months. Beginning teachers six months into their teaching careers gave more priority to extrinsic reasons such as salary, reliable income, friendly working conditions and attractive holiday entitlements, all of which were rated very low when they were asked the same question at the end of their teacher education, and before they began teaching.

The fact that the majority of teachers rated intrinsic and altruistic reasons for teaching highly in previous studies should be lauded, given that teaching is generally perceived as a career that is highly demanding, provides low return in terms of salary, and is lower in social status than other professions such as law and medicine (Darling-Hammond, 2006b). This could be seen as a positive sign that the right candidates have been recruited into the teacher education programmes in the countries concerned. However, Brown (1992) cautioned that while the altruistic reasons given by the majority of beginning teachers in previous studies can be commended, one should keep an open mind about the genuineness of their responses. There is a need to investigate in more depth the reasons teachers give for choosing teaching, as one cannot fully trust the notion that a majority of individuals chose teaching as a career for altruistic or intrinsic reasons, just because they say so.

Teachers' reasons and motivations for choosing teaching may provide invaluable background information that could be used to inform policy decisions relating to selection and recruitment of potential candidates for ITE and teacher professional development programmes in specific contexts. Richardson and Watt (2006) point out that it is important for policy-makers, teacher recruitment organisations, teacher education institutions and teacher educators to be aware of such valuable information, in order to address teacher quality and retention issues. The reasons individuals have for choosing teaching may influence the way they perceive their teaching roles, which may in turn affect the way they commit themselves to their

teaching careers. Hence, having some knowledge of the reasons why beginning teachers choose teaching as a career could provide a basis for understanding their self-beliefs and self-perceptions about their teaching roles, and how these might influence them to remain in or leave the teaching profession.

Whatever the reasons for choosing teaching, preservice teachers will be learning during their initial teacher education. Therefore, it is important to understand how they learn and how their learning can be enhanced in different contexts. The following section discusses how individuals construct knowledge based on social constructivist perspectives, and how teachers' dispositions can be strengthened so that they can develop sound professional judgement and behave professionally in their teaching roles.

2.3 Social views of teacher learning

Teacher learning can be viewed through various lenses, for example, constructivist perspectives view a learner as a unique individual who constructs his or her own knowledge and meanings, based on interactions with his or her environments, and existing knowledge (Fosnot, 2005), while socio-cultural perspectives view learning as a “highly contextualised and situated activity” (Bell, 2005, p. 50). This study focuses on the socio-cultural views of learning and their implications for teacher learning and professional development. Aspects of socio-cultural views of learning are now discussed.

2.3.1 Learning is a situated activity

According to socio-cultural perspectives, learning is a “situated activity”, one seen as situated in specific contexts. This means that learning occurs as a function of the activity, context, and culture in which it occurs (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, learners are considered to be part of a community of practice, and are expected to reach a certain mastery level in order to fully participate in their specific communities of practice (Bell, 2005). Learning is seen as “an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice or... the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice” (Bell, 2005, p. 45). Hence, new teachers can be viewed as newcomers to a community of practice, who need to reach a certain level of mastery in their teaching knowledge and skills in order to be able to

participate fully in their chosen professional community. This means that how teachers learn, and the factors that influence their learning, must be considered in relation to their specific contexts, and to the culture in which their learning occurs. This includes the physical (their school's physical environment) and social environments (opportunities for collaborative practice, professional conversations) which teachers are encultured into, as beginning teachers. Essentially, it is the whole learning experience that goes on in a learner's physical and social environments that determines learning, not only what is happening in the learner's head (Bell, 2005). Bell and Gilbert (1996) emphasised that it is through interactions with their physical and social environments that individual teachers construct or reconstruct their "self-identity as a teacher, and [are] positioned within [specific] culture" (Bell & Gilbert, 1996, p. 68). This means that the physical and social environments in schools can determine how beginning teachers are positioned in their school environment and encultured into their teaching roles. Therefore, schools as communities of practice need to provide physical and social learning environments that enable teachers to develop positive dispositions and commitment towards their teaching roles. The enculturation process of teachers involves "the development of dispositions" (Bell, 2005, p. 46).

2.3.2 The construction of knowledge

Another principle of the socio-cultural view of learning is that the construction and reconstruction of knowledge is "both personal and social" (Bell, 2005, p. 42). The socio-cultural perspective stresses the importance of a learner's social interaction with knowledgeable members of their society, and argues that without such social interactions it is impossible to acquire social understanding of important symbol systems, and how to utilise them. Hence, a social constructivist viewpoint takes into account learners' specific contexts for the learning process, as the contexts help to shape the knowledge that the learner creates and attains during the learning process. According to Vygotsky (1978a), human functioning involves "a complex dialectical process"(p. 73) which is influenced by interconnected external and internal factors. This means the process of dialogue in which knowledge or meaning is constructed by two or more people talking together. A key part of this process is the co-construction of meaning. For instance, the co-construction of meaning results from a dialectical process when

an individual learns through problem-solving experiences shared with the people around them. These include parents, friends, teachers, siblings and peers. This means that the person interacting with an individual assumes the responsibility of guiding their problem-solving experiences, but gradually transfers this responsibility to that individual as he or she progressively advances through each stage of development (Wertsch, 1997). Vygotsky (1978b) referred to this process as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This alludes to the difference between what a learner can do at a particular point in time and his or her potential to do better if given the necessary support. Put in Vygotsky's words, ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978b, p. 86). This means that the more a learner receives and takes advantage of the support they need, the wider their ZPD, and ultimately their own capacity to perform specific tasks. Vygotsky (1978b) maintained that the ZPD is an essential feature of learning, in which one builds on one's knowledge through interaction and co-operation with one's peers, or more capable others. He theorised that people are first social then individual in their cognition and language.

A concept used to reinforce Vygotsky's notion of ZPD is "scaffolding". This refers to the support knowledgeable others provide to learners until they reach a certain mastery level in their learning and thus can perform tasks independently in specific contexts (Vygotsky, 1978b). An important aspect of scaffolding is that the scaffolds are temporary, and are progressively withdrawn as the learner's ability increases. Therefore, the goal of educators in the scaffolding process is for learners to become independent and self-regulating learners and problem-solvers (Van Der Stuyf, 2002). In teacher education, this means that the role of teacher educators, principals, and experienced teachers is to provide support for pre-service and beginning teachers in their professional learning until they are able to perform specific teaching tasks independently.

2.3.3 The role of language in knowledge construction

According to a social cultural view of learning, language is part of a knowledge system that learners need to develop in order to construct meaning and make sense of what they learn. Vygotsky (1978b) emphasised that language is not only a primary tool used for social interaction within a culture but also serves as a primary tool for intellectual adaptation. He pointed out that:

The most significant moment in the course of intellectual development, which gives birth to the purely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence, occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development, converge. (p. 24)

This means that language influences how an individual constructs or reconstructs knowledge, which ultimately influences one's behaviour or practice. In other words, it is through language that an individual internalises the process of learning, and in doing so constructs for him or herself a rich body of knowledge that exists within his or her culture (Wertsch, 1997). Hence, it is important that the language used as a medium of instruction matches the language of the learner, if they are to make sense of what they learn. Vygotsky (1978b) also contended that speech is an extension of intelligence and thought, and a means through which one can interact within one's environment. This higher level of development enables learners to move beyond their level of comprehension, to test abstract actions before they are employed, with the help of more knowledgeable others. Hence, language plays a powerful role in the development of an individual's intelligence, including how they construct meaning out of what they learn. Therefore, language can be seen both as a tool for learning, and an aid to understanding, as Vygotsky (1978b) points out: "human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (p. 88). As such, language acts as a tool for learning and development through which a learner constructs knowledge and develops specific skills.

Language can also be seen as a psychological tool for problem-solving, through which a learner can consider the consequences of possible actions before performing specific tasks. Language develops as the individual matures and interacts at an increasing rate with those around them. Hence, as a learner

develops from one level of their learning to a higher level, they need the help and support of knowledgeable others to make meaning of what they learn through the use of language. Vygotsky (1978a) contended that a learner's potential should not be measured only on the basis of their existing knowledge and level of understanding. Rather, it should include the learner's ability to develop further knowledge and skills in order to take advantage of the support they receive from more capable others. Language is the tool that can be used to provide further support and feedback to learners through the process referred to by Vygotsky as "scaffolding" (see 2.3.2 above). In this regard, the basis of effective learning in any educational context should involve the learner in interacting with other members of the community, receiving support and feedback from teachers and knowledgeable others through the use of appropriate language and effective communication.

It is important to note that a learner is part of a culture and society that has already established language conventions and different forms of communication prior to their individual learning situations (Borg, 2003). This means that pre-service teachers as learners bring to their learning environment prior knowledge and experiences of specific language/s that are used for communication purposes within their specific contexts. In situations where the medium of instruction is different to that of the local vernacular, or other common language spoken, teachers and students alike are expected to develop sound knowledge of the language used for instruction in order to make sense of what they learn. According to sociocultural perspectives, teachers need to understand the language and terms used in their specific curriculum areas, and use a language that students understand in their teaching, in order to help students construct meaning when learning. This is vitally important as language is an important tool for meaning-making in any learning situation, and is one of the many representations that teachers use to explain concepts to learners.

2.3.4 Meaning-making by learners

Another key aspect of a sociocultural view of learning is that of meaning, and meaning-making. A central feature of meaning-making lies with a learner's capacity and tendency to make meaning of their lived experiences (Chen, 2001).

Meaning-making not only constitutes one's view of reality but also defines one's actions, culture, norms, beliefs, worldviews, ideologies, and perspectives on specific concepts (Krauss, 2005). The role of meaning-making in one's life is vitally important, as human beings are naturally inclined to understand and make meaning out of their life experiences. Dewey (1933) pointed out that "only when things about us have meaning for us, only when they signify consequences that can be reached by using them in certain ways, is any such thing as intentional, deliberate control of them possible" (p. 19). Hence, learners' life experiences can generate and enrich the meanings they attribute to specific concepts, and also provide an explanation and basis for experiences in their lives. In other words, learners can give meaning to, or get meaning from, specific activities, events and experiences only if they perform the psychological function of translating their experiences into what they think, and how they feel (Chen, 2001). Furthermore, learners make meaning based on their interactive experiences with various internal and external factors in their specific contexts. For example, internal factors that might affect teachers' professional learning and practice in a school would include: lack of teaching resources, heavy teaching loads, very large classes and lack of professional development opportunities, to name a few. External factors would include: education policies, government funding and resourcing of schools (Biddle & Berliner, 2002).

Therefore, meaning-making is the main intellectual function behind learners' thoughts and actions, as well as their interpretation and application of knowledge in specific social contexts. This has important implications for teaching and learning, including teacher education. One key implication is that learning is viewed as a mechanism for making new meaning in life (Merriam & Heuer, 1998). This means that beginning teachers' learning experiences through their ITE programmes may either inform or challenge, their existing conceptions and understanding of the teaching-learning processes. Hence, in their process of learning to teach, pre-service teachers need to be provided with adequate opportunity to reflect on their previous experiences and knowledge base, so that they can be appropriately assisted either to develop new meanings or to confirm their currently held views about teaching and learning, and develop positive

dispositions towards their teaching roles. Teachers can be seen as active meaning-makers, who act according to how they make meaning of certain aspects of their teaching roles. In order for teachers to construct informed meanings about their teaching roles they need to be actively involved in learning experiences that are linked to their previous knowledge and experiences and match their socio-cultural contexts. Hence, beginning teachers should not be seen as passive participants in the teaching-learning process. Rather, they should be viewed as individuals who have the ability to create an environment which may bring about change to their own thoughts and actions (Richardson, 1997).

2.3.5 Experiential learning and reflection

A sociocultural view of learning is not only a process of constructing meaning that is defined by an individual based on his or her previous knowledge and experiences (Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Learning is also viewed as the accumulation of knowledge and skills based on an individual's direct participation in particular activities in specific socio-cultural contexts, whether it be through direct observation, or involvement in particular learning tasks (Anderson, 2006). This is referred to as experiential learning, "a process through which a learner generates knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences" (Anderson, 2006, p. 287). Meaning-making also involves a learner in the reconstruction of ideas and assumptions through the examination of and reflection upon their individual experiences (Kolb, 1984). Building on the work of Dewey (1933) and Piaget (1967), Kolb (1984) argued that ideally experiential learners will involve themselves in new experiences by reflecting on previous experiences or using prior knowledge, and, on the basis of these multiple perspectives, integrate their observations into logical theories, which they will use in decision-making and problem-solving. This means that for an individual to make sense of a new concept they must both experience it and, through reflection, relate it to their previous experiences, in order to make sense of it.

The concepts of reflective thinking and experiential learning are synonymous with the notion of self-directed life-long learning (Kolb, 1984). This means that beginning teachers need to be involved in learning opportunities where they can reflect on their practice and set their own goals according to their specific learning

needs and contexts, through self-reflection and ongoing activities, with the guidance of their teachers, coaches, or mentors. Berl (2005) says that teachers can become active participants in the construction of knowledge about their teaching roles if they are encouraged to reflect on their practices through ongoing review of their work and feedback, and experience a school culture that builds a sense of community, and commitment to students' learning outcomes. This matches a sociocultural view, which asserts that learning is a result of social interaction with knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978b).

It holds, too, that learning requires action and reflection on the part of the learner (Schon, 1988), and is enhanced by appropriate feedback using appropriate language (Killion, 2009; Williams & Burden, 1997). Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) state: "deeper learning typically requires repeated cycles of engagement with learning processes, practices and outcomes" (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007, p. 8). This means that pre-service teachers need to be given adequate opportunities to reflect and improve on their teaching practices, not only during their initial teacher education, but throughout their teaching careers (Loughran, 2007). Timperley et al. (2007) also point out that if teachers are to negotiate the meaning of new knowledge they need to be given the opportunity to first examine their existing theories and practices. Therefore, teacher education programmes need to provide learning opportunities whereby teachers can interpret, question, or evaluate new knowledge in the light of their prior knowledge and experiences and given the relevance of that body of information to how they learn, what they understand, and how they approach teaching (Bransford & Schwartz, 1999). Therefore, an implication for teacher education is that pre-service and beginning teachers need to be provided with appropriate learning opportunities through which they can interact with others in a cooperative learning environment with room to reflect on prior knowledge and experiences, in order to construct new knowledge and improve on their practices. It is through a reflective process that individuals can develop a deeper understanding of what they learn.

2.3.6 Intention and agency

Another aspect of teacher learning to consider is that of intention and agency. Humans are intentional and purposeful in their actions. The concept of agency

implies that an individual, a teacher for example, is an active agent who plans, desires, and acts in the various arenas of their lives (Chen, 2001). However, the lives of individual teachers are also shaped by the grand narratives and discourses of the societies and cultures in which they live (Bell, 2005). In other words, humans have the ability to influence what happens in their lives and environment while at the same time they are shaped by social and individual factors within their social settings (Lasky, 2005). Hence, how individuals view the cause of their actions—whether they think they are in control of what they do, or perceive what happens to them as controlled by others—is an important determinant in their motivation to act in certain ways. This is known as one’s sense of agency (Williams & Burden, 1997). Teachers’ sense of agency is an influential factor in the instructional decisions they make and their motivation to teach.

A sociocultural view of learning sees human agency as a result of the interaction between an individual and the tools and structures within his or her social setting (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wertsch, 1985). This is in line with one of the core themes of Vygotsky’s theoretical framework which claims that “mental processes can be understood only if we understand the tools and signs that mediate them” (Wertsch, 1985, p. 15). Tools in this context include both technical and psychological tools that learners use to make meaning of what they learn, which in turn influences their actions. For example, teachers can use psychological tools of language such as counting systems, writing, and diagrams to teach specific topics in their curriculum areas (Bell, 2005). Similarly, they can use technical tools such as calculators, computers, microscopes, compasses, maps, barometers, to teach specific subjects and topics. Thus, in order to understand teachers’ beliefs and the reasons for their actions, there is a need to identify the social agents and “tools” that are prevalent in the environment in which they live and teach. This means that teacher agency is part of a complex and dynamic interaction, which is shaped by the structural and cultural features of a society and school culture. The decisions teachers make and the options they choose to act upon are a consequence of past action and present context, and constitute a condition shaping the context for further action (Hall & McGinty, 1997). Therefore, teachers should be seen as active agents who can proactively engage in their own development,

can make things happen by their own actions, “whether they act passively or actively” (Lasky, 2005, p. 900). In essence, individuals are seen as “agents of experiences and are not just under-goers of experiences” (Bandura, 2001, p. 4). This means that individuals can play an active role in their own development, and can bring about changes to their own behaviour on the basis of their own experiences, but mediated by the major discourses. Hence, an individual’s self-beliefs, or self-perceptions, are critical elements in his or her exercise of control and personal agency. Pajares (2008) points out that individuals are imbued with certain capabilities that define what it is to be human. These include their ability to symbolise, plan alternative strategies (forethought), learn through vicarious experience (self-regulate), and self-reflect. These capabilities provide human beings with the cognitive means to determine their own destiny (Bandura, 1986). As Bandura (2001) explains, “human agency” is:

...characterized by a number of core features that operate through phenomenal and functional consciousness. These include temporal extension of agency through intentionality and forethought, self-regulation by self-reactive influence and self-reflectiveness about one’s capabilities, quality of functioning and the meaning and purpose of one’s life pursuits.
(p. 1)

The core features of human agency mentioned above can be related to teachers’ thought processes and actions. First, intentionality refers to the tendency of teachers to have strong beliefs about their ability to apply specific pedagogical approaches and their motivation to persevere when faced with challenging situations in the classroom or wider school environment. Second, forethought refers to teachers’ ability to think ahead, to be aware of possible consequences of situational circumstances and able to plan future courses of action accordingly. Third, self-reactiveness refers to teachers’ willingness to adapt to change and to become more proactive, rather than being reactive based on their past experiences. Fourth, self-reflectiveness refers to teachers’ ability to reflect on their past experiences and beliefs and become aware of how their beliefs can influence their actions. This makes it possible for them to bring about any necessary changes to their actions and behaviour (Pajares, 2008). However, it is acknowledged that the

intention and agency of a teacher is also determined to varying degrees by the sociocultural contexts in which they live and work. Accordingly, teachers' actions and behaviour is influenced by their lived experiences in their specific sociocultural contexts.

Bandura expanded the concept of human agency to include collective agency, because individuals do not live their lives in isolation. Rather, people live and work together using shared beliefs about their capabilities and aspirations that determine their choices and actions and ultimately determine their behavioural output (Bandura, 1986). Thus, the collective agency of teachers in a school can have an impact on beginning teachers' thoughts, actions, and dispositions towards their teaching roles, and this goes on to contribute to the school's overall culture. In relation to the focus of this study, teacher educators and school principals can take appropriate actions to foster the professional development of pre-service and beginning teachers by improving their emotional states, misconceptions, or dispositions (personal factors), by enhancing their academic skills, and self-regulatory practices (behaviour), and by altering any aspects of the social, school, and classroom structures (environment) that might undermine pre-service and beginning teachers' success (Pajares, 2008). In addition, there are major discourses in a teacher's wider society that may determine what it means to be a teacher. For example, a teacher will be positioned within the discourses of gender and ethnicity.

2.3.7 The ontological position of social constructivist view

A sociocultural view of reality, knowledge and learning can be used as a basis to inform pedagogical approaches in teaching and learning. Sociocultural theorists believe that reality is constructed through members of a society or community working together, not only in culturally and historically defined contexts (Kukla, 2000), but also in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1999). They believe too that reality cannot be discovered, that is, as an entity external to the knower or the meaning-maker but, rather, that it is constructed by members of a society, or community, through social interactions within their environments (Richardson, 1997): reality is inseparable from the knower. Therefore, to make sense of teaching, a preservice teacher needs to consider not just what teachers think and

do, but also the social reality of teaching – the sociocultural contexts that teachers work in. Preservice teachers need to consider not just the teacher, but the teacher plus the sociocultural contexts.

Second, sociocultural view of knowledge is that it is a product of the activity of the human mind, something socially and culturally constructed (Wertsch, 1985). Proponents of this view contend that learners create their own understanding based on the interactions between what they already know and believe and new phenomena and ideas with which they come into contact (Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978a; Wertsch, 1985). They also uphold the view that learners have existing knowledge and beliefs that needs to be adjusted, enhanced, or changed, in order to match the expectations of specific learning situations. For example, beginning teachers have existing knowledge and beliefs that needs to be adjusted or enhanced to match the expectations of schools, as professional learning communities.

Third, sociocultural theorists view learning as a socially embedded process involving ongoing interaction between the learner and their environments, including their social environments. This means individuals learn and create meaning through activities that emphasise “mutuality, cooperation, communication, and social embeddedness” (Stetsenko & Arievidt, 1997, p. 161). As such, social interactions, the culture, and cultural tools that exist within an individual’s environment, are vital influences on the way they make sense of what they learn. Hence, language is viewed as the most important “mediation tool” for learning and meaning-making in any social setting (Wertsch, 1997). Therefore, instructional strategies grounded in a sociocultural perspective need to promote:

- learning opportunities through which learners can reflect on their existing knowledge and ideas, try new ideas;
- practise skills in communication, share knowledge with one another;
- think critically about what they already know and learn; and
- use “tools”, including relevant technologies that are in existence within their environments to advance their learning. (Steiner & Mahn, 1996)

The above strategies with assumptions highlight the complexity of the teaching-learning process. They also highlight challenges faced by teacher educators, who are expected to educate teachers to perform their roles in a way that satisfies societal expectations in today's educational context (Hagreaves & Fullan, 2000). Seen from a socio-cultural perspective, a teacher is not merely a technician, but someone who is expected to carry out defined tasks at set times, with meaningful intention and purpose (Beattie, 1995). Therefore, in rethinking a pedagogy for teacher education that is informed by a socio-cultural learning perspective Steiner and Mahn believe it is important that pre-service and beginning teachers are provided with adequate opportunities to :

- elicit and address the existing ideas of learners;
- take into account the context of teaching and learning;
- provide opportunities for learners to learn any specialised language; discuss and communicate effectively with peers and other groups; and
- address the purpose of learning in schools. (Steiner & Mahn, 1996)

In the context of teacher education, this requires that teacher educators take into account teachers' existing knowledge and beliefs when planning and designing their course programmes. For example, Loughran suggests they will use analogies that pre-service teachers are familiar with to help them make sense of new ideas; they will ensure effective use of both oral and written communication to help pre-service teachers better understand new ideas by "scaffolding" those ideas through coaching, modelling, and reflective inquiry; and they will develop a social framework in the classroom that encourages pre-service teachers to share their ideas with their lecturers and colleagues (Loughran, 2007).

In schools this requires a shift from a traditional school culture that encourages isolation to one that promotes a community of learning (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). Such a school culture encourages teachers to be involved in regular reflective inquiry and interactions with colleagues, and provides collaborative professional learning activities that are focused on improving teaching and learning in specific contexts (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2010; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). If schools are to be communities of learning they need to

provide adequate opportunities for teachers to observe, reflect, theorise, and practise what they have learnt during their initial teacher education.

The following section focuses on teachers' professional learning and pedagogies that would enhance that learning.

2.4 Teacher learning in initial teacher education

A key debate in the recent literature on teacher education is the need to develop appropriate pedagogies for initial teacher education, due to a major shift in the way learning is viewed, from the older behaviourist and cognitive perspectives to social constructivist perspectives (Loughran, 2007). There is now a growing consensus that learning is not just a process that is confined to learners as individuals. Rather, learning is an activity that involves social and cultural processes. This has led to an increasing acknowledgment that social and cultural factors within teachers' environments can have a major impact on their ability to make sense of what they learn. In the context of this study, it is important to consider the social and cultural contexts that can affect pre-service and beginning teachers' professional learning and meaning-making, and how they theorise teaching practices in the classroom.

Teacher educators are encouraged to create learning opportunities for pre-service teachers through which they can be involved, as they study, in social interactions, reflection, theorising of practice, and in classroom teaching, so that they can "gain a genuine appreciation of the skills, knowledge and abilities that shape practice" (Loughran, 2007, p. 1). During their early years of teaching they need to have adequate opportunities to interact with others in the teaching community of practice, for example teacher educators, associate teachers and deputy principals, in order to develop positive dispositions towards their teaching roles. They also need to be provided with opportunities to reflect on their practice and theorise why they approach their teaching roles the way they do. Most importantly, they need to be given adequate opportunities to practise teaching, with regular feedback and feed-forward (Bell & Cowie, 2001). Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning achievements, and its impact can be either

negative or positive. Hence, it is important to give appropriate feedback to beginning teachers that would impact positively on their teaching practices (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Pedagogies that involve dialectical processes and that are based on a sociocultural view of learning seem to be the more desirable approaches to teacher education alluded to in recent teacher education literature (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). They include collaborative approaches that allow pre-service teachers to reflect on their previous knowledge and experiences and construct new meanings and ways to improve on their teaching practices as they work with and are supported by experienced colleagues and mentors (Cameron & Baker, 2004). Such approaches favour Vygotsky's notion of "scaffolding" and zone of proximal development, whereby pre-service and beginning teachers would be provided with individualised support or "scaffolds" at their particular level of ZPD, enabling them to build on prior knowledge and internalise new information (Wertsch, 1997). An aspect of scaffolding that is vital to teacher education is that the scaffolds, although providing vital support during the learning process, are temporary and are progressively withdrawn as the learner's abilities increase (Day & Cordon, 1993).

Pedagogies that are considered appropriate for ITE and that support a sociocultural notion of scaffolding in the teaching-learning process include collaborative approaches such as mentoring, coaching, reflecting, and modelling. Each is now discussed in the following sections.

2.4.1 Mentoring

In the context of teacher education mentoring can be defined as one-to-one support given to a novice or less experienced teacher by a more experienced teacher. It is designed especially to assist the professional development of the novice teacher, and to facilitate their induction into the culture of teaching, and into a specific local context (Hobson et al., 2009). The usual practice is that mentoring is part of the school-based or internship component of teacher education programmes, and then used later as part of the induction of new teachers into their teaching career. However, Hobson et al. (2009) contend that

mentoring can have a wide variety of purposes or goals, involve a variety of practices and strategies, and can take place at different stages of a teacher's professional development over a certain period of time. For instance, in England mentoring forms two-thirds of the postgraduate initial teacher preparation programmes, with practising teachers playing a key role in helping pre-service teachers to attain specified government teaching standards, this extends to the early years of teaching, as part of teacher induction. Mentoring also forms a central feature of university-school based partnership programmes for undergraduate teachers (Brookes, 2005). In New Zealand mentoring is a vital part of ITE programmes and induction of new teachers during the first two years of teaching (Anthony et al., 2007a; Cameron & Baker, 2004; Langdon, 2007).

Changes in mentoring approaches and duration practised in the UK and elsewhere in recent times came as a result of increased theorising about the benefit of collaborative and reflective practices in promoting teacher learning. Other reasons include the need to increase and retain highly qualified and effective teachers in schools in response to high teacher attrition rates (Anthony et al., 2007a; Hobson et al., 2009). Typically, mentoring programmes pair beginning teachers with more experienced teachers. The latter are equipped to: competently explain school policies, regulations and procedures; share methods, materials and other resources; help solve problems in teaching and learning; provide personal and professional support; and guide the growth of the new teacher through reflection, collaboration, and shared inquiry (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993).

Mentoring is the most common form of teacher induction (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2001a; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Langdon, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The idea of assigning mentor teachers to work with beginning teachers and guide them as they develop their teaching practices and learn to manage the stresses of their work during the early years of their teaching has been increasingly accepted since the 1980s (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b). It was traditionally believed that teachers who teach alone can improve through their own individual efforts (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). However, there is increasing acknowledgement that teachers are more effective in their professional

learning and development when they are supported by colleagues as mentors, and able to experience a strong sense of collective efficacy within a community of practice (Hagreaves & Fullan, 2000).

An effective mentoring programme is described as one that engages beginning teachers in joint inquiry with a mentor who is well prepared to assist new teachers in understanding the importance of learning from practice (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). At the same time the mentor provides useful tools for enhancing new teachers' understanding of teaching, through observation, feedback, and analysis of students' work. Mentors in such a programme work with new teachers in managing a class, planning and implementing engaging learning tasks, knowing subject matter, assessing student learning, and learning in and from their practice as teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a). Clearly, the guidance provided for new teachers in such a programme goes beyond simply sharing instructional tips with beginning teachers; mentors have teaching roles that help new teachers build on their knowledge and the experience they gain through their initial teacher education (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Research has also confirmed that mentors can effectively assist new teachers to understand subject matter, plan for instruction, engage students, and assist them to apply effective assessment strategies, with careful preparation and support (Feiman-Nemser, Carver, Schwille, & Yusko, 1999). A formal induction programme with a strong mentoring component is believed to be the best form of support for beginning teachers in the early years of their teaching careers (Luft, 2009).

However, despite the increased appreciation of the importance of mentoring in teacher education programmes there is limited research evidence of its effectiveness. Critics of mentoring programmes claim that what some teacher education institutions might refer to as mentoring may be in fact be just coaching, focused more on the development and performance of teaching skills than on the psycho-social aspects of teaching (Harrison, Dymoke, & Pell, 2006). In some schools in the USA the selection of mentors appears to be based on convenience, entitlements and volunteers (Stanulis & Floden, 2009), rather than on the use of

teachers who possess the necessary knowledge and dispositions to take on mentoring roles.

Ideally, and in general terms, mentoring should involve an overlap of the following processes and skills: guiding, leading, advising, supporting, coaching, educating, enabling, organising, managing, counselling and interpersonal skills (Harrison et al., 2006). In the socio-cultural context, mentoring needs to include opportunities for beginning teachers to socially interact with mentors and their experienced colleagues, reflect on their practice, theorise practice, practise specific teaching strategies, and be given regular feedback. Mentoring involves coaching, modelling and reflecting. These are now discussed.

2.4.2 Coaching

Coaching is generally viewed as a form of learning that is focused on specific tasks, skills or capabilities and is related to competency levels in performing specific tasks and skills. It is a “...collaborative process of developing a person’s strength...” (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009, p. 177) in order to enhance his or her competence in a specific field. Harrison et al. (2006) define coaching as “...a particular form of mentoring within teacher education in that it has a more specific focus on particular tasks, skills, or capabilities...” (p. 1056). They point out that components such as counselling, friendship, and socialisation are usually more closely identified with mentoring than with coaching. However, there is growing acknowledgement in the literature that coaching in the context of teaching and learning has a broader application. Killion (2009) explains that coaching in teacher professional development involves the examination of beliefs about teaching and learning, development of knowledge and skills, participation in appropriate learning experiences that are context specific, provision of support and feedback, and the implementation of change. It focuses on “refining and honing teaching”, with the ultimate goal of improving students’ academic success (p. 9). Similarly, Robertson (2004) emphasises that coaching involves “real experiences..., reflective observation of experiences, opportunities to question, problem solve, analyse and develop new ways of thinking and leading, and then trying out new ideas” (p. 2), and the building of capacity for educational improvement. Pask and Barrie (2007) point out that mentoring and coaching are

related and should be seen as a tool and set of processes that are aimed at helping individuals reach their full potential in their “personal and professional contexts” (p. 3).

Coaching may take place at any point in one’s career, including the beginning, and can be overlapped with mentoring (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). An important characteristic of coaching is that it involves a partnership between two colleagues who reflect on their practices, and make decisions and strategise on how to improve. Coaching in teaching should engage teachers in continuous professional learning, as they support each other in their learning, and need to always seek growth in their professional development and competencies (Killion, 2009). In the context of this study, coaching is a “tool” that can be used by schools to enhance beginning teachers’ professional development and their development of positive dispositions towards their profession.

2.4.3 Modelling

The notion of modelling in teaching is sometimes confused with demonstration. A common scenario in teacher education is that teacher educators explain how specific teaching strategies are to be applied, sometimes with demonstration, and pre-service teachers are expected to learn and apply those strategies in actual practice. However, it is important that “modelling” should not be confused with “demonstrating”, which is more akin to the “correct way” of doing things set out in a blueprint or recipe that pre-service teachers are expected to replicate (Loughran, 2007). Modelling in teacher education should involve teacher educators not only as good role models but also in the way they apply specific pedagogical approaches in the classroom.

Everything a teacher educator does models something to pre-service teachers (Loughran, 2007). According to the notion of “apprenticeship observation” (Lortie, 1975), it is likely that what pre-service teachers observe their teacher educators actually say and do has a profound influence on their views and expectations about teaching. Teacher educators therefore need to model ways to help pre-service teachers “see into teaching” (Loughran, 2007, p. 8) rather than just mimic what they do. Pre-service and beginning teachers need to observe good teacher models so that they can develop ideas and teaching practices that are

relevant to their specific contexts. Such opportunities would encourage in individuals a deeper understanding of their own practice, which can lead to purposeful development of the personal and professional self. In employing modelling as a pedagogy for teacher professional development, teacher educators need to strike a balance between pre-service teachers' prior knowledge, beliefs and expectations about teaching, and the expectations for pedagogical development in teaching. It is essential for beginning teachers to be exposed to good role models during their professional learning as teachers because it can help them to build confidence in themselves as teachers and promote their learning, not only during the initial years of their employment but throughout their teaching careers (Loughran, 2007). The wider implication is that teacher educators and other experienced teachers themselves need to be provided with the professional support that will enable them to model best practice, and thus be effective role models for their students.

2.4.4 Reflection

The reflective practitioner model in teacher education draws on the work of Dewey (1933), which Donald Schön (1983) expanded to develop the concepts of reflective thinking and reflective action. Hatton and Smith (1995), also referring to Dewey (1933), defined reflection as “an active and deliberative cognitive process, involving sequences of interconnected ideas which take account of underlying beliefs and knowledge” (p. 34). This model involves individuals in reflective thinking, which:

...generally addresses practical problems, allowing for doubt and perplexity before possible solutions are reached, ...[and] reflective action, [which]...is bound up with persistent and careful consideration of practice in the light of knowledge and beliefs, showing attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness, which then lead to modified action. (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 34)

Reflection and self-direction comprise an important concept to impress on pre-service teachers during teacher education, both at the initial teacher education phase, and later during induction and professional development. Teacher educators and mentors can play a vital role in helping pre-service and beginning teachers to reflect on their previous experiences in order to identify and solve

problems that they might have in relation to their teaching practices (Sweeny, 2008). Reflective teaching has been associated with approaches that promote critical enquiry, analysis, and self-directed evaluation of one's own teaching (Calderhead, 1989). This again is related to the notion of assisting pre-service and beginning teachers to "see into teaching", and the need for teacher educators and mentors to provide opportunities for their students to gain deeper understanding of teaching practices by reflecting on their own practice (Loughran, 2007).

During reflection teachers are theorising what they are doing and why, and linking their knowledge to broader overviews provided in the body of education profession knowledge. Essentially, reflection can lead to the generation of professional knowledge and improvement on practice (Sweeny, 2008). In the context of teacher education reflection can enable pre-service and beginning teachers to develop personal theories that are related to the more formal theories they have learnt through self-study or lectures. Beginning teachers can be assisted to "reflect on action", meaning to reflect back on their previous practices. For example, they can use assessment information from their students' learning outcomes to reflect back on how they approached their teaching roles, what they might need to do differently in the future to achieve better results, and assess patterns in their teaching practices (Schon, 1988). They can also be assisted to "reflect for action", meaning to reflect forward, and plan how to improve their teaching practices in the future. For example, beginning teachers can reflect as team, and develop goals on how to improve their teaching practices (Hord & Sommers, 2008). Furthermore, they can be assisted to "reflect in action", meaning to reflect while actually teaching, and be able to recognise if a teaching approach is actually working, or not. Such reflective practices are important in schools, as professional learning communities (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Schon, 1988).

However, even though reflective thinking has seemed over the last two decades to be the more desirable approach to adopt in teacher education, researchers acknowledge that it is inadequate if applied on its own. Rather, a more effective teacher education programme would include aspects of coaching, modelling, and reflection, in order to meet the changing needs of pre-service and beginning

teachers throughout their professional learning and development (Collet, 2007). The teacher education approaches discussed above provide the basis for appraising and rethinking pedagogies for initial teacher education, to enable pre-service and beginning teachers to become constructive meaning makers, with positive dispositions towards their profession. Coaching, modelling and reflection can be applied throughout the continuum of teacher education, from initial teacher education through to induction and ongoing professional development.

The following section discusses the need for induction and professional development of teachers, and takes into account the application of the above pedagogies.

2.4.5 Teacher induction and professional development

The literature suggests that teachers' professional learning and development occurs in three phases of an individual's career: pre-service, induction, and in-service teacher education, which includes on-going professional development activities. All three phases play an important role in enhancing teacher learning and professional development. However, the phases that are considered of most significance to teachers' practices and their retention in the profession are induction and continuing professional development. Therefore, it is vitally important that pedagogies used during these phases are well supported and resourced by school systems, including teachers' collaborative efforts to support one another, in order to make a difference (Anthony et al., 2007a) to the professional learning and development of pre-service and beginning teachers.

Induction is the recognition of the new teacher's progression from teacher-learner to teacher of students (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Continuing teacher professional development involves providing opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own practices and learn from their teaching experiences (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a). Furthermore, induction has been viewed as the best form of professional development for beginning teachers to "acculturate them to the school" (Wong, 2002, p. 52) and provide them with the opportunity to reflect on their existing knowledge and practices in order to make necessary improvements. It has been variously defined as the period of transition from being

a student teacher to being a teacher of students (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997), the orientation of new teachers into their teaching careers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), “the process by which novices are initiated into the teaching profession, and into a particular school” (Fletcher, Strong, & Villar, 2007, p. 4), and “the support provided for provisionally registered teachers, until they are judged to meet requirements for full registration” (Cameron & Baker, 2004). However, induction also means more than these. It involves a system-wide, coherent, comprehensive training and support process (Wong, 2004) aimed at supporting beginning teachers in order to improve teacher quality and effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2006a), and to retain teachers in the profession (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b).

For the purposes of this study, induction is viewed as an important link between pre-service teacher education and the first two years of teaching. It should therefore provide beginning teachers with a well-informed and comprehensive teacher induction programme relevant to their socio-cultural context, and with ample opportunity for observation, practice, and self-reflection. Imig & Imig (2006) contend that context matters, and that new teachers need to be prepared to cope with the realities posed by school situations that they are likely to encounter. This underscores the need to identify and make sense of the self-perceptions and professional learning experiences of beginning teachers in different socio-cultural contexts, including the kind of support they need when they begin their teaching careers, and the kind of professional support they receive from the schools in which they are placed. It is important that decisions relating to induction programmes for beginning teachers take into consideration the expressed needs of beginning teachers, as well as the contextual factors that exist within specific socio-cultural settings (Flores, 2001).

In a survey of teacher induction programmes at case-study sites in Australia (Northern Territory), Japan, and New Zealand, Moskowitz and Stephens (1997) found that effective teacher induction programmes are characterised by:

...a culture of shared responsibility and an environment where all professionals take active roles in a new teacher's acculturation and

transition, ... [the pursuit of] a multi-pronged set of support strategies, including mentoring, modelling good teacher practice, orientations, and in-service training...[and are] focused on assisting new teachers, and not on assessing their competence. (p. iv).

Research also confirms that the factors that contribute to the effective induction of teachers include:

structured, sustained, intensive professional development programmes that allow new teachers to observe others, to be observed by others, and to be part of networks or study groups where all teachers share together, grow together, and learn to respect each other's work (Wong, 2004, p. 41).

If the ultimate purpose of schooling is to help students succeed in their learning, every effort should be made to support teachers' learning and professional development based on the above observations. It could be that the typical ITE programme is too short to fully prepare teachers for their teaching roles, and that teachers can learn more from their actual classroom teaching experiences. Certainly there is much research evidence which suggests that initial teacher education cannot fully prepare teachers for all aspects of teaching (Loughran, 2007). Nonetheless, it starts them on their journey of continuing professional development. Therefore, it is imperative that beginning teachers are provided with the necessary professional support and opportunities to develop not only their pedagogical, content and curricula knowledge and skills but also the commitment needed for optimal teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2006a), and a positive disposition towards their work.

It is also important to bear in mind that teachers who are recruited today will be teachers for the next decade or two, and that their success will determine the success of students in the next 20 years or more (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Wong, 2004). Moreover, the knowledge base of society changes and increases continuously: hence, the demand for teachers to meet the learning requirements of their students that match employment and parental expectations also increases (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) with each decade. Teachers

therefore need to be provided with continuing professional development that will keep them up-to-date with new knowledge and teaching practices. Such professional development programmes should provide teachers with opportunities to reflect and to learn from their own teaching experiences, and the insights of more knowledgeable and experienced teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b).

Beginning teacher induction programmes can involve a variety of elements and includes activities such as “workshops, collaborations, support systems, orientation seminars...and mentoring” (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 683). They should also “introduce new teachers to the responsibilities, missions, and philosophies of their schools ...treat teachers as lifelong learners from their very first day of teaching... [and] include all the things done to support new teachers and to acculturate them to teaching” (Wong, 2002, p. 43). There needs to be enculturation at the school level. In New Zealand, this involves the deputy principal at the school level, head of department at the department level, and a “buddy” at the subject level (Anthony et al., 2007a). More importantly, it should extend beyond the induction period and be integrated into a career-long professional development programme for all teachers.

The following section examines some of the literature on how schools can be developed into communities of learning which provide opportunities for teachers to support each other in their learning and professional development.

2.5. Schools as communities of learning

The term ‘learning community’ was adapted from the concept of learning organisations. It comprises a group of individuals who develop a sense of connectedness that is experienced in family units, or closely knit communities or groups, where learning is collectively nurtured, and people continually find ways to improve their learning (Hord, 1997a). The essence of a learning community is the focus and commitment to the learning of its members. In schools, this means a commitment to the learning of teachers and students (Dufour et al., 2010).

Schools can be referred to as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Dufour et al., (2010) argued that a PLC is not a programme, or a staff meeting that occurs occasionally, nor it is a dialogue based on common readings of selected books or scholarly articles. Rather, "...it is an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve." (Dufour et al., 2010, p. 11). PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning is continuous professional learning and development of teachers. The school as a learning community is characterised as one that engages teachers in reflective dialogue, promotes a collective focus on students' learning, encourages collaboration amongst staff, and whose members have shared norms and values (Hord, 1997b). Further, it is also described as one that reduces isolation, increases staff capacity, provides a caring environment, and promotes increased quality. It is a place where critical inquiry is practised, staff experience collegial relationships, share a common vision, and engage in shared decision-making to contribute towards improvement in the quality of learning experienced by its students (Hord, 1997a).

The literature has identified a number of necessary elements of successful professional learning communities. For example, Hord and Sommers (2008) consider they are: supportive and shared leadership, collective learning, shared values and visions, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice, while Roberts and Pruitt (2009) have summarised them as: reflective dialogue, focus on student learning, interaction among teacher colleagues, collaboration, and shared values and norms. Each of these terms is now discussed.

Reflective dialogue occurs when teachers engage in professional conversations that focus on teaching practices and learning outcomes. The intention is to encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and collaborate on how they can improve. A focus on student learning involves ongoing conversations and decision-making about curriculum, teaching, and learning that focus on students' learning outcomes. Interactions among teachers will see them developing professional relationships, sharing ideas, and supporting each other in

their learning. This will include teachers observing each other's lessons and providing constructive feedback. Collaboration means that teachers discuss instructional strategies and techniques regularly, make decisions about instructional issues, and agree on ideas that will enhance the learning of both teachers and students in their school communities. Hord and Sommers (2008) explain that having shared beliefs, values and vision allows teachers to focus consistently on student learning and their own teaching practices in order to improve. Shared and supportive leadership means the involvement of teachers with principals and administrators in shared decision-making that leads to improved learning opportunities for students. Collective learning enables teachers to help determine what students need to learn and how they will learn it. Supportive conditions are those that will ensure effective learning in the PLC, such as time, resources, and policies which support collaboration between school staff. Shared personal practice involves teachers in giving and receiving feedback that supports their professional learning and development, and which eventually contributes to school improvement.

Dufour et al. (2010) also identify key elements of a professional learning community. They report that a PLC:

- focuses on and is committed to the learning of each student. This can be achieved if teachers are guided by a clear vision of what they want or need to do as a team in order to provide optimal learning outcomes and opportunities for their students to learn;
- promotes a collaborative culture with a focus on learning for all. This means that members in a PLC work in interdependent teams to achieve common goals. However, Dufour et al. (2010) point out that collaboration in a PLC does not lead to improvement in schools unless members are focused on the appropriate issues and are willing to work together to address them and involves collective inquiry into best practice and current reality. This means that members engage in collective inquiry into best practices, in both teaching and learning. This enables members to develop new skills and capabilities;

- involves learning by doing. This means that PLC members are action-oriented. They work together and swiftly to turn aspirations into action and visions into reality. They recognise that learning by doing develops deeper understanding of knowledge and skills than learning solely by reading, planning, or thinking;
- is committed to continuous improvement to achieve goals and accomplish the purpose of the PLC. This means that members are engaged in an ongoing cycle of gathering evidence of students' learning; developing strategies to address weaknesses in students' learning; implementing those strategies; analysing the effects of any changes on students' learning; and applying new knowledge in the next cycle of improvement. Participation in this process is not reserved for designated PLC leaders, but it is the collective responsibility of members within a PLC;
- is committed to regular assessment of the above mentioned processes of gathering evidence of students' learning; developing strategies to address weaknesses in students' learning; implementing those strategies; analysing the effects of any changes on students' learning; and applying new knowledge in the next cycle of improvement. Such assessments are based on results, rather than intentions. The focus on results can lead to the development and improvement of institutional goals that are aligned with the school's goals for learning.

It is important to note that the above discussed characteristics of PLCs cannot be effectively implemented without addressing physical and structural conditions that would enhance practices in schools. These include consideration of: time for teachers to meet and discuss; physical proximity of members of staff teaching the same subject; shared teaching roles; teacher empowerment; and communication structures within the school (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). Also important is the availability of resources and policies that support such practices and relational factors such as openness to improvement, supportive leadership, and trust, respect, and a caring attitude among community members. Effective leadership is essential for creating such an environment in schools; that is, leaders who view learning as

something to be valued, and are committed to providing learning opportunities for the teachers and students under their care (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009).

School culture and leadership are two important factors that contribute to the effectiveness of PLCs. The following section examines the literature on these areas that is relevant to this study.

2.5.1 School culture and leadership

Researchers have made significant strides in investigating the influence of school organisational factors on teachers' professional practices and dispositions towards teaching. These research studies have demonstrated that work conditions, school culture and leadership make a major contribution to beginning teacher induction, teacher morale, commitment and teacher retention (Flores, 2001; Stodolsky, Dorph, & Feiman-Nemser, 2006).

For schools to develop into learning communities that focus on teachers' and students' learning requires a supportive school culture. Peterson (2002) has succinctly defined school culture as "the set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the 'persona' of a school" (p. 10). Peterson also pointed out that a school's culture can be evident in teachers' attitudes towards professional learning and development, and in their dispositions towards change. It is argued that schools need to re-evaluate themselves, and perhaps alter their organisational structure, align curricula with national educational goals, and improve the overall quality of teaching and learning, given that the demographics of school communities are changing - that is, student populations and composition of communities are changing - and that what worked in the past may no longer be working or may cease to work in the next ten to twenty years (Hord & Sommers, 2008). However, when such changes are applied without consideration of the norms, values, and beliefs that sustain and drive a positive school culture, schools are unlikely to achieve the intended outcomes (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009).

Researchers and educators are becoming increasingly aware of the need for a healthy or positive school culture, one which is characterised by shared values and

opportunities for collaboration and continuous learning (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). This requires commitment on the part of school leaders and teachers, if necessary, to change the way they approach teaching and learning in order to create a stimulating learning environment for both teachers and students (Hord & Sommers, 2008).

Researchers who have examined the culture in schools point to the fact that every school has a distinct culture. It could be a positive culture that promotes learning for both teachers and students, or a negative one that is characterised by conflict (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003) and works against improvement and reform (Barth, 2002). Flores (2001), who examined the influence of biographical and contextual factors on beginning teachers' professional learning and development during their first years of teaching, noted that workplace conditions make a major contribution to beginning teachers' practices and attitudes towards teaching.

Barth (2002) also pointed out that a school's culture "has far more influence on life and learning...than...the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal, teachers, and parents can ever have" (p. 6). School culture can be viewed as a product of the kind of leadership practised in a school, which can determine whether or not a school is effective. Creating a school culture that promotes and sustains learning should be the school leadership's primary concern (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003). School leaders are responsible for facilitating the kind of change required in their schools. They must therefore reappraise continuously the culture of their school, with the goal of bringing about the kind of change needed to make their school a community of effective and sustained learning (Barth, 2002).

Over the past decade, leadership has emerged as a key ingredient in the improvement of education quality (DeVita, 2007). It is "seen as a bridge to school reform, capable of linking all other reform strategies" (Colvin, 2007, p. 15). Hence, it is important to understand the type of school culture and leadership style that would provide beginning teachers with the best possible support and professional development opportunities, so that they can foster positive learning

in their students. Several studies have pointed out that even though teachers are at the frontline of teaching in the classroom, school principals and school superintendents, or school board chairpersons, are responsible for setting clear visions and expectations within the school setting (Colvin, 2007; DeVita, 2007; Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003). Essentially, school principals and school board chairpersons are responsible for the professional culture within a school, and for ensuring that a school can achieve specific standards and expectations (DeVita, 2007). Having an effective and sustained induction and teacher professional development programmes in schools, or not having one, may be a reflection of the type of school culture and leadership practised in that school. However, studies that examined the adequacy of induction programmes for beginning teachers in US schools have suggested that those responsible for leadership and policy “often do not realize that creating a quality induction program can make a tremendous difference in teacher satisfaction, growth, retention, and impact on students” (Stanulis & Floden, 2009, p. 112). It was evident in a study conducted by Smith and Ingersoll (2004), who analysed the percentage of beginning teachers who participated in sustained, comprehensive induction programmes in US schools, that only 1% of beginning teachers were involved in such a programme. In New Zealand, almost 100% of full-time beginning teachers have access to such programmes (Anthony et al., 2007a).

Public expectation for beginning teachers to perform from day one in the same way as do their more experienced colleagues is common throughout countries that have a formal school system. Darling-Hammond (2006a) points out that if new teachers are expected to deliver this level of quality instruction they must be supported by a culture that promotes the ongoing professional learning of teachers in schools. Stanulis and Floden (2009) found that novices with inadequate support need about three to seven years of teaching before they can reach their full potential as teachers. This calls for effective leadership and an enriching school culture. In PLCs, shared and supportive leadership is encouraged, and principals and teachers collaborate on decision-making that is relevant to improved teaching and learning practices. This may be a challenge for school cultures that view principals as “all-powerful, all-wise, and all-competent” (Hord & Sommers, 2008,

pp. 10-11). However, it is important to note that a shared and supportive leadership style promotes collegiality and commitment among teachers (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009).

Seen from a socio-cultural perspective, the interaction that goes on in a school and the professional environment within a school are important contributing factors to beginning teachers' professional learning and development. Furthermore, modes of professional practice within a school, the norms, interactions, relationships, and prevailing institutional and individual values, determine what teachers do, and how they do it (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). Thus, schools are viewed "as a social and psychological setting in which teachers construct a sense of practice, of professional efficacy, and professional community" (Flores, 2004, p. 299). This requires schools to develop into communities of professional learning, where teachers' professional development can be enhanced, so that they can create optimal learning conditions for students to learn and develop (Varrati, Lavine, & Turner, 2009). Hord and Sommers (2008) have noted that a professional learning community is one that promotes a positive school culture, where critical inquiry is practised by collegial partners who share common vision and goals and engage in shared decision-making. Therefore, school principals need to develop a positive school culture that promotes learning for both teachers and students in their school programmes.

2.6 Summary

The review of the literature presented here has indicated that teacher learning is influenced not only by teachers' existing knowledge and beliefs, but also factors in their physical and social environments. These can impact on teachers' professional knowledge and beliefs and their dispositions towards their teaching roles and the teaching profession. Socio-cultural theory explains that teacher learning, including that of beginning teachers, is a complex process, which is socially constructed, context specific, and influenced by various factors in teachers' physical and social environments. It is the professional learning opportunities provided for pre-service and beginning teachers that enable them to construct or reconstruct knowledge about teaching and learning, and their

teaching roles. Hence, beginning teachers' professional learning experiences can have either a positive or negative impact on their professional learning and development, and how they theorise practice. This calls for the need to identify teacher education pedagogies that are relevant to teachers' learning in specific contexts. Pedagogies for teacher learning based on a socio-cultural view of learning include mentoring, coaching, modelling, and reflection within a community of learning and practice. The literature also emphasises the crucial role of leadership and school culture in beginning teachers' learning and professional development. Socio-cultural perspectives support the notion that the social interactions that go on in a school, as well as the professional environment within a school, are important contributing factors to beginning teachers' professional learning and development.

The review of the literature presented here also highlights the gaps in our knowledge of induction in Solomon Islands secondary schools. The lack of research on teacher learning in the Solomon Islands context highlights the need for further research. Hence, this study was designed to explore the professional learning experiences of beginning teachers in the Solomon Islands context. It was guided by the overarching question: What are the self-perceptions of beginning secondary teachers about their preparedness to teach, and their induction and professional learning experiences during the first two years of their teaching careers in the Solomon Islands context? Answers to this question may contribute to the improvement of current teacher education and professional development practices in the Solomon Islands by informing policy decisions that would bring about positive change.

The next chapter discusses the research methods and processes employed in this study, and the reasons for selecting these research methods and processes.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

One of the key observations highlighted in the literature review is the need for appropriate pedagogies in teacher education to meet teachers' learning and development needs in their varied socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, in pursuit of pedagogical approaches in initial teacher education (ITE) that are appropriate for the particular social contexts of the Solomon Islands, this study set out to explore the self-perceptions, lived experiences, and expressed professional learning needs of beginning secondary teachers (BSTs) in the Solomon Islands context. Significant research has been conducted over the past three decades in developed countries, including Australia and New Zealand, on the perceptions, professional learning experiences, and lived experiences of teachers. However, there is still a concern amongst minority cultural groups throughout the globe, including the Pacific Islands, that educational researchers have been "slow to acknowledge [and appreciate] their culture and cultural differences as key components in successful research practice and understandings" (Bishop, 2005, p. 19). This is despite an increased acknowledgement that research which focuses on "discovery, insight, and understanding [a phenomenon] from the perspectives of those being studied [participants] offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice in education" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). The above statements underscore the need to examine the lived experiences of teachers in particular socio-cultural settings, in order to make sense of why teachers approach their teaching roles in the way they do. Hence, this study is framed around the above premise in order to contribute towards the existing knowledge base, and also to create new knowledge and understanding about teachers' professional learning experiences in the Solomon Islands context. This study employed an interpretive qualitative case study research approach, in an effort to get a comprehensive understanding of the professional learning experiences of BSTs in the Solomon Islands context.

This chapter discusses the epistemological assumptions and theoretical perspectives that informed the choice of the research methodology, design and methods used in this study, and the justifications for choosing to use them. There are ten sections in this chapter. Section 3.2 provides a link to the focus of this research study and highlights the questions that guided this study. Section 3.3 discusses the methodological framework employed. Section 3.4 focuses on the study's research design and methods including the techniques and procedures used to gather and analyse data relating to the research questions that guided the study. Section 3.5 discusses ethical considerations pertaining to qualitative research which were adopted for this study. Section 3.6 focuses on criteria and strategies for ensuring quality trustworthiness in qualitative research. Section 3.7 looks at the processes involved in gaining access to the research site and participants. Section 3.8 describes the processes involved in the generation of data, and Section 3.9 the processes involved in the analysis of those data. Section 3.10 provides a concluding summary of the whole chapter.

3.2 Research focus and questions

For the past two and half decades, the Solomon Islands only teacher education institution, School of Education, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SOE-SICHE), has educated more than two thousand secondary teachers who were then recruited into the Solomon Islands secondary school system. However, little research has been conducted that examined how prepared those teachers were at the end of their ITE, and their lived experiences during the initial years of their teaching careers. The purpose of this study was to gain an insight into and an understanding of the experiences of these Beginning Secondary Teachers (BSTs) during the first two years of their teaching careers. Of particular interest was the BSTs' self-perceived sense of preparedness, their experiences of how they were acculturated into the school working culture, and the support mechanisms provided in secondary schools to guide and support them during the first two years of their teaching careers. Therefore, the overarching research question that guided this study is: **What are the self-perceptions of Beginning Secondary Teachers about their preparedness to teach, their lived experiences, and**

professional learning experiences during their initial teacher education and the first two years of their teaching careers in the Solomon Islands context?

3.3 Methodology

This study used qualitative research methods. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) maintain that qualitative research places more “emphasis on the quality of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency” (p. 10), that is, there are no causal or correlational data involved. Qualitative research is not in the positivist paradigm, where the emphasis is on the “measurement and analysis of casual relationships between variables” (p. 10). Qualitative researchers “argue that quantitative researchers are seldom able to capture their subjects’ perspectives because they have to rely on more remote, inferential empirical methods and materials” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 12). The qualitative research methodology supports the relativist and realist ontology that there is no objective reality. Rather, there are multiple realities ready to be explored; and realities, are socially and historically constructed over time (Krauss, 2005).

The qualitative research approach was favoured for this study because the study involved an investigation of BSTs’ experiences in a natural setting. Additionally, qualitative research approaches suited the focus and purpose of this study because qualitative research is viewed as a situated activity which locates researchers in specific socio-cultural contexts, and involves the description and interpretation of experiences by individuals in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This means that qualitative researchers are committed to naturalistic perspectives and the interpretive understanding of human experiences, including the perspectives of individuals in diverse cultures and social settings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Flick, 2009). This position is in agreement with the social constructivist view, which emphasises the importance of culture and social context in human beings’ meaning-making (Crotty, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978b).

3.3.1 Interpretive qualitative research

The nature and purpose of this study made interpretive qualitative research the most appropriate approach to employ. This is because the focus of this study was on Solomon Islands BSTs' lived experiences, and how they made meaning of their roles as BSTs within the Solomon Islands secondary school context. Furthermore, the intention of this study was to explore, interpret and theorise the experiences of Solomon Islands' BSTs, how they perceived their roles as BSTs, and the social interactions in the schools they were posted to in their first teaching engagement. Research that seeks to discover and understand how individuals in various contexts experience and interact with their environments and construct meaning out of their experiences is seen as using an interpretive qualitative approach (Merriam, 2002). The key focus is to understand situations in their uniqueness, and as part of specific contexts, with their own social interactions: for instance, how people such as teachers think and how they come to develop the perceptions they hold about their teaching roles (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Furthermore, the understanding that is reached based on the findings of such research cannot be used either to generalise or to predict. Rather, the understanding reached is an end itself—the findings portray what it means to the participants to be in a specific situation, based on their experiences, and what the world looks like in their particular social setting (Merriam, 1998, 2002).

Merriam (2002) pointed out that interpretive qualitative research approach is embedded in the view that:

...meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world..., [and that] the world, or reality, is not the fixed, single, agreed upon or measurable phenomenon that it is assumed to be in positivist, quantitative research. [Rather], there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time... [Furthermore], qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time at a particular context. (pp. 1-2).

Qualitative researchers use any or all of the following research strategies: case study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and biographical,

historical, participatory and clinical approaches (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 1998). These are also referred to as traditions in qualitative research, and “each tradition is in need of its own standards related to rigor” (Toma, 2006, p. 408). Researchers employing qualitative research methods obtain data through “ethnographic prose, historical narratives, first-person accounts, still photographs, life histories, fictionalised facts and biographical and autobiographical materials” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 16). However, studies that claim to employ the qualitative research methodology need not use all the above-mentioned qualitative research strategies and methods in equal measure. Rather, they employ some of the above strategies and methods to a certain degree. As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) point out, the issue lies with the degree to which specific qualitative research strategies and methods are employed in a particular study.

This study adopted methods relating to two of the traditions in qualitative research, namely case study and phenomenology, in the design and research methods employed in the data generation and data analysis processes. The aspects of qualitative research methodology relating to these two traditions are discussed in the following sections.

3.4 Design and Methods

This study used qualitative research methods and designs, including the case study, questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and phenomenology. Yin (2009) points out that qualitative case study research can use different methods to generate data for the same research question/s at one time. The aim is to allow a researcher to generate as much data as possible about the phenomenon under investigation. Yin (2009) also stresses that a case study can involve a variety of methods of data generation, as a research method in its own right, or it can form part of a larger study. Merriam (1988) also contended that a qualitative case study is a suitable method to employ in research that deals with critical issues of practice, and to extend the knowledge base of various aspects of education.

This study could be described as an interpretive qualitative case study. Merriam (1988) describes this as one that involves a researcher in gathering detailed and

rich data about their research topic, with the intention of interpreting the meaning of the experiences and theorising about the phenomenon under investigation — in this case, the lived experiences of a selected group of BSTs in selected secondary schools, in the Solomon Islands. The intention of this study was to interpret and theorise the meaning of those experiences, in order to illustrate the uniqueness of their experiences in light of contextual factors in the school environments in which they teach.

The following sections discuss the research methods and design selected for the study.

3.4.1 Qualitative case study

Case study method is usually employed in qualitative inquiry to study ‘a case’ (Stake, 2005), which usually refers to “a noun, a thing or an entity” (Stake, 2006, p. 1) that is easy to visualise, but may be difficult to understand. A case study is one that focuses on a bounded system, and that the bounded system, ‘the case’, might be selected because it is an instance of some concern (Merriam, 1988). This means it will require a detailed investigation of a specific setting, a single subject, a particular group, or a particular real-life event, which usually stems from one’s desire to get an improved understanding of a complex phenomenon (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). Hence, the case, unit, or bounded system to be investigated in this study was a selected group of BSTs from the 2007 cohort of secondary teacher graduates from SOE-SICHE, in Solomon Islands.

As a research method, case study can be used in situations where one intends to contribute to existing knowledge about specific groups, organisations and programmes, and social, political and related phenomena (Yin, 2009). Freebody (2003) also points out that case study is used to conduct and disseminate research that can impact upon practice, and more importantly to refine ways in which practice has been theorised. Like Yin and Freebody, Toma (2006) says that case study is also preferred when the study is geared towards inventions and interventions, and when a researcher is interested in contributing towards policies, or improving decision-making about a specific phenomenon. Furthermore, a case study may focus on a single case or multicases, depending on the overall

intentions of the researcher (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). A single-case study focuses on a single case, as the name suggests. It may consider an individual person, an event or happening, an institution, a community organisation, or one particular instance of educational experience, a specific programme, a process, or a social group (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003). Good examples of subjects for a single-case study in educational research would include: a school, a programme, a teacher, a group of students, a group of teachers, or a group of school managers. When a researcher involves more than one case in a study, or when studying a specific phenomenon, it is referred to as a multicase study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Stake, 2006), or multiple-case studies (Yin, 2003) — for example, a study that explores the leadership experiences of three women in three different school settings. The key referent point in a case study is ‘the case’, not the methods by which the case operates (Yin, 2003). In studying a case, a researcher must have some understanding about ‘the case’ before attempting to examine the functions and activities relating to it (Stake, 2006). In single case studies, the aim is to study ‘a case’ in depth, in order to better understand its complexity and uniqueness in relation to the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 1998). On the other hand, multicase studies, focus on the experiences of each case in relation to the phenomenon under investigation (Stake, 2006).

The question of whether a researcher will focus their case study on a single, or on multiple cases, or both, is a procedural dilemma for case study researchers, and an issue that Stake (2006) claims becomes even more complex as one tries to understand it better. There is also the epistemological dilemma of deciding on what is worth knowing about the cases and what is not. However, it is important to note that case studies, whether single or multicase, are concerned with particularisation rather than generalisation. In other words, the concern of case studies is on what is particular and situational about the phenomenon under examination, whether positive or negative (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009).

Even though case study research methods are desirable in situations where a researcher wishes to investigate, understand, make meaning, and provide a rich,

thick description and analysis of a phenomenon, its usage as a research method can present a number of challenges and limitations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003). First, a researcher may not be able to conduct an intensive investigation, as required by the case study method, because of time and financial limitations, and thus they may not be able to collect detailed information about the issue/s being investigated. Second, the researcher may oversimplify or exaggerate the issue being investigated, because the description and analysis of information is entirely up to the researcher. This may lead to erroneous conclusions about the actual situation or issue. Third, there is also the likelihood of readers making the assumption that the results represent the whole, when in fact they constitute just “a slice of life” (Merriam, 1998, p. 42). In other words, the cases in the study are just part of the whole situation being investigated. Fifth, case study research can be affected by researcher bias because the researcher himself/herself is the primary instrument for data generation and analysis. Hence, the researcher has the prerogative to decide on what to include and leave out in the final report, and may, through their inability to see “everything as a part of everything” (Stake, 2006, p. 7) ignore aspects that another researcher sees as vital.

As indicated earlier, this study is a case study involving the 2007 cohort of secondary teacher graduates from SOE-SICHE, in the Solomon Islands, which comprised 110 new secondary teachers. Therefore, “the case” in this study is the 2007 cohort of secondary teacher graduates from SOE-SICHE. However, only 42 out of the 110 completed the questionnaire, and a smaller group of 11 BSTs within the case was selected to participate in three in-depth interviews over a two-year period to provide comprehensive information about their ITE experiences, and their lived experiences during the first two years of their teaching careers. The issue of concern in this study includes BSTs’ sense of preparedness, and the kind of support provided for them in Solomon Islands secondary schools to help them develop professionally. The intention was to examine the perceived experiences of BSTs in order to get an understanding of their thoughts and feelings on these aspects of their training and of their teaching at their first appointments. These data can provide invaluable information that may be used to inform policies

pertaining to teacher education and teacher professional development in the Solomon Islands, and to inform those who mentor beginning teachers.

3.4.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a research method that is situated within qualitative research methodology. According to Merriam (2002), phenomenological studies focus on the essence of an experience. Hence, the aim of such studies is to clarify situations that individuals have experienced, and to examine the “lifeworld” of individuals, as phenomenologists refer to it (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). Accordingly, phenomenological studies focus not only on a phenomenon and how it is experienced in specific contexts by individuals but also on the meanings attached to those lived experiences (Smith, 2008). Edmund Husserl (1900), who is regarded as the forefather of phenomenology, stated that:

Phenomenology is neither a science of objects nor a science of the subjects; it is a science of experience. It does not concentrate exclusively on either the object of experience or on the subject of experience, but on the point of contact where being and consciousness meet. It is therefore a study of consciousness as intentional, as directed towards objects, as living in an intentionally constituted world. (p. 19)

A unique feature of conscious experiences is that an individual lives through them, or performs them. Moreover, a key feature of any experience is its intentionality — the way one’s thoughts and intentions are directed towards specific targets, or the meaning they hold towards a certain object (Edie, 1962), and the enabling conditions which allows them to happen (Smith, 2008). Basically, humans have various types of experiences, which are linked to their perceptions, imaginations, thoughts, emotions, desires, wishes, and actions in different aspects of their lives (Smith, 2008). Studies that adopt aspects of phenomenology in the analysis of data seek to capture as closely as possible both the way in which a phenomenon is experienced, firsthand, within the context in which the experience takes place (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008) and the meanings attached to those experiences.

Therefore, a phenomenological study or analysis would attempt to address the meanings attached to specific experiences and the significant impact contextual

factors may have on those experiences (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Smith, 2008). Phenomenologists are interested in describing the essence and meanings of the experiences and endeavour to show how complex meanings are built from simple units of direct experiences (Merriam, 2002; Toma, 2006). They might employ in-depth interviews to generate as much data as possible, to enable them to understand the essence of the experiences under examination (Merriam, 2002; Toma, 2006). Fischer (2006) argues that empirical phenomenological research does not simply focus on “experiential impressions taken at face value” (p. 81); rather, it involves demanding and systematic reflection by both the researcher and the research participant. This means that the researcher can also be viewed as a participant in his or her own study, playing the role of a “perceiving agent” (p.81). Given this context, the researcher’s own observations and impressions, especially during interviews, are also important in the meaning-making process (Churchill, 2006).

In this study, in-depth interviews were employed in phases two, three and four. The study’s focus meant that a phenomenological analysis of the data generated through these in-depth interviews was required in order to get a holistic picture of the BSTs’ lived experiences, and the meanings they attached to those experiences. Data generation and analysis processes applied in this study are discussed in detail in sections 3.7 and 3.8 of this chapter.

3.4.3 Sampling: Choosing the participants

One of the necessary steps in any research study is to select the participants for the study. There are two basic types of sampling that are involved in the selection of participants: probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling involves the random sampling of participants for a research study, with the intention to generalise findings to the entire population; non-probability sampling involves the selection of specific individuals, or groups to participate in a study, with the intention to get a better understanding of their experiences in specific contexts (Merriam, 1998).

The sampling method most commonly used in qualitative research is non-probability sampling, because the aim of qualitative research is to develop an

understanding of complex issues that are experienced in specific situations and contexts. Hence, the selection of participants is purposeful and issue-specific, as the findings of such studies are not intended for generalisation purposes (Marshall, 1996; Stake, 2006) but are viewed as relative to specific situations and contexts. In contrast, probability sampling is more relevant to quantitative research, as the intention is to obtain statistical data on a random sample, so that generalisations could be made about an entire population (Merriam, 1998).

One form of non-probability sampling that is commonly used in qualitative case studies is “purposeful sampling” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998, 2002). Purposeful (or purposive) sampling is necessary when the researcher intends to find out more about a phenomenon in a specific context; this means the selected sample must be representative of the case to be studied, not of the entire population, as in positivist research. As such, the type of sample for a qualitative case study is usually selected ‘on purpose’, so that the researcher can learn about issues that are of central importance to their study from “information-rich cases”, or those who are directly involved in the issue/s under investigation (Merriam, 2002). In most cases, researchers choose cases that they have some knowledge about, or that they have access to (Stake, 2006). Sometimes, however, the researcher needs to apply a screening process in order to identify the final cases, prior to data collection. A worst-case scenario would be to find out during data collection, or even after data collection, that the cases selected were not representative of what the study intends to achieve (Yin, 2009).

According to Merriam (1998), two levels of sampling are necessary in a qualitative case study. Firstly, there is a need to decide on the case or the bounded system to be investigated. The case or bounded system may include a programme, a group of teachers, or schools that the researcher might like to study aspects of. Usually, the researcher may have some link or prior knowledge about the case or bounded system they wish to investigate (Stake, 2006). Secondly, from within the case or bounded system, a smaller sample may be selected (unless the intention was to interview the entire population within the case, unit, or bounded system). As highlighted earlier, a case study may consist of a single-case or of multicases

involving two or more participants. Merriam (2002) says that to begin purposive sampling the researcher must first determine what criteria are essential to choosing the sample for their case study research. These criteria include who are to be interviewed and what sites are to be included. Typically, a researcher would create a list of criteria of the attributes that are essential to their intended case, and then proceed to find a unit. Hence, the criteria to be used and the size of the sample within the case are usually determined by the purpose of the study (Merriam, 1998). This is to ensure that the selected sample matches the context of the study, as most case studies deal with real-life situations (Yin, 2009).

As mentioned earlier, purposeful sampling is most suited to a qualitative case study approach because it focuses on a specific issue, or phenomenon, at a particular place, at a particular time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998). However, factors such as accessibility to participants, and the availability of transport, finance and other resources, could also play a crucial role in the selection of participants. The selection of a sample on the basis of the above factors is known as “convenience sampling” (Marshall, 1996; Merriam, 1998). Marshall (1996) and Merriam (1998) have both argued that the selection of a sample based on convenience alone is not very credible and likely to yield biased or poor results. However, if the sample is selected on a convenience basis but is representative of the case to be studied and yields the results intended for the study, then it can be justified (Marshall, 1996).

In this study the first consideration was to decide on the case or bounded system to be studied. The cohort of pre-service secondary teachers who were going to graduate at the end of 2007 from SOE-SICHE was accordingly identified, because this study was designed to commence at the beginning of 2008, and focused on Solomon Islands BSTs who graduated from SOE-SICHE at the end of 2007 and began their teaching careers in January 2008. The second consideration was to select a group of participants from the 2007 cohort of secondary teacher graduates to participate in phases two, three and four of the study. Hence, the selection of participants for this study was done in two phases: at the case level—before the questionnaire was administered to the entire cohort of secondary teachers; and

within the case—after the questionnaire was completed. The selection process and criteria used to select the participants in this study are discussed in section 3.7.3.

3.4.4 Data generation methods

Data generation in qualitative research usually involves methods giving the researcher direct contact with participants at the research site. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) note that qualitative research does not claim any particular data generation methods of its own, but has borrowed research methods and techniques from other fields such as anthropology, history, sociology and psychology. According to Merriam (1988), qualitative case study research in education logically draws on data generation methods from the above-named fields because such studies seek to understand specific issues or problems of practice in specific social settings. Data generation methods used in the above-named fields are vital to qualitative research, as the goal is to collect first-hand, detailed information that will enable the researcher to better understand a phenomenon, and how it is experienced in its natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 2002).

Generally, there are six sources of data in case study research: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artefacts (Yin, 2009). However, case study research in education may use methods of data generation from both qualitative and quantitative approaches, depending on the nature and purpose of the study (Merriam, 1988). The methods most commonly used in qualitative case study are observation and interviews (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 2006). However, a qualitative case study can also include data gathered by a survey instrument. For example, a qualitative case study investigation into a school programme may involve sending a questionnaire to the participants to collect biographical data, and ask their opinions about the programme. Their responses would form part of the data base for the case study (Merriam, 1988). Essentially, deciding which methods to use to collect data in case study research depends on the nature and purpose of the investigation (Yin, 2003). In addition and regardless of which methods of data generation a researcher may wish to employ in a case study, there are three key principles of data generation that need to be considered, in order to ensure validity of the data collected. These are: the need to use multiple sources of evidence, not just one;

the need to create a case study data base; and the need to maintain a chain of evidence (Yin, 2009).

According to Merriam (2002), the ideal tool for generating and analysing data in the qualitative research paradigm is the “human instrument”(2002, p. 5). The human instrument refers to the researcher. This has a number of advantages. First, the researcher can expand his or her understanding about the phenomenon being studied through the use of both verbal and non-verbal cues. Second, the researcher can process information immediately in the field and make decisions based on this. Third, the researcher can clarify and summarise materials during the fieldwork and cross-check with participants for accuracy of interpretation during the fieldwork. Fourth, the researcher can probe immediately into unusual or unanticipated responses from participants (Merriam, 2002).

The aims of this study fit well with the interpretive qualitative case study research approach. First, the intention of the study was to obtain as much information as possible from the BSTs themselves about their learning experiences during their ITE and the first two years of teaching. Second, data for this study was obtained through first-person accounts of the BSTs’ perceptions of their experiences by means of a questionnaire, and extensive interviews in the second and third phases of the study. And third, I was the key person who generated and analysed the study’s research data. This enabled me to do preliminary analysis of the data during my fieldwork, and to cross-check with BSTs for accuracy of the information I obtained through the questionnaire and interviews.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is an important data generation tool in research. There are different types of questionnaires, including postal questionnaires, group or self-administered questionnaires, and structured or semi-structured questionnaires. Questionnaires can be administered in several ways: as face-to-face interviews, and as self-administered and postal questionnaires. A questionnaire may contain checklists, Likert/attitude scales, rating scales, and questions, both open-ended and supply-type (Oppenheim, 1996). The design of the questionnaire and the item

types to be included depends on the issues to be investigated and the research design that will be adopted for a specific study (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Oakely, 2006).

A structured, questionnaire (Appendix H) was used in the first phase of this study to determine the pre-service secondary teacher graduates' perceptions of their ITE programmes. More specifically, the structured questionnaire was used to generate information about aspects of teaching for which teacher graduates felt that the current teacher education programme had adequately prepared them. These included the aspects of teaching they felt were inadequately covered during their ITE, as well as their general sense of preparedness at the end of their training, and the reasons why they chose teaching as a career. More details about the design, content, and administration of the questionnaire are provided in section 3.8.1.

Interviews

Interviewing is one of the most common ways of generating data in qualitative research. It is a purposeful conversation between two or more people (Merriam, 1988), and may be used as the main strategy for collecting data in a research study, or used in conjunction with other data generation techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Furthermore, interviewing is one of the most important sources of information in case studies (Yin, 2009). The most common form of interview in qualitative and case study research is the person-to-person encounter in which the researcher elicits information from the participant/s. Whatever its form, an interview is a conversation with a purpose, whereby the interviewer intends to find out from the interviewee things that cannot be directly observed, such as feelings, thoughts, and intentions (Merriam, 1988). Therefore, "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour or feelings or how people interpret the world around them" (Merriam, 1988, p. 72). Thus, the decision to use interviewing as a primary mode of data generation in this study was based on the type of information I wanted to obtain from this study, which was to obtain detailed first-hand accounts from BSTs about their sense of preparedness and their early professional learning experiences.

Interviews can be structured, unstructured or semi-structured, depending on the types of questions asked, and can be conducted with individuals or with groups of people, in “focus groups” (Kervin et al., 2006; Merriam, 1988; Oppenheim, 1996). According to Yin (2009), interviews in case study research are guided conversations, not structured queries. In other words, although the researcher may be pursuing a line of inquiry, the questions they ask are not rigid. This means that the researcher plays two roles throughout the interviewing process: first, they follow their own line of inquiry as reflected in the case study procedure; and second, they ask actual questions that serve the purpose of their inquiry, in an unbiased manner. Hence, case study interviews require the researcher not only to ask questions that are relevant to the purpose of their study but also to ask questions in a friendly and non-threatening way.

In-depth and focused interviews are two types of interviews used in case study research. In an in-depth interview (IDI) the researcher can ask the participants about facts, as well as their opinions about the phenomenon under investigation. In some instances the researcher may ask the participants to propose his or her own insights into certain events, and may use these to inform further inquiry. In-depth interviews usually take place over an extended period of time and happen more than once. Focused interviews, on the other hand, may occur only once, and take a shorter period of time (Yin, 2009).

Semi-structured interviews were preferred for this study because the questions could be prepared in advance, based on the participants’ responses to the questionnaire and subsequent interviews. This is important because it meant that appropriate questions were asked of each participant. It also provided for consistency in the types and number of questions being asked. Using the semi-structured interview technique also gave me the freedom to ask additional questions and to probe deeper into the participants’ responses to questions, in order to substantiate previous responses and obtain additional information (Kervin et al., 2006).

According to Merriam (2009), one of the strengths of the interview over a questionnaire, is that it yields a higher response rate. However, this depends very much on how a researcher handles the interviewing process. It is advisable that researchers who use interviewing as the main data generation technique in their research not only inform participants fully about the purpose of their research but also be flexible and ready to adjust to constraints faced by participants in their respective settings, in order to maintain their interest and motivation (Patton, 2002). I observed in this study that the BSTs' responses in the interviews were more detailed than their responses to the same questions in the questionnaire. This could be due to the way I handled the interview process and the trust and confidence that developed between me as the researcher and the participants as each research phase was completed.

Although interviewing as a research technique has its advantages, it also has its limitations. One of the major limitations of interviews relates to cost and time. The process of arranging, conducting, transcribing, and translating one language to another into text form was time-consuming and challenging. Consequently, the more time one spends in conducting research, the more money is needed to be spent on transportation, accommodation, communication, and transcribing and translating interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Moreover, there is the likelihood of researcher bias in the way the interview data is interpreted, as interviews are regarded as subjective experiences. Therefore to minimise researcher bias in the interpretation of interview data, the researcher should as much as possible, reduce their subjectivity in the analysis of information generated by verifying with participants what they said and meant in the interview transcripts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

The notion of strangification, which is the effort of expressing one's language in a language that is understandable by others, is necessary for mutual understanding about the meaning of what is being said in another language (Shen, 2008). This is particularly important in this study because the interviews were conducted in Solomon Islands Pidgin, and had to be translated into English. However, the human factor, that is, the fact that the researcher can choose what to include, or

not to include, in the translation process, cannot be totally ruled out. There is the likelihood of the researcher referring to the same things using different terms, or mixing up terms in the translation process. There is also the issue of different concepts being obscured by the synonymity of various terms (Marco, 2007). This can be particularly true in the case of Solomon Islands Pidgin, which borrowed most words from English, but some of those words have come to bear a different meaning to their literal meaning in English.

In this study, semi-structured, in-depth interviewing was used as the primary means to generate data. The first interview was conducted at the beginning of the first year of teaching to elicit further information on BSTs' sense of preparedness that was gathered from the questionnaire, but was vital to the focus of this study. The intention was to provide an opportunity for the participants to expand on their responses in the questionnaire. The second and third interviews were conducted towards the end of the first and second years of teaching, respectively, to obtain detailed information about the BSTs' induction and professional learning experiences. Hence, interviews were conducted to get detailed responses from the participants on their perceptions and experiences as BSTs, and specifically on their feelings, thoughts and intentions about teaching. More details about the processes involved in the interviews conducted in this study are given in section 3.8.2 of this chapter.

3.4.5 Data analysis methods

In qualitative research, data analysis is a process by which raw data generated through interview scripts, field notes, and other sources, are systematically organised and arranged so that the researcher is able to consider them in relation to the research questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Qualitative data usually come in the form of language or text (Gibbs, 2002). In general, qualitative data analysis involves "examining, categorising, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to draw empirically based conclusions" (Yin, 2009, p. 126). Unlike other research methods where data generation and data analysis are regarded as separate activities, in qualitative case study data generation and analysis often occur simultaneously. When data generation and analysis are simultaneous, the analysis of data begins with the first phase of data collection, whether it be an

interview, observation, or questionnaire, rather than at the end of the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommended that it is best to do early data analysis because it allows the researcher to look into their data and think of ways to collect new or better data. Data obtained from the first instance of data collection can be used to inform subsequent phases of the study, which may lead to the researcher refining and reformulating his or her research questions (Merriam, 1988). Essentially, data analysis in qualitative case studies is an interactive process, in which the researcher is concerned with providing trustworthy findings. Furthermore, rigour in qualitative research is determined by the nature of the interaction between the researcher and the participants, the triangulation and interpretation of the data, and the data's richness (Merriam, 1998). This is discussed in more depth in section 3.6. Miles and Huberman (1994) also noted that "qualitative research persuades through rich depiction and strategic comparison across cases, thereby overcoming the abstraction inherent in qualitative studies" (p. 41).

There is no single or best way to analyse qualitative data. However, the data analysis process a researcher chooses to use depends on the research questions, how the data they generated through their research will be used, and the resources they have available to assist them in the analysis process (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). Yin (2009) points out that techniques for analysing case study evidence are not yet well defined — there are no set formulas, recipes or tools that case study researchers can rely on to produce the findings they seek in their research studies. Yin contends that even when computer tools are used in the data analysis process the ability to analyse and make meaning of the data rests with the researcher. However, Miles and Huberman (1994) made some useful suggestions as to how qualitative data could be organised to enable the researcher to make meaning from them. Strategies include: preparing research data and organising the information into different groups; determining categories and placing evidence under each category; creating and using flow charts and other graphic means to examine the data; determining the frequency of events; examining the complexity of relationships between the different categories; and arranging the information in some sort of meaningful ways that relates to the focus of the research study.

Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) also suggested five basic elements of qualitative data analysis and interpretation that are very similar to the ideas put forward by Miles and Huberman (1994). These are the five steps that guided the process I used to analyse the data that I collected for this study.

The first step in qualitative data analysis is for researchers to prepare their data and organise them effectively (Miles & Huberman, 1994). They need to get to know their data well, by reading and re-reading their research texts, or listening to their recorded interviews several times, before proceeding further with their analysis (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). This ensures that researchers have a better understanding of their data, and can determine whether the data they generated are of the quality they expected, or whether more are needed. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) claim that a good data analysis depends on how well a researcher understands his or her research data.

During the process of analysing my research data I realised the importance of having a summary of the questionnaire responses and of transcribing the interviews soon after I had conducted them. Having the research data summarised in written form provided a holistic picture of the data, and helped me to bring meaning to the BSTs' individual responses to the questions asked in the questionnaire and interviews. However, I had to read and re-read the texts and listen to the recorded interviews several times, in order to get a better understanding of the research data. Thus I fully endorse the notion that it is important for researchers to get to know their data well before proceeding further with their data analysis.

Second, researchers need to establish the focus of their data analysis, by reviewing the purpose and focus of their study (Yin, 2009), and identifying key questions that they would like their data analysis to answer (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003), before proceeding further with the analysis process. These key questions should give researchers a sense of direction in the data analysis process, and help them avoid false starts (Yin, 2009). For instance, a researcher may wish to focus his or her data analysis according to the key research question/s, or topic. Alternatively,

he or she may focus his or her analysis on participants' responses by case, individual, or group. The researcher may also, focus his or her analysis on both—by the research question/s, and by case, individual, or group (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003; Yin, 2009). In this study, I decided to focus my data analysis on both my research questions and on the BSTs' responses to the questionnaire and the interview questions.

Third, researchers need to organise the information they generated for their research study into categories and themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003; Yin, 2003, 2009). This involves identifying themes and patterns, such as ideas, concepts, behaviours and incidents, that are apparent in the data they collected, and organising them into categories, using abbreviated codes. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) admit that this could be labour-intensive, depending on the amount of data a researcher has to deal with. However, they stress that this is the "...crux of qualitative data analysis" (p.2). This stage of the data analysis process involves the researcher in reading and re-reading research texts, and coding all the texts he or she has gathered, until he or she has labelled all the themes and identified the relevant categories and sub-categories in his or her research texts (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). The researcher may use pre-set themes or categories that he or she identified in advance based on his or her key research question/s, or categories he or she has identified from the literature review. This means that the researcher identifies the themes before he or she has categorised the research data, and then searches the data for text that matches those themes (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). On the other hand, the researcher may identify the themes and categories as the texts are read. There may be recurring themes and ideas that emerge from the text that the researcher may not have thought of previously (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This approach allows the themes and categories to emerge from the data. In this case, the categories are identified after the researcher has worked with the data or as a result of working with the data (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003).

In addition, a researcher may combine these two approaches by beginning with pre-set themes and categories and then adding new themes and categories as they

emerge from the research data during the data analysis process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher's prior knowledge can enable him or her to notice emerging patterns and themes that relate to the focus of his or her study during the data analysis process. In this study I began my analysis with preset themes and categories that were based on the research questions and the focus of this study, and then I added new categories as they emerged when I read through the research texts. The BST' responses were then identified accordingly using abbreviated codes. How I organised the themes was also based on my prior knowledge of initial teacher education, and secondary teaching in the Solomon Islands context.

Fourth, the researcher needs to identify relationships and try to make connections within and between categories, after the themes and categories are identified. According to Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003), there are several ways in which a researcher can identify such relationships and connections. The researcher may:

- summarise the information pertaining to each theme within a category, and take note of the similarities and differences to the participants' responses;
- work from more specific categories and relate them to larger categories, ideas or concepts;
- focus on the relative importance of each category, by looking at the number of respondents who refer to specific themes that are important to their study; and
- look for relationships between the themes in each category by identifying two or more themes that occur together consistently in the data.

In this study, I summarised the information in each category, based on the BSTs' responses, and then identified similarities and differences in those responses.

The fifth and final stage of data analysis involves interpreting the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). This involves using the themes and connections identified earlier to explain the findings of the study. The process involves making meaning and attaching significance to the findings of the study (Yin, 2003). According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), this is an essential stage

of data analysis as the meaning perspectives of the research findings are developed, and key findings are organised into themes. The researcher may develop a list of key points and important findings in the categorisation of the data, and report his or her findings according to those key points. The format of how the researcher presents the findings depends on the purpose of the study (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). In this study I decided to report the findings according to the key themes that are related to the key focus of my study.

Yin (2009) also reiterates that data analysis strategies, like the one suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), and Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003), or computer software for qualitative data analysis, such as NUD.IST or NVivo, are very useful in the data analysis process; however, a researcher should also have a general analytic strategy in place. Yin warns that without an overall data analytic strategy researchers are likely to encounter many false starts, which may jeopardise their data analysis efforts. He reiterates the need for researchers to follow the theoretical propositions that led to their case studies, because their data analysis strategies should be linked to theoretical propositions that guided their specific case study, in that such propositions should have informed the research methods and design used in their particular case study.

Although data analysis can be viewed as an exciting activity, it can also be a challenging task, especially for first time qualitative researchers who must deal with multiple data sources and have a huge amount of texts or words to deal with (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The two main dilemmas in data analysis are data overload and data retrieval (Yin, 2009).

A number of data analysis techniques that can be applied in qualitative research are discussed in research methodology literature. They include: constant comparative analysis, content-analysis, ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, and phenomenological analysis, or interpretive phenomenological analysis (Merriam, 1998; Osborn & Smith, 2008). Yin (2009) has described several other analytical techniques that a researcher may use as part of or along with general analytical strategies such as the ones listed above. They include: pattern matching,

explanation building, time series analysis, logic models, and cross-case analysis. For the purposes of this study the most appropriate data analysis strategies and techniques were content-analysis and interpretive phenomenological analysis.

Content analysis

To a certain extent, all qualitative data analysis involves content analysis. This form of data analysis involves the analysis of the contents of interviews, questionnaires, field notes and other documents (Merriam, 1998). It is the preferred technique to use when analysing data obtained through semi-structured interviews. It involves going through documents or interview transcripts, categorising data, searching for recurring themes, and then looking for relationships between the different categories and themes in order to interpret them (Krippendorff, 2004). The focus is on the communication of meaning (Merriam, 1998). Although this may sound easy, content analysis can be time-consuming and can be marred by a degree of researcher bias (Krippendorff, 2004), which is unavoidable, but can be minimised.

In this study content analysis was used for both the questionnaire and the interview data. It involved: preparing the questionnaire and interview data and organising the information into different groups; determining categories/themes and placing evidence under each category/theme; creating a means to examine the data; determining the frequency of events based on the BSTs' responses; examining the relationships between the different categories/themes; and arranging the information into themes that reflected the focus of this study. A detailed description of how content analysis was used to analyse data in this study is discussed in section 3.9.1 of this chapter.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis

Interpretive phenomenological analysis explores in detail how participants in specific social contexts make sense of their world, and make meaning of their particular experiences. This approach involves a detailed examination of the participants' lived experiences, in order to understand how they perceive their personal experiences (Osborn & Smith, 2008). It focuses on discovering the

structure and essence of the phenomenon under investigation. This involves viewing the phenomenon from different angles and perspectives, and trying to interpret the experiences of the participants on the basis of individual participants' viewpoints, without any researcher prejudice or assumptions (Smith, 2008). The aim is to make meaning of the experiences of the participants in relation to contextual factors in their environment (Merriam, 1998).

Although it seems that this type of analysis focuses on making meaning of the experiences of participants based on the participants' perspectives only, it also emphasises the active role the researcher plays in the process (Smith, 2008). Osborn and Smith (2008) point out that an interpretive phenomenological data analysis process involves both the participants and the researcher in making meaning of the participants' experience. Hence, they contend that:

...a two-stage interpretation process, or a double hermeneutic, is involved. [That is], the participants are trying to make sense of their world; [while at the same time] the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants' trying to make sense of their world. (p. 53)

Therefore, in employing an interpretive phenomenological analysis approach, two different interpretive stances are being used: an "empathic hermeneutic" stance, and a "questioning hermeneutic" stance (Osborn & Smith, 2008, p. 53). This is consistent with phenomenological assumptions, which involve understanding a phenomenon from the perspective of the participant/s, or interpreting the meaning of the lived experiences of the participants based on the participants' side of the story (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Merriam, 2002; Osborn & Smith, 2008; Smith, 2008). At the same time, the researcher can also ask critical questions about the experiences of the participants, in order to make sense of the meanings constructed by the participants and to report on their interpretation of their side of the participants' stories (Osborn & Smith, 2008).

In this study, then, phenomenological analysis was used to make meaning of the experiences of the BSTs as expressed in their responses to the questionnaire and three interviews, and the contextual factors that surrounded their experiences. It involved an interpretation of the BSTs' experiences, based on their responses and

how I interpreted what they said based on my knowledge of contextual factors in the Solomon Islands teacher education and secondary education systems. The processes involved in analysing the data that I gathered from the questionnaire and three interviews in this study are discussed in detail in sections 3.9.3 to 3.9.5 of this chapter.

3.5 Ethical considerations

As educational research involves working with humans, there are ethical considerations that a researcher needs to observe when conducting research. Ethics is an integral part of the research process and need to be observed throughout a study in any research approach a researcher may wish to employ, not just at the beginning (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Thus, researchers need to ensure that any study they conduct is carried out in an ethical manner, so that the rights and interests of the participants are safeguarded throughout the research study (Kervin et al., 2006). It is also important to adhere to ethical considerations in research to ensure that the study produces valid and reliable information that will contribute towards a current body of knowledge in the area under investigation (Merriam, 1998). In a qualitative case study “ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge at two points: during the generation of data and in the dissemination of findings” (Merriam, 1988, p. 179). Moreover, qualitative studies obligate a researcher to observe important ethical practices because they are dealing with human beings in real-life contexts. The researcher is therefore responsible for ensuring that he or she conducts research with special care and sensitivity (Yin, 2009). Ethical considerations in research include the need to obtain access and informed consent from participants; to ensure the safety of participants and their privacy/confidentiality/anonymity; and to ensure that there is no conflict of interest on the part of the researcher during the generation of data.

This study was guided by relevant ethical considerations outlined in the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics regulations, as well as in the qualitative research literature and the ethical research guidelines contained in *The Solomon Islands Research Act* (Ministry of Education and Human Resources

Development, 1982). The important ethical considerations that were observed in this study include: obtaining access to participants, informed consent, safety of participants, right of withdrawal, privacy/confidentiality/anonymity, and ensuring that there is no conflict of interest on my part, as the researcher, during the collection of data.

In conducting this study I was aware of a researcher's role and responsibilities in relation to gaining access to participants and respect for research sites. My knowledge about ethical issues in research was based on information I obtained from the literature, as well as from my own experiences when conducting other studies. According to Cohen et al. (2007), respect should be shown by seeking official permission from those in authority, and informed consent from the participants, before entering a research site and conducting research. Accordingly, I sought permission from relevant education authorities as well as from the participants themselves, before the BSTs were involved in this study. I understand that respect for research sites should also be shown by ensuring as much as possible that the researcher does not interrupt the normal activities at the research site. This should be done by making sure that participants are interviewed at a time when they are free, and when they agree to be interviewed (Kervin et al., 2006). Furthermore, the researcher should view him or herself as a "guest" at the research site (Creswell, 2005). During the course of this study I ensured that I was granted permission to enter school premises before I conducted my fieldwork at the participating schools, and ensured that the school principals and the BSTs were informed in advance about my visit. Furthermore, for all interviews, I ensured that little disruption was caused to the participants' normal class times by making appointments to interview them outside of their class times, and at a time that they agreed to be interviewed.

Permission to conduct this study in the Solomon Islands was sought from the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, which is responsible for issuing research permits in the Solomon Islands. In addition, permission to have access to schools was obtained from relevant education authorities and school principals. Informed consent was also sought from the participating BSTs

before they participated in the study, in accordance with research ethics regulations, which require that participants in any research study should give their informed consent before they participate (Christians, 2003; Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 1998, 2002). The principle of informed consent stems from an individual's right to "freedom and self-determination" (Cohen & Manion, 1996, p. 350). In this study, the participants were fully informed about the nature, purpose, and processes involved in the study and any likely impact on them before they were asked to participate. This was done in written form as well as verbally at the study sites (schools). The BSTs who agreed to participate in this study signed a consent form (Appendix, J) before they engaged fully in the research activities. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the research without any repercussions up to the time of signing off their first transcript.

Another important ethical consideration observed in this study relates to the safety of the participants. The principles of ethics require that researchers must ensure that no harm is done to participants in any way, either physically or psychologically, and that their rights, needs and interests will be protected and respected (Christians, 2003). At the beginning of any research study, a researcher needs to weigh the benefits of the outcome of the research against any inherent or potential risks. They must make sure that participants are aware of such risks, and understand that they may withdraw from the study if they think they are at risk, or cannot participate for any other reason (Cohen et al., 2007; Kervin et al., 2006). The welfare of the participants must be carefully considered, so that they do not feel that they are being exploited in any way (Flick, 2009). However, the likelihood of exposing participants to potential danger in an educational research study such as the one reported in this thesis is minimal. Even so, such occasions may arise and researchers need to take the necessary precautions, and be aware of the ethical issues involved in physical, psychological, emotional, or cultural harm (Crowl, 1996). For instance, in terms of physical danger the researcher must be aware of potential safety risks relating to travel or bad weather. In relation to psychological or mental stress the researcher must ensure that the participants are not put under undue pressure to be involved in the study, by ensuring that

interviews are conducted at a time convenient to the participants. In terms of cultural harm, the researcher needs to ensure that the participants' cultural practices are respected and observed. According to Crowl (1996), "it is more likely that mental stress rather than physical harm may be a risk in educational research" (p. 80). In this study I minimised the chances of physical, psychological, emotional, or cultural harm to the participants in a number of ways. First, all interviews were conducted at the schools where the BSTs teach; second, they were conducted at times when the teachers were free; and third they were conducted at a safe distance away from other teachers, and in the language of each participant's choice. This was to ensure that teachers had privacy, and felt free to express themselves fully.

Measures were also taken in this study to safeguard the confidentiality, the anonymity, and the privacy of participants and the research sites. According to Christians (2003), research codes of ethics insist that researchers safeguard the identities of both research participants and research locations, depending on the type of research. Anonymity and confidentiality are two important aspects of safeguarding the identities of research participants. That the information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity is fundamental to the notion of anonymity (Christians, 2003). A participant is therefore considered anonymous when other people cannot identify the participant from the information provided. Anonymity can be maintained when identifying data and individual names are not required (Kervin et al., 2006). However, when a researcher needs to interview participants, or needs to collect data over a long period of time, and needs to track an individual's progress over time, anonymity can only be maximised, but not guaranteed. This means that the researcher will keep the raw data confidential for a period of time (Kervin et al., 2006). It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that anonymity is maintained throughout the course of their study by taking active measures to conceal the identity of participants or the research sites; "the essence of the matter is the extent to which investigators keep faith with those who have helped them" (Cohen & Manion, 1996, p. 367). To maximise anonymity, pseudonyms should be used to conceal the identity of participants and sites

(Kervin et al., 2006). Respecting the rights of participants to privacy is another way of safeguarding the identity, rights and interests of research participants.

In this study, all necessary measures were taken to ensure that participants' identities were concealed as much as possible, although maintaining anonymity in tight-knit communities in a small country like Solomon Islands can be a challenge. The purpose and nature of this study also made it impossible for me to fully conceal the identity of the participants, especially from the school principals and teachers teaching in the participating schools — the participants shared offices with other teachers, and permission needed to be sought from the school principal before the participants were involved in the interviews. In addition, I had to meet the participants because face-to-face interviewing was the method used to obtain information from them. Moreover, the participants were identified by their real names during data collection so that information obtained from each phase of the study could be matched to each participant. For instance, data obtained from the questionnaire needed to be matched with data obtained through the three interviews. However, in this research report, the participants are referred to using pseudonyms (Alex, Debbie, Dories, Eugenie, Henry, Jeremy, Josephine, Marcia, Paul, Sophia, and Zinnia), also are the participating schools (Belana, Isuna, Natana, Tetena, and Vurana). This should maximise concealment of the identity of participants and schools from those who read this thesis. The participants in this study were assured that any information they provided would be kept confidential for an indefinite period of time, that all interview data and recordings were kept secure, and that electronic versions of the data collected were accessible only to me, as the researcher. The participants were also assured that none of the information they provided would be disclosed without their consent. Finally, the questions used in the questionnaire and interviews in this research study were focused on the research topic and questions. All efforts were made to ensure that questions were not asked in a manner that would make the participants feel that their privacy had been invaded, or their time wasted.

The final ethical consideration observed in this study relates to researcher bias. One of the main threats to research validity is researcher bias. Researcher bias

results from researchers' tendency to be selective in how they conduct their research, for example regarding whom they wish to interview and the type of information they choose to record, and to allow their personal views and perspectives to influence the way they interpret and report their research data (Johnson, 1997; Osborn & Smith, 2008). It is important to note that, to avoid such biases, researchers need to put aside preconceived ideas when conducting their investigation (Yin, 2009), and that the findings and conclusions of qualitative research studies should depend more on the participants' views than on what the researcher values and thinks is important (Christians, 2003). Therefore, it is important that researchers are aware of their biases, values and assumptions before they conduct their studies, as these can impact negatively on the study (Toma, 2006). This can be achieved through reflexivity—a process through which a researcher involves him or herself in critical self-reflection about potential biases and predispositions that may affect how they conduct their study, right from the beginning of their studies (Johnson, 1997). However, it has to be acknowledged that bias cannot be removed, only minimised, as researchers usually bring their prior knowledge to their research task.

Biases in qualitative research can also be inherent in the relationship between the researcher, the participants, and the topic under investigation (Merriam, 1998). Case study researchers are prone to such biases as they tend to select research topics that they have good background knowledge about, and research participants they know. Thus they might fall into the temptation of selecting the case study method in order to pursue or advocate for particular issues of interest (Yin, 2009). In this study I was aware of the conflict of interest that might arise during the course of the study, because I was the former Head of the SOE-SICHE, and was conducting a study on BSTs who undertook training on programmes that I had helped to design. Being in such a position might prompt others, including the participants, to view me as someone pursuing specific issues in teacher education to advance my own interests. Moreover, the participants might have felt, somewhat reserved, and perhaps not constructively criticise weaknesses of the Diploma in Teaching (Secondary) programme because of respect for my previous role as a lecturer and the Head of School. To avoid such feelings amongst the

participants I fully discussed the purpose and intentions of the study with the participants right at the beginning of the study, and assured them that I would value their honest responses and that there would be no repercussions of any kind.

3.6 Credibility and trustworthiness in qualitative research

The terms reliability and validity are traditionally attached to quantitative research. In general “reliability” refers to the stability of findings, should a study be repeated, and “validity” to the truthfulness of the findings (Johnson, 1997). Fundamentally, these are the benchmarks against which the quality of a piece of research is judged (Mathison, 1988). However, proponents of qualitative research are adamant that these benchmarks are incompatible with the basic epistemological and ontological assumptions of qualitative research (Johnson, 1997). For example, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest that qualitative and quantitative researchers are markedly different in terms of their commitment to different styles of research methodologies and methods, including their epistemological assumptions, forms of representation, interpretation, and how they view trustworthiness. Hence, in response to critics who question the validity and reliability of qualitative research findings, and think that it is unscientific, only exploratory, or subjective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), proponents of qualitative research have explored ways whereby the concepts of reliability and validity can be applied to qualitative research, to enhance its rigour and credibility (Merriam, 1998). While qualitative researchers have suggested numerous possible criteria for determining the quality and authenticity of qualitative research, the perspectives proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) have seemed to be widely accepted by qualitative researchers over the past two decades. Lincoln and Guba (1985) translated internal validity to mean credibility; external validity to mean transferability; reliability to mean dependability; and objectivity to mean confirmability.

Credibility is the first criterion for judging the quality of qualitative research. It is concerned with the extent to which research yields credible or believable results that reflect the context of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that ensuring credibility is one of the most

important factors in maximising trustworthiness of qualitative research. They emphasised that credibility is the overriding goal of qualitative research, which reflects the relativistic nature of truth claims in the interpretivist paradigm. Therefore, it is vital that qualitative researchers describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participants' perspective.

Transferability is the second criterion that can be used to assess the quality of qualitative research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other settings that are similar in context. From a qualitative perspective transferability is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalising (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Using qualitative research findings for transferability or generalisation purposes is one of the limitations of qualitative research, because the findings of qualitative studies are usually context specific (Merriam, 2009). However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that qualitative researchers can enhance transferability of their research findings by providing a thorough and detailed description of the research context, and of the assumptions that were central to their research. This can enable those who wish to 'transfer' the results to a different context to decide how best they can make a sensible transfer of ideas.

The third criterion for determining the worth of specific qualitative research study is dependability. This refers to how consistent a researcher is in employing and accounting for research processes applied in his or her study, such as data generation, data analysis, interpretation of data, and theorising (Cohen et al., 2007; Merriam, 2009). Hence, the notion of dependability emphasises the need for qualitative researchers to employ an integrated approach in their studies from data generation to theorising. Furthermore, the researcher needs to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. This means that the researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in specific social settings, and how these changes affected the way the researcher approached his or her study.

The fourth criterion for assessing the quality of qualitative research is confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It refers to the degree to which research results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. There are a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study, and document the processes involved (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The researcher can actively search for and describe any negative instances that contradict prior observations. And, after the study, a researcher can conduct a data audit that examines the data collection and analysis procedures and make judgements about the potential for bias, or distortion of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A researcher can maximise credibility of his or her study through a number of strategies. Triangulation is one of the key strategies used by qualitative researchers to maximise the credibility of their research. It involves the use of multiple methods, data sources, and researchers to enhance the validity of research findings. For example, a researcher can use questionnaire, survey, and interviews to generate data for one study. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) pointed out that triangulation “adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to an inquiry.” (p. 5). Creswell (2003) and Johnson (1997) have also identified triangulation as one of the strategies that qualitative researchers could employ to enhance the credibility of their research. Others include: member checking or participant feedback, debriefing sessions with participants immediately after interviews, cross-checking information with participants to check emerging interpretations and conclusions of the data, accuracy in reporting data through rich, thick descriptions, clarifying the biases that the researcher may bring with them to the field, spending prolonged time in the field, and using an outside auditor to examine the process and results of the project.

In this study credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability issues were addressed through triangulation of methods and data sources, participant feedback or “member checking”, ensuring accuracy in the reporting of data through rich, thick descriptions, and clarifying researcher biases.

In relation to triangulation, I employed a variety of data generation and analysis methods. This included using information obtained from the questionnaire, and the three sets of interviews to make meaning of the lived and professional learning experiences of BSTs in the Solomon Islands context. Also, the data analysis process involved more than one method, and included both content analysis and phenomenological analysis. I used triangulation to secure a comprehensive understanding of the study's topic, to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of my research findings.

Regarding participant feedback or member checking, I discussed with participants issues relating to their responses straight after each interview, and provided them a copy of their interview transcripts so they could look through them, make any changes to my interpretation of their responses, and sign their transcripts before I left the research site in the Solomon Islands. This helped me to validate the participants' responses in each of their transcripts, and added to the accuracy of the data I generated in this study. The participants' feedback to my preliminary analysis of interview data indicated that they were happy with my interpretation of their responses. This gave me confidence that I had satisfied the confirmability criteria in this study.

In relation to accuracy in the reporting of data, I have endeavoured to ensure that Chapters Three and Four provide an accurate account of the processes involved in this study, and of the experiences of beginning secondary BSTs in the Solomon Islands context. The aim was to provide accurate, detailed description and analysis of the experiences of BSTs in a Melanesian context, so that those who read this thesis will be able to evaluate for themselves the degree of transferability to their own settings.

Finally, right from the beginning of the research process I was obliged to reflect on the biases that I might have in relation to the topic of this study, to reduce the likelihood of researcher bias. I had to reveal that I was a former lecturer and Head of School at the teacher education institution from which the participants of this study graduated, and that I was also the data gatherer. Hence, I had to consider

ways in which I could minimise potential biases in the way I generated, analysed, and reported the findings of this study. In the data generation process, I ensured that the participants were fully informed about the purpose and intentions of the study, and assured them that the information they provided was to be used only for purposes of this study. In the data analysis stage, I made sure that I noted the responses of the participants very carefully and did not distort the data in any way. And, in the reporting of data, I did my best to ensure that the views of the participants took precedent over my own views, and that they are presented as closely as possible to how they were relayed to me through the questionnaire and interviews.

The following section provides further details of the processes involved in this research.

3.7 Access to research site and participants

As this study was purposely designed to explore the self-perceptions and experiences of beginning secondary teachers in the Solomon Islands, it was necessary to seek the permission of those in authority in the Solomon Islands education system to have access to the research sites in the Solomon Islands. In the case of this study, the research sites selected were secondary schools located in Guadalcanal Province, in the Solomon Islands (SI), and the School of Education, at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SOE-SICHE). These institutions were targeted because this study focused on the 2007 cohort of pre-service secondary teachers who graduated from SOE-SICHE at the end of 2007, and began their teaching careers in 2008. In keeping with ethical considerations for this study, I began my fieldwork only after I was granted access to the research sites and to the beginning secondary teachers (BSTs) who participated in this study.

3.7.1 Access to Solomon Islands educational institutions

Permission to conduct this research study in Solomon Islands educational institutions was sought from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD), as it is the authority responsible for issuing research permits in the SI. A letter (Appendix C) and details about this study (Appendix L)

were sent to the Permanent Secretary of the SI Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, seeking his permission to conduct research in selected secondary schools around Honiara and Guadalcanal. I sent the application for a research permit to the MEHRD soon after the University of Waikato, School of Education Research Ethics Committee approved my research ethics application (Appendix A). I began the first phase of my data collection, which was administering the questionnaire, soon after receiving an indication from the Undersecretary (Administration) at the MEHRD headquarters in Honiara that I could begin my data generation while his office processed my research permit. However, I began the interviews only after I received my research permit (Appendix B) from the MEHRD.

In order to gain access to SOE-SICHE to administer the questionnaire (Appendix H) to the final year pre-service secondary teachers, I sent a letter (Appendix D) and information about this study (Appendix L) to the SICHE Director, a month prior to the administration of the questionnaire. A copy of the letter was sent to the Head of the School (now the Faculty) of Education to inform her about my study. I asked one of my colleagues at SOE-SICHE to administer the questionnaire soon after receiving permission from the SICHE Director.

Permission was also sought from the education authorities in order to have access to the secondary schools that are administered under their respective establishments. A letter (Appendix E) and a research information sheet (Appendix L) were sent to each of the education authorities that are responsible for the operations of secondary schools that participated in this study, seeking their permission to have access to selected secondary schools in Guadalcanal. I followed up the letters with a phone call to those responsible and received a positive response.

I also sent a letter (Appendix F) and an information sheet (Appendix M) to the secondary school principals seeking their permission to access their schools. I had to obtain permission from the principals before I could contact the beginning secondary teachers.

The process of gaining access to the institutions for this study was slow and required patience and understanding on my part. I found that it was important to allow enough time for those in authority to respond to my letters. However, having an inside knowledge of the system and the processes involved, and the fact that many of those I was working with knew and trusted me, was an advantage for me. Hence, I was given permission for access to the institutions concerned in time to begin my data collection.

3.7.2 Selection of secondary schools

The selection of secondary schools for this study involved, firstly, deciding on the criteria to be used to select the participating schools. Factors taken into consideration included whether they had recruited BSTs from the 2007 cohort. The nature and purpose of this study made it necessary to select schools that recruited new teachers from the 2007 cohort of graduated pre-service secondary teachers from SOE-SICHE. The other criteria were: accessibility to telephones and public transport, and prior approval for access by education authorities and principals. Availability of telephones and public transport was necessary to ensure ease of communication, and movement from one school to another, as the majority of schools in Guadalcanal do not have access to either of these facilities. Finally, the schools were selected based on my inside knowledge about the schools' location and organisational set-up. This was a significant factor because it made it easier for me to approach those in authority for permission to involve beginning teachers at the five secondary schools in this study.

The five secondary schools that were involved in this study were purposely selected, not only because they satisfied the above criteria, but also because the 11 BSTs who were placed at those schools gave their consent to participate in this study over a two-year period when they completed the questionnaire. In order to identify the schools that recruited BSTs from the 2007 cohort, the principals were contacted via phone. However, in cases where I could not reach a principal by phone, I had to visit those schools in person. This was due to the unavailability of information on teacher deployment from the relevant offices at the beginning of 2008.

Initially, I intended to involve schools that were located in both rural and urban areas to determine any variation in the experiences of the BSTs. However, this was not possible because no beginning secondary teachers were placed in rural Guadalcanal secondary schools that were accessible by road. Therefore, the variation of schools that were involved in this study was considered according to the education authorities that oversaw the operations of those secondary schools. The five secondary schools that participated in this study were operated under four education authorities. Even though they were similar in their organisational set-up, there was a slight variation in the level of resources and classroom facilities made available to their teachers.

3.7.3 Selection of beginning secondary teachers

The selection of participants for this study was done in two phases, the first before the questionnaire was administered to the 2007 cohort of secondary teachers, and the second, after the questionnaire had been completed and analysed. I used the purposive sampling technique to select the participants, so that I could gather the kind of information I needed to adequately respond to the study's research questions. The 2007 cohort of pre-service secondary teachers, which consisted of 110 final-year pre-service secondary teachers training at SOE-SICHE, was selected to complete the questionnaire. However, only 42 were able to complete the questionnaire because the rest were out on Teaching Practice in the Provinces. Of the 42, 40 agreed to participate in the three semi-structured interviews.

I had to use specific criteria in the selection of the 11 BSTs to ensure that those selected were representative of the 2007 cohort of secondary teacher graduates from SOE-SICHE. The criteria used included the courses they had taken at SOE-SICHE, the provinces they were from, their gender, and their availability to participate in the three interviews over a two-year period. Gender representation was considered one of the important criteria as women's voices and experiences were often ignored in past educational research conducted in the Solomon Islands. Fortunately, seven female BSTs were posted to the five secondary schools in this study, so this criterion was met without much difficulty. The selection of the 11 BSTs was also based on the BSTs' responses to the consent form (Appendix J) sent with the questionnaire (Appendix H). Only those who completed the

questionnaire and agreed to be involved in the interviews were identified and selected according to the above criteria. The 11 BSTs included seven females and four males.

Although the 11 BSTs had already signed a consent form, I wanted to reaffirm the purpose of this study with each BST before I conducted the first interview. This was to ensure that they were fully informed about this study, and to clarify any doubts that they may have had. I also wanted to make sure that the BSTs were fully aware of the ethical consideration pertaining to their right to withdraw before they could make a commitment to fully participate in the three interviews. After having reaffirmed the 11 BSTs' commitment to participate, I confirmed the 11 participants for the next three phases of this study, and determined the dates and times for the first interviews.

The following section describes the data generation processes involved in this study. It focuses on how I conducted this research study in each of the four phases.

3.8 Generation of data

The primary sources of data for this study were a questionnaire, and three in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The generation of data followed four phases, over a two-year span. The four phases include; phase one—questionnaire, phase two—first interview, phase three—second interview, and phase four—third interview. These are described in more detail in Table 1.

The duration of each phase ranged from two to eight weeks. In total, data generation for this study covered 20 weeks of fieldwork, over a two-year period. Table 1 contains a summary of the four phases of this study, including the main objective of each phase.

Table 1: Study Phases and Objectives

Phases	Time of Implementation	Objectives
One: Questionnaire (n=42)	November 2007	To obtain demographic data about the participants, their self-perceptions about their ITE, and their sense of preparedness at the end of their ITE.
Two: First Interview (n=11)	February/March 2008	To examine the BSTs sense of preparedness at the beginning of their teaching careers, and their self-perceptions about the kind of support they received, or would want at the beginning of their teaching careers.
Three: Second Interview (n=11)	September/October 2008	To explore BSTs experiences during the first year of their teaching careers, and their self-perceptions about the type of induction support they receive during the first year of their teaching careers.
Four: Third Interview (n=11)	October 2009	To explore BSTs experiences during the second year of their teaching careers, and the self-perceptions about kind of guidance and support they received during the second year of their teaching careers.

The following sections describe in more detail the methods used to obtain data in each phase, and the processes involved in each of the data generation methods.

3.8.1 The Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire (Appendix H) was administered in the first phase of this study to explore the final-year pre-service secondary teachers' self-perceptions about their ITE programmes and their sense of preparedness at the end of their ITE. The questionnaire was used to generate information about the aspects of teaching for which the final-year pre-service secondary teachers felt that their respective teacher education courses had adequately prepared them for, and the aspects of teaching they felt were inadequately covered during their ITE. Specific questions were included to obtain demographic data about the final-year pre-service secondary teachers, such as their gender, age and highest level of education before pursuing teacher education, and the reasons why they chose to pursue teaching as a career. The questionnaire also contained a Likert scale

comprising of 20 items which was developed to identify the final-year pre-service secondary teachers' perceptions and knowledge about different aspects of teaching.

The questionnaire design was based on the questionnaire used by Anthony et al. (2007) for New Zealand beginning secondary teachers, but was modified to suit the context and objectives of this study, to ensure content validity. The questionnaire was piloted with Solomon Island teachers who were studying at the University of Waikato at the time the questionnaire was designed. Their feedback enabled me to modify the questionnaire to ensure clarity and focus. I also received feedback on the draft questionnaire, which led to modifications that aided the validity and quality of the final copy of the questionnaire, before it was printed and administered.

A colleague from the SOE-SICHE administered the questionnaire, as I was not able to do it in person due to financial constraints. She signed a consent form (Appendix K) before she administered the questionnaire on my behalf.

3.8.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were conducted in phases two, three and four of this study, as shown in Table 1. The semi-structured interview method was preferred over structured interview to allow for breadth and depth of understanding of BSTs self-perceptions and experiences. Questions asked in the interviews were based on the literature relating to beginning teachers' experiences on being and becoming a new teacher in the first year (Anthony et al., 2007a, p. 53; 2007b; Kane & Fontaine, 2008; Timperley et al., 2007). The interview questions were open-ended to allow for an interactive dialogue during each interview. The questions were organised according to specific aspects of the BSTs ITE, induction, and teaching experiences to ensure that the questions asked encompassed key aspects of this study.

Interview schedules were prepared in advance for each of the three interviews (Appendix N, O, P). Questions for the first interview (Appendix N) were focused on beginning teachers' responses to the questionnaire, to confirm their responses,

and to allow them to expand on their responses to questions in the questionnaire. Questions were also asked in relation to the beginning teachers' initial experiences as a beginning teacher at their respective schools, their sense of preparedness as a beginning teacher, their views about their ITE programme, their confidence in applying various teaching skills and strategies, their initial induction experiences, and what future plans they might have for their teaching career paths, based on their initial experiences.

The second interview focused on questions relating to the BSTs' experiences during the first year of teaching, including their induction experiences, and the kind of support they received as beginning teachers from their respective schools. The interview schedule (Appendix O) was focused on the BSTs' teaching experiences, professional learning experiences, induction and professional development experiences, their self-perceptions about their preparedness to teach, and their commitment to the teaching profession based on their experiences during their first year of teaching. Questions asked were based on responses from the first interview, as well as on the literature referred to earlier.

The third interview focused on the BSTs' experiences as beginning teachers during the second year of teaching. The purpose of this third interview was to generate information from the BSTs about their induction, and professional learning experiences. The interview schedule (Appendix P) for this final interview was more individualised, and focused on the BSTs responses in the first two interviews. The questions asked them to relate to how they had developed professionally as a teacher since they started teaching in 2008, and the changes they may have noticed in the way they approached their teaching roles. The questionnaire also contained questions relating to their induction experiences during the second year, and their perceptions of their future plans in the teaching profession.

3.8.3 Conducting the interviews

Dates and times for each of the three interviews were negotiated with the BSTs. The principals were also informed about my visit to their school a month before each phase of fieldwork began. This was done via email to schools that had access

to email, via telephone to schools that had access to telephone, and by hand-delivered mail to schools that did not have email or telephone access. The interviews were conducted at the BSTs' respective schools at a time suited to the BSTs teaching time tables to ensure their convenience and safety. The 11 BSTs participated in all three face-to-face interviews. Each of the interviews lasted between 50 and 60 minutes.

The interview schedules were written in English, but the BSTs were given the option to be interviewed in either English, or Solomon Islands Pidgin, a neo-Melanesian lingua franca commonly used in schools, and at the workplace in the Solomon Islands. All of the participants preferred to be interviewed in Solomon Islands Pidgin as they were not comfortable with conversing in English. Interviewing in Solomon Islands Pidgin meant that I was placing myself at the same level as the BSTs, as in the Solomon Islands context English is commonly regarded as an elite language used mainly by academics, and senior officials in the government hierarchies (Leve, 2004). However, English is the medium of instruction in the Solomon Islands schools, including SOE-SICHE, so it may be they also felt that my English would be better than theirs. I therefore decided to use Solomon Islands Pidgin in the interviews. This was important in the interview process as it enabled the BSTs to feel at ease and able to interact freely and participate fully in the conversations.

Before each interview was conducted the 11 participants were asked for their permission to be recorded, and all agreed. At the end of each interview they were also given the opportunity to add further comments to any of the questions asked. All the interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, downloaded to a laptop computer, and later transcribed.

3.8.4 Transcribing the interviews

Each of the three interviews was transcribed individually for each participant. This was a labour-intensive process, as it involved the dual task of transcribing and then translating the interviews into English. This was carefully done to ensure the meaning of what the BSTs said in Solomon Islands Pidgin was maintained in the English version of the interview transcripts. It took more than two hours to

transcribe each interview. Additional time was spent after each interview was transcribed to review the transcripts by listening to the interviews again and checking through each transcript. This was done to lessen the number of errors in the translation of the interviews, and to minimise researcher bias. The interview transcripts were given back to each BST for further comments and validation after each interview, before the transcripts were further analysed. The BSTs were happy to read the English version of their interview transcripts. This was done during each phase of the fieldwork in the Solomon Islands before I returned to New Zealand. The participants were generally satisfied with each of their interview transcripts and signed them off with very few changes.

The following section discusses the processes involved in analysing the data that were generated through the questionnaire and interviews.

3.9 Analysis of data for this study

Data analysis processes adopted for this study were based on the research methodology I adopted, which relates to the interpretive qualitative research approach. The data generated through the questionnaire and interviews were analysed using content analysis techniques to identify emerging themes, and interpretive phenomenological analysis techniques were used to interpret and make meaning of the relationships within and between the key themes that emerged from the analysis. The data analysis process for this study was carried out in the following stages:

- Stage one: Preparing and getting to know the research data
- Stage two: Determining the focus of the data analysis
- Stage three: Organising data into categories and themes
- Stage four: Identifying relationships and interpreting data.

3.9.1 Preparing and getting to know the research data

Stage one of the data analysis, the preparation of data, involved reading through the responses in each of the questionnaires and organising the responses into categories according to the key questions asked in each section. Table 2 shows how participants' responses were summarised according to each question.

Table 2: BSTs responses arranged according to questions in the questionnaire

Questions	Responses	Pseudonyms
What are your reasons for choosing teaching?	Because of the need for teachers in the SI...	Paul
	I love to be with young people and help them learn...	Henry
	Because of teacher shortage, and because I need salary...	Jeremy
	To help students learn, and for me to learn new things...	Alex
	I want to...help young people learn.	Eugenie
	To expand my knowledge in the subject.	Marcia
	I want students to learn new knowledge in my subject.	Sophia
	To help teach young SI to become good citizens...	Josephine
	Because I am interested to help teach students about science.	Zinnia
	For family convenience and teaching is a respectable profession.	Debbie
	To help young people in the SI learn new things.	Doris

One of the advantages of organising participants' responses into groups according to questions is that it provided an overall impression of the BSTs' responses to each question. It also allowed me to determine whether I needed to probe deeper into any of the participants' responses during the interviews.

In phases two, three and four of the study, data preparation happened simultaneously with the data generation process. It involved listening to the recorded interviews and translating and transcribing them from Solomon Islands Pidgin to English. The responses to each question in the interview were also summarised according to each key question in the interview schedules as represented in the example in Table 2.

In order to get a comprehensive understanding of the data I collected I had to read through the summary of the questionnaire and interview responses several times. This was important to my data analysis process, as I needed to know the data well before I could arrange them in meaningful categories, and interpret them. I was aware that a good analysis begins with quality data and a good understanding of the data collected. Hence, I valued the time I spent in preparing and organising the data, as well as the time spent in reading and re-reading the research texts, as it helped me to better understand the data before I proceeded further.

3.9.2 Determining the focus of data analysis

At this stage of the data analysis, I referred back to my initial research questions and the focus of my study, in order to establish the focus of my data analysis. I then decided on a number of questions that I thought needed to be explored, given the focus of my research study. The five questions that I intended to respond to in my data analysis are:

- What are the BSTs' perceived senses of preparedness at the end of their ITE?
- What are the BSTs' perceptions of their ITE programme?
- What are the BSTs' experiences during the first two years of their teaching careers?
- What are the BSTs' perceptions of the professional support they received during the first two years of their teaching careers?
- How have their perceptions changed as they progressed from the first year to the second year of teaching?

Having the above questions as a reference point in the data analysis process helped me to stay focused throughout the data analysis process.

3.9.3 Organising data into categories and themes

The data were organised into categories and themes according to the above questions. This involved identifying themes based on the BSTs' responses to the questionnaire and three interviews and organising them into categories according to the key questions. For example, the categories, sub-categories, and themes for the second question above are organised as follows:

What are the BSTs' perceptions of their ITE programme?

a) Strengths of ITE programmes

- Placed a lot of emphasis on lesson planning, preparation, and presentation.
- Adequate coverage of subject content in most courses.

b) Areas ITE should place more emphasis on

- Processes and strategies involved in the assessment of students' learning.
- How to deal with students' learning problems.
- How to manage student disciplinary problems at the secondary school level.
- How to apply a variety of teaching strategies in specific subjects.

- More practical experiences in subjects like Science and Agriculture.

c) Areas the ITE need to address

- Basic computer training for pre-service teachers.
- Courses on how to administer and manage departments at the secondary school level.
- Preparation of teaching resources for specific teaching subjects based on the secondary school syllabus.
- Exemplary teaching in the specific curriculum areas by lecturers.
- How to manage assessment tasks at the school level.
- Allow more time for practice than theory.

d) Teaching practice programme

- TP should cover eight to ten weeks, or a full semester, of their training Programme, especially in the final year,
- They were concerned about the quality of feedback they get from some of their Supervisors/Lecturers, and associate teachers.
- They want more critical feedback that clearly points out their weaknesses and suggest ways on how they could improve during their TP.

3.9.4 Identifying relationships within and between categories

The fourth stage of analysing data adopted in this study involved identifying relationships between the different key themes in the data, interpretation of the data, drawing conclusions, and reporting the major findings that were derived from the data. This is an essential stage of data analysis as the findings are organised in a meaningful way according to the key themes that emerged from the analysed data, in order to identify the relationships that exist between the key themes and interpret the meaning attached to them. In this study I identified the relationships that existed between the key themes that were apparent in the research data, and then interpreted the meaning attached to the BSTs' perceptions and professional learning experiences; thus I identified the areas of professional learning indicated by the BSTs, how they learnt, and the contextual factors that influenced their professional learning during their first two years of teaching.

Accordingly, I began by summarising the information pertaining to each theme within each category, and noted the similarities and differences in the participants' responses. Then I identified specific categories and related them to larger categories, ideas or concepts that related to the focus of this study. I also evaluated the relative importance of each category by looking at the number of respondents who referred to specific themes that are important in this study. I then looked for

relationships between the themes in each category by identifying two more themes that occurred together consistently in the data.

3.9.5 Interpreting and making meaning of the data

Finally, I focused on making meaning of the data in relation to the questions I wanted to explore through the data analysis process. Interpretive phenomenological data analysis techniques were used to explore in detail how the BSTs made meaning of their initial teacher education, induction, and teaching experiences during the first two years of their teaching careers. I examined the data in more detail in order to understand the participants' perceptions of their personal experiences as BSTs in the schools where they were teaching during the time of this study. First, I tried to make meaning of their experiences based on their own perspectives of how prepared they felt they were at the beginning of their teaching careers. Second, I tried to make meaning of their experiences as BSTs during the first year of their teaching careers. And third, I tried to make meaning of their experiences as BSTs during the second year of their teaching careers. My aim was to make meaning of the BSTs' experiences overall during these three stages of their first two years of teaching, and to understand how contextual factors in their school environments might have hindered or enhanced their teaching roles and practice.

Although I was primarily focused on making meaning based on the BSTs' perspectives of their experiences, I was also aware of the active role I played in the whole process as the researcher. The interpretive phenomenological data analysis process recognises that both the participants and the researcher make meaning of the participants' experiences. Hence, the meaning-making process in this study depicted how the BSTs made meaning of their own experiences and also how I made meaning of the BSTs' experiences. Therefore, I employed two different interpretive stances —the “empathic hermeneutic stance, [and the] questioning hermeneutic stance” previously referred to Smith, (2008, p. 53). I had to try to understand the experiences of the BSTs, based on their perspectives, while at the same time asking critical questions about their experiences, which were based on my knowledge of contextual factors existing in the Solomon Islands teacher education and secondary education systems during the time of this

study, in order to make sense of the meaning the participants attributed to their own experiences.

3.10 Summary

The research design, methods and processes described in this chapter are based on interpretive qualitative research methodology. Interpretive qualitative research was preferred for this study because it strives to understand the meaning that people construct about their world on the basis of how they make sense of their lived experiences. This paradigm suited the nature and purpose of this study, that is, to explore, interpret and theorise the experiences of Solomon Islands' beginning secondary teachers. Hence, the study employed case study and phenomenology data generation and analysis methods, because the focus was on the lived experiences of a cohort of BSTs in the Solomon Islands context. The data generation methods used were questionnaire and in-depth interviews. A questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the study to provide baseline information for the study, and this was used to inform the types of questions asked in the semi-structured interviews, and to identify suitable participants for this study. In-depth interviews were conducted in phases two, three and four of the study. Content analysis and interpretive phenomenological analysis techniques were used in the analysis of research data to ensure the perceptions and experiences of the BSTs were appropriately interpreted, and to minimise researcher bias. The chapter also described how interpretive qualitative case study approach was employed in this study to investigate and make meaning of the self-perceptions and professional learning experiences of the 2007 cohort of Solomon Islands BSTs.

My interpretations of the experiences of the 11 BSTs who participated in this study are reported in the next chapter of this thesis, Chapter Four, which reports the study's findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a synthesis of the findings of this study. It describes the self-perceptions of 11 beginning secondary teachers (BSTs) about their initial teacher education (ITE), and their induction and professional learning experiences during the first two years of their teaching careers. The findings are based on recurring themes that emerged from the questionnaire and interview data gathered between November 2007 and October 2009. The chapter consists of five sections. Section 4.2; provides a general overview of the research settings for this study, and demographic information about the 11 BSTs who participated in this study. Section 4.3; discusses findings on the BSTs reasons for choosing teaching as a career. Section 4.4, describes the BSTs self-perceptions about their ITE programmes, and their sense of preparedness at the end of their ITE. Section 4.5; focuses on the BSTs' initial teaching and induction experiences. Section 4.6; describes the BSTs' professional learning experiences. Finally, section 4.7 provides a concluding summary of the whole chapter.

4.1.1 The Solomon Islands context

This study was situated in the Solomon Islands. The Solomon Islands is a small sovereign state located just North East of Australia, between Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. It consists of about 1,000 islands and atolls that are scattered over a land area of approximately about 30,400 square kilometres. The six main islands are Guadalcanal, Malaita, Choiseul, New Georgia, Santa Isabel, and Makira. These main islands are characterised by rugged, volcanic, mountain ranges, and the smaller islands are mainly atolls with raised coral reefs and lagoons (National Statistics Office (SISO), 2007). The main transportation link to each island and atoll is via sea transport. These geographical features make it a challenge to provide equitable basic social services, including education, to the entire population. This has been a challenge for the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD), in particular, since the 1990s as it tries to maintain the delivery of education services, and manage educational resources in

an efficient and transparent manner throughout Solomon Islands (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2004).

The Solomon Islands became independent in 1978 after 100 years of British rule. The population is estimated to be around 518,000 by the Solomon Islands statistics office in 2009. The total population comprises of 95% Melanesians, 3% Polynesians, and 2% other races. Guadalcanal is the largest island with a total land area of approximately 5,336 square kilometres, and estimated population of about 79,000 in 2009. The capital Honiara, which is located on the Island of Guadalcanal, is the main urban centre with an estimated population of 78,000 people. The Solomon Islands has a high birth rate at an average of 2.8% per annum (National Statistics Office (SISO), 2007). This has implications on the provision of basic social services, including a growing demand for places in schools and qualified teachers.

Cultural context

The majority of Solomon Islanders live in rural villages that observe diverse cultures and customs. Villagers are self-sufficient and self-reliant due to access to their traditional land, and the family kinship system. Such cultural practices prevent Solomon Islanders from experiencing absolute poverty. However, “...while resource-management regimes are community-based and participatory, their disparate nature creates difficulty in ensuring a national, sustainable, basic supply of food for all.” (Coxon, 2008, p.11).

Solomon Islanders are said to speak about 87 different indigenous languages, but only 74 have been recorded so far (Paul, 2009). These languages are spoken by specific groups of people in the different Islands and represent sub-cultures on their own. English is considered the official language to be used at the work place and as a medium of instruction in the school system. However, Solomon Islands Pidjin a neo-Melanesian lingua franca is now widely used by all citizens, and is the common language spoken even at the workplace and in schools (Leve, 2004).

Like indigenous people in other parts of the world, Solomon Islanders have developed fundamental indigenous knowledge, technologies, skills, competencies, attitudes, values, beliefs, and symbolic systems, enabling them to use the land and sea base resources within their territories to meet their basic needs for the past centuries. Informal learning and teaching styles were, and still are, an integral part of traditional education in the rural villages, which allow parents and other members of the family, clan, or tribe (who have expertise in specific life skills) to educate their children for adult life through socialisation and hands-on experiences. However, Solomon Islanders are experiencing rapid transformation, as a result of their contact with western civilisation and also with various change agents which inevitably pressured individuals to change their way of life and thinking in recent times. Regardless of these changes Solomon Islanders are aware of the importance of maintaining worthy Solomon Islands cultures. Therefore, the biggest challenge for Solomon Islanders is how to effectively maintain their worthy cultures, while at the same time accommodating new cultures. Moreover, the challenge for the Solomon Islands education process, and in particular education planners and policy makers, is to find ways in which Solomon Islands indigenous knowledge can be integrated into the school curricula in order to provide opportunities for future generations to learn and appreciate their indigenous culture (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007a). This includes the need to integrate traditional knowledge and practices in teaching pedagogies employed by teachers and teacher educators.

The ethnic conflict experienced in Guadalcanal between 1998 and 2003 has also impacted on the delivery of basic social services, including education services and the amount of resources made available to schools by the MEHRD. There was a general view held by Solomon Islanders that the values and attitudes promoted through the western lifestyle and education system contributed to the development of the conflict (Coxon, 2008). The current Solomon Islands education system was blamed for the increased tensions within Solomon Islands communities, because of "...its promotion of and focus on economic advancement." (Coxon, 2008, p.13). The education system has been criticised for being disconnected to the social and cultural values which formed the basis of the Solomon Islands culture for

centuries. This posed a challenge for the Solomon Islands government, especially the MEHRD, to bring about major reforms in its education system. Such reforms should recognise and integrate the Solomon Islands cultural values and practices in the school system (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2004).

Education context

Like other Pacific Islands that were formally colonised and later granted political independence, the Solomon Islands formal education system was introduced by the early Christian missionaries between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. It was not until later in the 20th century that the colonial administration (British Government) assumed a greater responsibility for the entire school system. All teaching and learning resources were developed and produced in Great Britain and shipped to the Solomon Islands, so were the teachers who were brought in to teach the local children. The Cambridge School Leaving Certificate curriculum was eventually abandoned when the National School Curriculum was introduced in 1975. Since independence in 1978, the Solomon Islands government has taken full responsibility for the national school curricula. It was then that the government realised the need to educate teachers in the Solomon Islands to deliver the Solomon Islands school curriculum in schools. Initially, pre-service and in-service secondary teachers were awarded scholarships to undertake their teacher education in PNG, Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand. However, due to the increase in the number of secondary schools in the mid-1980s the MEHRD saw the need to expand teacher education programmes at SOE-SICHE to cater for the training of secondary teachers locally (Rodie, 1997).

The MEHRD is responsible for ensuring the operation and development of schools and training institutions throughout the Solomon Islands. The MEHRD managed over 600 primary schools with a student enrolment of 85,000, and 140 secondary schools with a student enrolment of 29,000. It also supported 28 Rural Training Centres with a total enrolment of approximately 1500 students. It also manages a teaching establishment of over 4,000 teachers (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007). The Ministry of Education is divided

into divisions that have specific responsibilities and functions that support the work of teachers in the Solomon Islands.

The education system in the Solomon Islands comprises of three main categories of secondary schools that enroll students from years 7 to 13. These include:

- *National Secondary Schools* (NSS) - these were the original secondary schools established by the Churches but are now receiving substantial support from the Government, and enroll students from Years 7 to 13 across the country;
- *Provincial Secondary Schools* (PSS) - these were initiated by the Government but are run by the provinces, and enroll students from Years 7 to 11 only, but student enrolment is restricted to the provinces only;
- *Community High Schools* (CHS) - these started as primary schools, and expanded to include secondary education courses. CHSs are built and managed by communities, and are assisted by church or provincial education authorities, and enroll students from Years 7 to 9 only, but some a now enrolling Years 10 and 11 students as well (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007b).

The purpose of secondary education is to expand students' knowledge of subjects already studied at the primary school level, including the systematic study of literature, sciences, mathematics, social studies, commerce, and other subjects essential for physical and intellectual development and to prepare students for specialised skills training.

4.2 Research setting and participants

This study involved the School of Education, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SOE-SICHE), and five selected Community High Schools (CHS) that are located on the Island of Guadalcanal. It was designed to obtain insight into and an understanding of the initial teacher education (ITE), induction, and professional learning experiences of beginning secondary teachers (BSTs) in the Solomon Islands context. The aim was not to compare the experiences of the BSTs, although some similarities and differences were noted in the research data.

Rather, the intention was to provide a descriptive account of the BSTs' experiences, and to theorise these experiences in order to provide readers with new information about what it was like to be a pre-service teacher at SOE-SICHE and a beginning secondary teacher in the five CHSs where the BSTs taught at the beginning of their teaching careers. Such information might not only confirm what was already known about beginning teachers' experiences as reported in the existing literature but also extend readers' knowledge about beginning teachers' experiences in different socio-cultural contexts. Hence, the experiences of the BSTs reported in this chapter can be seen as informing the collective case of BSTs' experiences in the Solomon Islands secondary school context. Although each school may have differed slightly in the number of teachers employed, the number of students enrolled, and beliefs and practices that characterised the culture that was inherent in each school, they were bounded by the fact that they were all guided by the same educational goals, accountability expectations, and school curriculum.

A description of SOE-SICHE and each of the five CHSs is provided in the following section to set the scene for this study. It highlights contextual factors that might have influenced the BSTs' perceptions of their ITE and induction experiences. SOE-SICHE is described as it was during the time when the BSTs who participated in this study undertook their initial teacher education. Details include its socio-economic situation, the availability of resources, condition of classroom facilities and equipment, staff establishment, student enrolment, and an outline of the Diploma in Secondary Teaching programme offered at that time. The description of the CHSs is organised according to their geographical location, size, number of teachers and students, classroom facilities and resources available, and induction practices. I have used pseudonyms to refer to the schools and BSTs throughout this chapter to ensure confidentiality and the protection of their identity. The five community high schools were given the names: Belana, Isuna, Natana, Tetena, and Vurana. The BSTs were referred to by the names Alex, Debbie, Doris, Eugenie, Henry, Jeremy, Josephine, Marcia, Paul, Sophia, and Zinnia.

4.2.1 Initial teacher education setting

The School of Education (SOE) involved in this study is one of seven schools administered under the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE). It is the main provider of teacher education in the Solomon Islands, and is located at the SICHE Panatina Campus, east of Honiara city, the capital of Solomon Islands. During the time when the beginning secondary teachers who participated in this study undertook their initial teacher education it had a staff establishment of 48. This included 37 academic staff and 11 administration and support staff. Student enrolment at SOE-SICHE ranges from 600 to 700 per year, depending on the number of scholarships made available by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, and the number of students who can afford private sponsorship. For instance, in 2004 the school enrolled a total of 632 students, in 2005 there were 721 students, and in 2006 the total enrolment was 613. Out of the above totals, 565 were boarding students in each year, and the remainder were day scholars (Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, 2004, 2005, 2006).

Panatina Campus is located in an urban setting, and has access to urban utilities such as water and electricity supply. The majority of staff and students reside on-campus. Students who pay full fees are provided with three meals a day, seven days a week during each semester. Boarders are also provided with basic toiletries such as soap and toilet paper. The majority of staff live in subsidised rented staff houses on-campus.

SICHE is a statutory organisation. It receives annual grants from the Solomon Island Government (SIG) for its operational and developmental expenses. Hence, SOE-SICHE depends on financial support made available to SICHE by the SIG, and fees paid by private sponsored students to fund its operations. However, financial support for SICHE from the SIG was erratic during, and after, the period of ethnic conflict in the Solomon Islands, from 2000 to 2004. This affected the level of resources made available to teacher education programmes at SOE-SICHE. It was during that time that the teacher education programmes at SOE-SICHE were temporarily suspended for three semesters, as classroom facilities were occupied by people who were displaced by the ethnic crisis. This resulted in

classrooms being damaged and classroom furniture being taken away unlawfully by some of the displaced people when they left for their home provinces. Since then, the classroom facilities at SOE have not been fully repaired, and furniture has not been recovered. It was not until July 2004 that the school was able to secure funds from NZAID, through the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, to repair and refurbish the school's administration building and classroom infrastructure and facilities. The school was also able to procure teaching resources needed to implement its teacher education programmes.

Eight of the 11 BSTs who participated in this study began their ITE in 2005, at a time when SOE-SICHE was just recovering from the effects of the ethnic crisis in the Solomon Islands. During that time there was a general lack of resources at the school; the SOE Library had very limited resources, there were no computers and no internet access for staff and students, and the printing machines at the school were not functional (to mention just some of the problems). This affected the morale of both staff and students at the school, and may have had a negative impact on the ITE experiences of the BSTs who began their ITE in 2005. Fortunately, the BSTs who participated in this study managed to complete their ITE programmes in 2007 and graduated with a Diploma in Teaching (secondary) award. This qualified them to teach in any secondary school throughout the Solomon Islands from 2008.

The Diploma in Secondary Teaching programme undertaken by the 11 BSTs who participated in this study was implemented by SOE-SICHE in 1988. It comprised two strands, a three-year strand and a one-year strand. The three-year programme was tailored to meet the teacher education needs of pre-service secondary teachers who had completed F5 or F6 and wished to pursue teaching as a career. The programme was designed to prepare teachers of Forms 1 to 3 at the junior secondary school level. Alternatively, the one-year programme was tailored to meet the teacher education needs of individuals who already possessed a qualification in their teaching subjects and had decided to pursue teaching as a career. The aim of both programmes was to develop pre-service secondary

teachers in four main areas: basic professional attitude; professional knowledge; professional skills; and personal development.

The one-year programme was known as the Diploma in Teaching (Secondary)—Advanced Standing programme. The teaching subjects offered under this programme were Science, Agriculture, Business Studies, Chaplaincy, Home Economics, and Industrial Arts. Those who graduated from the one-year programme could teach up to Form 5 because they were considered to have good content knowledge of their teaching subjects.

The three year programme comprised a total of 28 units (papers). It included: 12 units in the teaching subject/s, three units in one elective subject of their choice (Health Studies, Physical Education, Music, or Expressive Arts), six compulsory units in Education, five compulsory units in Communication Skills, and one compulsory unit in First Aid. The one-year programme comprised a total of 11 units (papers). This included: four units in the teaching subject, four units in education, two units in communication skills, and the compulsory unit on First Aid.

The Diploma in Secondary Teaching programme covered 24 weeks of lectures and six weeks of teaching practice per year. Hence, the pre-service secondary teachers who undertook the three-year programme would have done a total of 72 weeks of lectures and tutorials and three six-week blocks of teaching practice prior to their graduation. Similarly, those who undertook the one-year programme would have done 24 weeks of lectures and tutorials, and one six-week block of teaching practice. Pre-service teachers were usually placed in schools close to their home villages to do their teaching practicum. This meant that the majority of student teachers would be placed in rural secondary schools throughout the nine provinces of the Solomon Islands. The six-week teaching practice segments were done under the supervision of SOE-SICHE lecturers. Lecturers were required to do at least three observations per student teacher during each teaching practicum period. Moreover, associate teachers were required to do at least three observations and to complete three TE observation forms per student teacher

during each teaching practice period. School principals were also required to complete a report form for each student teacher placed at their schools at the end of each teaching practice period.

There were about 100 secondary teachers graduating per year from SOE-SICHE from 2004 onwards. In 2007, 121 pre-service secondary teachers graduated from the three-year Diploma in Teaching (Secondary) programme. Of that 121, eight participated in this study. Similarly, 46 graduated from the one-year Diploma in Teaching (Secondary)—Advanced Standing programme. Out of the 46, three participated in this study.

To date, the above programmes have been reviewed, restructured, and redeveloped between 2006 and 2008. This led to fundamental changes to both the structure and content of the teacher education programmes. The new programmes were implemented at the beginning of 2009. The Diploma in Teaching (Secondary)—Advanced Standing programme has been renamed the Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Secondary) programme with a total of 120 credit points. The three year Diploma in Teaching (Secondary) programme has been restructured into a two-year programme with a total of 240 credit points. The review and redevelopment of the ITE programmes at SOE-SICHE was done in partnership with the School of Education, University of Waikato, New Zealand, with funding support from NZAID.

4.2.2 The secondary school settings

Following are descriptions of the five Community High Schools (CHS) where the 11 BSTs were posted on their first teaching engagements. The five CHSs share a number of common features today, and did so at the time of this study. First, they are all financially supported by annual grants from the Solomon Islands Government; they also collect other fees from students, and raise funds through school bazaars to support their operational costs. Second, they were all initially established as primary schools but began offering secondary education in the mid to late 1990s, due to an increased need for student places in secondary schools. This has changed the schools' status from that of Primary School to Community High School. However, the schools continue to offer early childhood and primary

classes. Third, the CHSs are all day schools whose students live with parents or guardians, and travel to school by foot, private transport, or public transport. Fourth, the CHSs follow the same secondary school curriculum as Provincial and National Secondary Schools, from Forms 1 to 5.

Table 3 provides a summary of demographic information about the schools, including whether they provided formal induction for new teachers at the time of this study.

Table 3: Demographic information about the Community High Schools

School name (Pseudonym)	Type of School/Size	Location	Approx. No. of secondary teachers	Approx. No. of secondary students	Grade Levels	Formal Induction
Belana	CHS- medium	Urban	20	380	F1-F6	None
Isuna	CHS-small	Urban	12	243	F1-F5	None
Natana	CHS-small	Semi- urban	10	150	F1-F3	None
Tetena	CHS-large	Urban	25	735	F1-F7	None
Vurana	CHS-small	Urban	12	269	F1-F5	None

Belana Community High School enrolled students from various socio-economic backgrounds throughout the Solomon Islands. The school had well established rules and routines that the staff and students were expected to follow on a daily basis to ensure that students' physical, social, learning, and spiritual needs were met. The school principal had many years of experience in secondary school principalship. The school administration staff were very friendly and helpful to visitors. The school principal, deputy principal and teaching staff were also welcoming and approachable. The school was considered one of the few schools with very good classroom facilities, according to Solomon Islands standards. It had a classroom for each class level, and specialised classrooms for subjects like science, home economics, and industrial arts. It was one of the few schools in the Solomon Islands that has access to both telephone and internet. The school was in the process of establishing a computer suite for its students when this study was

conducted. However, teachers at this school expressed the need for bigger office and classroom space, more computer access for teachers, and more curriculum materials and other teaching resources for the various subjects.

Isuna Community High School enrolled students from various socio-economic backgrounds and who were mainly born and raised in Honiara. The school did not have any school receptionist or secretary, so appointments had to be made directly with the school principal, deputy principal, or individual staff. The school principal, deputy principal, and the staff were welcoming and approachable. The classrooms at this school were quite old and not spacious enough to cater for 50 students, which was the average class-size at the school. However, there were signs that classroom facilities were going to be improved. The school did not have a school library. The school staff had access to a telephone, but there was no internet access. The teachers at the school expressed the need for improved office facilities, internet access for staff and students, bigger classrooms, and more curriculum materials and teaching resources.

Natana Community High School enrolled students from various socio-economic backgrounds, including some from the nearby rural villages. The school principal was a very experienced teacher, with many years of experience as a principal. The school office administration staff were very friendly and helpful to visitors. The school principal, deputy principal, and staff were also very welcoming and approachable. The secondary classrooms at this school were new, but were few. The school was planning to build more classrooms to expand its secondary education strand. The school had specialised classrooms for subjects like science, home economics, and industrial arts, but they had very limited space, equipment, and resources. The school had a small room as a library, but it was not well resourced. The teachers at this school also expressed the need for internet access, a proper and well furnished staff room, more spacious classrooms, a well resourced library, and teaching resources for the various subjects, including adequate supply of curriculum materials.

Tetena was a large urban CHS in terms of its student enrolment. It enrolled students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, including from the upper middle-class families, and from families in rural areas without a regular income. Although it was a church-administered school, it also received annual grants from the Solomon Island Government to support its operational costs. The school principal had more than two decades of experience as a school principal. The administration staff seemed to be very formal in the way they approach visitors. However, the principal and staff were welcoming and approachable. The school was one of the very few secondary schools with very good classroom and office facilities for secondary education in the Solomon Islands. They had specialised classrooms for science, home economics and industrial arts and have separate classrooms for each grade level. The school had very good office facilities such as fax machine, a sophisticated photocopier, and telephone and internet access for staff. Although this school seemed advanced, in terms of school facilities, the teachers at this school also expressed the need for teaching resources, including adequate supply of curriculum materials for the various subjects.

Vurana was a small CHS which enrolled students from mainly low socio-economic backgrounds. Like Isuna, the school did not have a school secretary or receptionist and all appointments had to be made directly with the school principal, the deputy principal, or individual staff. The majority of students walked to school. Those that lived far from the school travelled to school by bus. The school infrastructure, including secondary classrooms, was of a reasonable standard. However, the school did not have specialised classrooms for subjects like science, home economics, and industrial arts. The school also did not have a school library. The school staff office had telephone access but no computers for staff and internet access. The teachers at this school also expressed the need for bigger office space, computers for staff, internet access, more classroom space, and adequate supply of curriculum materials and teaching resources.

4.2.3 The beginning secondary teachers

The 11 beginning secondary teachers who participated in this study were all Solomon Islanders. Four were male and seven female. They came from five of the nine provinces in the Solomon Islands: Malaita, Western, Choiseul, Central, and

Isabel Provinces. Six of the BSTs were in the age range of 31-40 years and five in the range 21-30. Only three of them were unmarried when this study began in November 2007. The 11 BSTs received certification to become secondary teachers of English, Social Studies, Mathematics, Business Studies, Science, Agriculture, Home Economics, Industrial Arts and New Testament Studies. The seven females were certified to teach English, Social Studies, Science, Home Economics, Agriculture, and New Testament Studies. The four males were certified to teach Maths, Science, Business Studies and Industrial Arts.

The following section reports findings on the BSTs' reasons for choosing teaching as a career.

4.3 Motivations for choosing teaching as a career

The 11 BSTs cited various motivations for their decisions to become a secondary teacher. It was evident from the BSTs' responses that they had more than one reason for choosing to become a teacher, as demonstrated in the following comments by Debbie and Marcia:

For family convenience, I want to be in the same job as my husband, and because I think teaching is a respectable profession. (Debbie)

I want to follow my father's footsteps, and to help young people learn too. (Marcia)

The reasons could be classified according to three categories: intrinsic (reasons that are connected to the job itself), extrinsic (reasons that are related to benefits and conditions linked to the job), and altruistic (reasons that are linked to altruism, or the concern for humanity). The majority cited mainly intrinsic and altruistic reasons for choosing teaching when they were first asked to state their reasons for choosing teaching in the questionnaire that was administered at the end of their ITE programmes. The main intrinsic reasons for pursuing teaching cited by seven of the 11 BSTs were the desire and interest to share their subject knowledge and expertise with young Solomon Islanders and to help them learn. This is illustrated in the following brief responses by Henry, Alex, and Josephine:

I chose teaching because I love to be with young people, and help them learn. (Henry)

I chose to become a teacher so that I can help students learn, and for me to learn new things to. (Alex)

I decided to become a secondary teacher because I am interested to help students learn about my subject. (Josephine)

The main altruistic reasons cited by four of the 11 BSTs include the desire to help address the need for teachers in the Solomon Islands and to help promote good citizenship in young Solomon Islanders, as illustrated in the following comments by Paul and Zinnia:

I chose to become a teacher because of the need for teachers in the Solomon Islands. (Paul)

I love teaching because I would like to help teach young people to become good citizens of the country. (Zinnia)

Only one of the BSTs cited extrinsic reasons for choosing teaching as a career at the end of their ITE programme, as illustrated in the following comment:

I chose teaching because I need a salary, and also because housing is provided by some schools. (Jeremy)

However, when asked the same question after they started teaching, the BSTs cited mainly extrinsic and altruistic reasons for choosing teaching as a career. They also indicated more than one reason for choosing teaching, as shown in the following statements:

I chose teaching as a career because since I was in High School I was really interested to help children and young people. My mum also influenced my decision to become a teacher because she wanted me to go back home and teach at our Community High School some day in the near future, so that I can be near my parents. (Henry)

I chose teaching as a career because I see the need for science teachers in the country. After completing my university studies, I took up teaching before I went on for further training at the College. The desire to pursue teaching as a career was driven by my desire to do something better to help the country. (Jeremy)

I chose to become a teacher because I wanted to help Solomon Islands children to learn the international language 'English' because it is the international language for communication. My parents also influenced me to be a teacher because they wanted me to go back and teach at our Community High School at home, because we do not have enough teachers to teach at that school. (Zinnia)

The main extrinsic motivation for choosing teaching was the influence of significant others who encouraged the BST to pursue teaching as a career. Of the six who cited influence of significant others, three cited parental influence, one cited the influence of former secondary teachers, one the influence of a spouse, and one that of older siblings. The main altruistic reasons cited by the 11 BSTs were: the desire to help young people learn and succeed; that they viewed teaching as a reputable profession; and that they would like to help address the need for teachers in Solomon Islands secondary schools, as illustrated in the above comments.

4.4 Initial teacher education experiences

The BSTs' perceptions about their initial teacher education (ITE) are reported in this section under three categories. The first section encompasses themes relating to the BSTs' perceptions about their ITE programme. The second section focuses

on themes that relate to their teaching practicum experiences. The third section reports on themes that relate to the BSTs' sense of preparedness at the end of their ITE.

4.4.1 Perceptions about initial teacher education programme

When asked to identify the strengths of their initial teacher education (ITE) courses, three recurring themes that emerged from the BSTs' responses were subject content, planning and preparation, and teaching methods and skills. For each of these strengths, the BSTs also expressed concerns.

The BSTs felt that the coverage of subject content in their initial teacher education courses was adequate, and provided them with a good basis for their subject content knowledge to begin teaching. However, they realised during their first year of teaching that they were not fully prepared to teach some topics in their subjects. Such feelings are illustrated in the responses made by Josephine and Henry below:

I think my teacher training programme prepared me well in my...subject content. But I still need to learn more about some of the topics in my subject. (Josephine)

I think the main strength of my teacher training course was that my lecturers covered the subject content well. But there are areas that I still need to learn more about in my subject. (Henry)

They suggested that this could be due to content being covered superficially during their initial teacher education, or not covered at all in some subject areas, as pointed out by Marcia:

I think the teacher training programme at SICHE has prepared us well for teaching in our subject content, except that in some of our courses our lecturers did not cover the content well. For example, in one of our units, our lecturer just rushed through the content, so we did not fully understand

what we needed to learn in order to be able to teach it confidently to our students. (Marcia)

What I find challenging is that I am not that confident in some content area in my subject. There are topics in my subject syllabus that were not covered during my teacher training. (Paul)

They also reported that in some subjects there was a mismatch between the subject content they learnt through their ITE and the subject content in the secondary school curriculum. They suggested there was a need to revise the content of some of their subjects so that it matched the content in the revised secondary school syllabus and provided up-to-date researched information, particularly in subjects like social studies, science and mathematics. Sophia said:

The content of some of the courses at the SOE-SICHE should be updated to match current standards. Some of the content was out of date because new information has been discovered about certain topics, for example in Social Studies. I spent some time in search of information on the internet about some of the topics I teach in Social Studies. I know that some of my students go to the internet café and download information about some of the topics we covered in class. (Sophia)

Four of the 11 BSTs, who were teaching science, social studies, and agriculture, suggested that they needed to learn more about the aims and content of their subjects' secondary curricula during their ITE. They believed this would have enabled them to raise some of the concerns they met during their first year of teaching, such as outdated content.

The participants believed that their ITE programme had prepared them well in terms of instructional planning and lesson preparations skills. However, the main issues they faced in relation to planning and preparation for their lessons were time constraints and lack of teaching resources. Four of the 11 BSTs also found

themselves teaching subjects they were not prepared to teach. This is illustrated in the comments made by Henry:

I think one of the main challenges for me is the lack of teaching resources and textbooks. I do not know where to get them, or how to get them. For me as a beginning teacher and a probationer, I need the relevant teaching resources for my subjects and support from those responsible, so that I can perform well in my teaching, and pass my probation at the end of this year. I also find it difficult to prepare well for my lessons sometimes because of my heavy teaching load. I am only trained to teach Maths and Business Studies, but now I am also teaching Science. (Henry)

The BSTs also felt that their ITE programme prepared them well in terms of teaching strategies. They did lesson presentations through peer presentations and during their teaching practicum that helped them develop confidence in relevant teaching skills. However, four of them indicated that they were not able to apply in practice some of the teaching strategies they learnt at SOE-SICHE because they learnt about them in theory only. This was illustrated by Debbie when she said:

Our lecturers did not demonstrate to us how to teach certain aspects of our subjects. I think the lecturers should demonstrate each teaching strategy first. They should also allow us time to practice, and give us enough feedback to help us improve before they ask us to do presentations during our peer teaching sessions. In Education courses, although they covered the different methods of teaching well, they did not show us how to apply those teaching strategies in our specific subject areas. So, when I began my teaching now, I find it difficult to make the connection between the teaching strategies I learnt at the College, and how I should apply it in teaching my subject area. (Debbie)

Those who undertook the Science and Agriculture courses expressed the need for their lecturers to demonstrate more practical skills in their courses. They reported that they were not able to conduct some experiments and demonstrate certain

practical skills confidently in their teaching because they were not given adequate opportunity to learn and practise those skills during their ITE. Doris and Josephine were two BSTs who felt less prepared in teaching practical lessons at the beginning of their teaching careers, as illustrated in the following comments:

One of the things that is lacking in my teacher training is the demonstration and application of practical skills in my subject. For example, in grafting, we only learn about it in theory. I think the Agriculture course at the College must try and do more practical than theory work because it is a practical subject. (Doris)

I think conducting experiments in my science lessons is an area of need for me. Our group did not do most of the lab work that we needed to do during our training. So, now I am not confident to conduct experiments in my lessons. (Josephine)

In essence, the BSTs wanted to see more exemplary teaching and demonstration of relevant teaching strategies and skills for their specific subjects by their lecturers. They also wished they were given adequate opportunities to practice what they learnt in theory.

4.4.2 Perceptions about their teaching practicum

The BSTs viewed the teaching practice (TP) component of their ITE programme as a very important part of their pre-service programme which gave them the opportunity to observe experienced secondary teachers in action. They also said that their TP programme was very useful, as it helped them to experience what teaching was like in real-life classrooms, and to gain more confidence in their teaching roles:

I think teaching practice was a very important part of our teacher training. My teaching practice experience is really helpful in my teaching because it builds my confidence in teaching and also it allows me to experience what it is like to be a teacher in a real-life classroom before I actually start to teach, like I do now. (Josephine)

However, some of the BSTs felt that the duration of their teaching practice programme should be extended to a full school term in the final year. They believed that the more time they spent in the field during their teaching practicum the more confident they would become in their teaching. Furthermore, they would like associate teachers in schools to demonstrate exemplary teaching during their teaching practicum so that they could also learn from them. Such sentiments are illustrated in comments made by Sophia:

I would like to observe some of the classes taught by my associate teacher during my TE, before I begin teaching the classes assigned to me. But, I did not observe my associate teacher's classes during my last TE because she left me to take full responsibility of her class for the six weeks I was there, and only came to observe me three times and filled in the College TE Form. (Sophia)

They were also concerned about the quality of feedback received from some associate teachers and lecturers. They reported that their associate teachers often just ticked the boxes in the SOE-SICHE Teaching Practice Observation Form without writing any comments. They also indicated that some of their supervisors from SOE-SICHE did the same. Zinnia said:

The feedback I received during my TE did not help me much. It was very brief. My associate teacher just ticked all the boxes in the College TE observation form, but did not write any comments. This does not tell me anything about my strengths and weaknesses and how I should improve. Even some lecturers do the same. (Zinnia)

They reiterated that such feedback was inadequate. They would prefer more detailed feedback that clearly points out strengths and weaknesses and provides practical suggestions for improvement.

4.4.3 Sense of preparedness

It was evident from the BSTs' responses to the questionnaire (Appendix H), Likert scale (Appendix, I), and interviews that they felt prepared to take on their

teaching roles at the end of their initial teacher education. Their responses to statements provided in the Likert scale in the questionnaire indicated that they felt well prepared in various aspects of teaching, including planning and preparation of lessons; curriculum; teaching strategies; classroom management; lesson presentation; assessment; time management; and behaviour management. They gave a high rating to the 20 items provided in the Likert scale. This indicated that they were generally confident and believed that their initial teacher education programme had prepared them well to become secondary teachers. The only aspect of teaching that showed an average score of 3 on the Likert scale was assessment. However, a score of three meant that they agreed more than disagreed with that statement.

Although the BSTs' responses to the Likert scale showed that they were confident in various aspects of their teaching roles, it was evident in their responses to other questions in the questionnaire and interviews that they were less confident about and less prepared in planning and preparation of assessment tasks, preparing students' reports, keeping up with a teaching plan, time management, meeting students' various learning needs, communicating with students and teachers, preparing teaching resources, standing confidently in front of a class, classroom management, and dealing with students' behaviour problems. Comments made by Zinnia typified how the majority of the BSTs felt during their first month of teaching:

I am not really confident yet as a beginning teacher. I felt confident a bit, but I still feel nervous at times in my class. There are topics that I am not very confident to teach, and I am not yet really sure about how to go about assessing my students. I need the help and advice from my HOD. I sometimes approach my Principal to help me overcome some of these challenges, when my colleagues could not help me. (Zinnia)

The type of school and class level the BSTs indicated they would like to teach in at the beginning of their career might also indicate their lack of preparedness at the end of their initial teacher education. Nine out of the 11 BSTs indicated that

they would like to be placed at a Community High School (CHS) or Provincial Secondary School (PSS) during their first year of teaching. Only two indicated that they would like to be placed at a National Secondary School (NSS). The main reason why the majority preferred CHS or PSS to NSS was because they thought these types of schools enrol students with varying abilities, compared to a NSS, which enrolls the most academically able students. This is illustrated in the comments made by Henry:

I prefer to teach at a CHS because they have students with different abilities, unlike NSS where you get mostly bright students. (Henry)

Furthermore, they stated that they would like to teach classes from Forms 1 to 3 level because they would like to gain more experience and confidence before moving on to higher forms. This is illustrated in the comments made by Marcia:

I prefer CHS and Forms 1 to 3 because I would like to gain more confidence and experience before moving on to senior classes. (Marcia)

On the other hand, the two BSTs who indicated that they would prefer to teach at a NSS felt that NSSs are better resourced than CHSs and PSSs. For instance, Jeremy stated that he preferred to teach in a NSS because “NSS have more teaching resources and easier to teach students.” Similarly, Sophia stated that she preferred NSS because “NSS have more experienced teachers and resources.

The above examples indicated that the BSTs felt adequately prepared to teach and manage junior secondary classes in schools that enrol students who are purported to be below average, as defined by their secondary entrance exam results. However, the BSTs believed that if they were provided with the professional support they needed as soon as they began their teaching careers they would gain confidence and would be able to deliver quality instruction from the first year of their teaching careers.

4.5 Initial teaching and induction experiences

This section focuses on the BSTs' induction experiences during the first two years of their teaching careers. The findings are reported under three broad sections. The first section focuses on the BSTs' feelings about their induction experiences during the first two years of their teaching careers. The second section focuses on their perceptions of their teaching experiences over the two years, and the third section focuses on their perceptions of the challenges they had encountered during their first years of teaching.

4.5.1 Feelings and perceptions about teaching

For the 11 BSTs who participated in this study the transition from a pre-service teacher to a full-time qualified teacher was marked with a myriad of feelings and expectations about what teaching would be like. This situation persisted as they struggled to settle into their new careers, and positioned themselves in the teaching community of practice.

The first month of teaching

The BSTs reported mixed feelings of anxiety and excitement during their first month of teaching. Anxiety was the predominant feeling reported by nine of the 11 BSTs who had not had any previous experience as full-time teachers. However, all of them also reported feelings of excitement. Those that reported feelings of anxiety thought that this was mainly due to their unfamiliarity with the school environment, students and staff, school processes and procedures, curriculum goals and expectations, and not being confident in certain aspects of their teaching roles. For example, a number of them were anxious about school expectations and procedures. They were especially concerned because they had not yet been informed about processes and procedures at their schools. Alex said:

I am worried about the school processes and procedures, expectation of the school, and so on, because I have no idea what they are at the moment. I need to know what these processes and procedures are before beginning my teaching career, so that I know what I need to do. (Alex)

Participants reported that they felt reluctant to approach those in authority for such information during their first month of teaching because they felt they were still new to the school. Such notions could be associated with Solomon Islands cultural practices, in that those who are new to a place should keep a low profile, and should not question things that they see around them. However, this could be a hindrance to a new teacher's confidence and efficiency at the beginning of their teaching careers.

Other aspects of teaching that some of the BSTs were anxious about include students' background and previous knowledge about their subjects. They were not really sure about the level at which they should pitch their teaching, so that it would match their students' ability level. This was pointed out by Alex:

When I first started teaching I was worried because I did not know my students well, as well as the other staff. So, I feel it was important for me to get to know my students well before I teach them so that I could plan my teaching to match my students' learning abilities. (Alex)

Some of them were also anxious about how to manage their classes and time well, so that they could cover all the topics they needed within a week or term. They were particularly concerned that their class time might be taken up by other activities or teachers and that they might not be able to complete their teaching plans in time:

I am worried other teachers might take up some minutes of my class time, and that I might not be able to cover what I planned to teach in my lessons. (Marcia)

Others were concerned about the expectations of the teaching service office and education authorities. They were particularly anxious about the requirements for becoming a fully-registered teacher at the end of their one-year probation, as expressed in comments made by Henry:

I think for me as a beginning teacher and a probationer, I am concerned about what I need to know, I mean what the expectations of the teaching service office and education authorities are, in regards to teacher registration. I think I need the support of the school so that I can perform to my best and pass my probation at the end of this year. (Henry)

In general, the BSTs were anxious about those aspects of teaching that they were not really confident in at the beginning of their teaching careers. These included: planning and preparing assessment tasks, preparing student reports at the end of each term and school year, time management, meeting students' expectations and learning needs, being confident to stand in front of the class and teach, and dealing with students' behaviour problems. They were also concerned about the limited availability of teaching resources, a heavy teaching load, and the lack of specialised classrooms and teaching resources for subjects such as Science, Home Economics, Industrial Arts and Agriculture.

The BSTs also reported feelings of excitement at the beginning of their teaching careers. Their feeling of excitement came with their sense of accomplishment that they had acquired a teaching qualification and would now be regarded as qualified teachers. Furthermore, they were excited about commencing a new career, and a full-time paid job, which meant that they could now receive a regular salary and could financially sustain their livelihoods. Such perceptions are summarised in comments made by Doris:

When I graduated last year I looked forward to becoming a teacher. I said to myself, now I am a qualified teacher, and will get a job and receive a regular salary. I looked forward to teaching and was enthusiastic about being a teacher because I would like to help young people learn skills in my subjects, and also because I will have a regular source of income. Now, I make sure I prepare my lessons before time for my lessons. I am motivated to prepare my lessons and look forward to my classes each day. But I do not know what will happen in the future, whether I will continue to have this kind of feeling, or not. (Doris)

There was evidence from the BSTs' responses to suggest that their perceptions of teaching were based on their teaching practicum experiences, secondary school experiences, and previous teaching experiences. For some of the BSTs, their previous thoughts and views about secondary teaching matched their initial teaching experiences. However, for some their expectations about secondary teaching changed when they began their teaching careers. For instance, some of them thought that secondary teaching would be like what they had observed and experienced during their secondary school days. That is, secondary teaching requires commitment on the part of a teacher, and it involves teachers in planning, preparing, and presenting lessons, and marking students' assignments during and after school hours. These participants reported that what they observed at their current schools did not match their initial perceptions of what secondary teaching would be like. The example given below illustrates such an experience:

I thought teaching would be like what I observed during my secondary school days as a student. What I observed from my teachers was that they showed a lot of commitment to their role as a teacher. Some of them worked after hours to prepare for their lessons and mark students work, and so on. However, my observation of teachers' commitment to their teaching role at this school, so far, is quite the opposite. (Henry)

Some of them thought that secondary teaching would be like what they had seen when they undertook their teaching practicum while at SOE-SICHE. Some schools were well organised and had adequate resources, while others were not so organised with very limited resources. Moreover, some schools required teachers and students to observe strict rules, while others were a bit more lenient. Paul was one of the BSTs who held such perceptions, and who thought that church schools were stricter than government schools. The example below shows how Paul viewed such schools:

When I graduated last year I thought teaching would be the same like when I did my teaching practicum. There were schools that were very strict with time and teachers' attendance to work, and there were others

that were a bit slack. For example, I found that church schools were very strict and government schools were a bit slack in enforcing rules. Being a new teacher in a church school, like this school, I find that the environment, especially the school rules, a bit challenging. Although I think some of the rules are not necessary, I have to follow them, so that I could pass my probationary period. I generally enjoyed teaching in schools that have good classrooms and teaching resources because it makes my teaching easier. (Paul)

Some participants thought secondary teaching was not particularly challenging because they felt that they had learnt enough during their ITE, and they had had previous teaching experience. They felt that having had some teaching experience in the past meant that they could easily handle their teaching roles. Jeremy was one of the BSTs who felt that way, as illustrated in the following comments:

I don't think secondary teaching is that challenging because the teaching skills I learnt during my training helped me to be more effective in my teaching, and I have already experienced what it's like to be a teacher in the classroom during my previous teaching experiences. My only problem now is that I do not have the time to prepare well for my lessons. (Jeremy)

It was evident from the 11 BSTs' responses that they began their teaching careers with a variety of perceptions about what secondary teaching would be like in the schools where they were posted. Additionally, their perceptions of what teaching was like were linked to their previous experiences, beliefs and expectations about teaching, as is shown in a comment made by Josephine:

I thought teaching would be the same as when I taught those children in my church, but I realised that secondary teaching requires more experience in planning and presenting lessons and I hope with time I will gain more experience. (Josephine)

It was evident from the BSTs' responses that their existing beliefs and values about teaching were challenged by certain practices at their schools. However, they felt obliged to abide by the rules and live up to their school's expectation, in order to meet the requirements for their full registration.

After nine months of teaching

Eight of the BSTs found secondary teaching during the first year more challenging than they had expected. When asked to describe what teaching was like after nine months of teaching during the first year, they reported that teaching was interesting and enjoyable but also challenging. They said that they found teaching enjoyable because they had come to understand their students and other teachers better and interacted more with them. They also stated that they had learnt more about their subjects as they taught each topic. This is illustrated in comments made by Marcia and Eugenie:

I enjoy teaching, because I have come to understand my students better and they have come to see me more as a teacher, unlike at the beginning of this year when I did not really know them, and so some of them were a bit naughty at times. (Marcia)

I found teaching enjoyable. I think it is a nice job. It helped my learning as a teacher; I learn more about my students, and other staff, and, and it broadens my knowledge in my subject. (Eugenie)

However, they also found teaching challenging because they came to realise that teaching requires proper planning and preparation in advance, and that a teacher needs to have the necessary teaching resources available before they can plan and prepare properly for their lessons. They reported that time constraints and the lack of basic teaching resources at their schools made planning and preparing for their lessons a challenge. Such sentiments are summarised in the following comment by Paul:

Since the beginning of this year until now, I find teaching interesting, but I must say challenging too, because teaching needs advance planning and preparation. But because I don't have most of the teaching resources that I need, it is difficult for me to plan and prepare well for my lessons. Sometimes I find that I don't have the time. (Paul)

They also came to realise that teaching is not only about helping students to develop their intellectual ability in the subjects they teach but also involves taking care of the students' social and physical development. This is summarised in comments made by Zinnia:

Since we last talked, I find teaching enjoyable. I thought that teaching was just about going into the classroom and teaching students about my subjects. But as time goes on, I realised that teaching also involved taking care of students' behaviour, and in involving them in sports, and keeping the school environment clean. So, I think teaching involves both outside learning as well as inside the classroom. I find this challenging. (Zinnia)

As they progressed through their first year of teaching they reported that they felt more confident in their teaching roles and enjoyed teaching more. They thought they felt this way because they became more familiar with their school's processes and procedures. They also became more aware of what constitutes a bad and good day as they progressed through their first year of teaching. They experienced a 'good day' when they knew their subject content well, prepared their lessons in advance, had the resources they needed to teach their lessons, and involved their students in a variety of activities in their lessons. They reported that they enjoyed their teaching more when their students were more motivated to learn—were attentive, participated actively in class activities, and responded well to questions. This is summarised in the comments made by Jeremy:

A good day for me was a day when I prepared well for my lesson. I used a variety of teaching aids and did a demonstration for the students that caught their attention. I could tell that my students were motivated to learn

in my lesson that day, because they were all attentive, participated well in the activities I prepared for them, and responded well to my questions. I learnt that I needed to prepare well in advance for my lessons, and that I needed to prepare teaching resources, and involve students more in my lessons to keep them motivated. (Jeremy)

Similarly, Josephine reported that her best day of teaching was when she used real examples that the students were familiar with:

I could recall this particular day when my students seemed very motivated in my lesson and responded well to the activities we did. That lesson was about living systems. We went outside and looked at real examples of living systems that the students were familiar with. In that lesson the students learnt new terms and new things about living systems that exist in the school environment. This taught me a lesson that I needed to use familiar examples in my teaching. (Josephine)

The BSTs also came to learn what a ‘bad day’ in a teacher’s working life was like. They learnt that a ‘bad day’ was when they were not well prepared and students did not participate well in their lessons. This is illustrated in the examples below:

My worst day was when I was teaching a lesson and some of my students were just yawning right throughout the lesson, especially the girls. I thought this would be due to time of the day, which was an afternoon class, and maybe the topic was difficult for them. I could have improved that lesson by applying a variety of teaching approaches, and involving the students more in my lesson, using a variety of teaching resources. In fact, I did not enjoy teaching that lesson myself. (Jeremy)

A similar experience was shared by Eugenie when asked to describe her worst day as a teacher:

I could recall a day this year when I was busy and did not prepare well for my lesson. I just went into my class and wrote up some notes on the blackboard for the students to copy. I was not satisfied with my lesson on that day. I realised that I had to plan and prepare for my lessons in advance, in order to apply more variety in my teaching. I must make sure I give myself enough time to plan and prepare for my lessons, if I want to teach a good lesson. (Eugenie)

They discovered that the time of the day may also affect students' motivation to learn. For instance, in the above example Jeremy thought that the time of the day would be a reason why the girls in his class were not that motivated in the lesson. Similarly, Sophia observed of her worst teaching day:

My worst day as a teacher, so far, was teaching afternoon classes. I found that students do not seem to concentrate, and feel bored during afternoon classes. How I dealt with this situation was to involve students more in practical activities during my afternoon lessons. I learnt that I needed to prepare my lessons well in advance so that I could apply more variety of activities and involve students more in my lessons in the afternoons. (Sophia)

The above examples showed that the BSTs learned from their own experiences as they progressed in their teaching careers. However, whether they had perceived this as a learning opportunity which could inform their future teaching practices needs to be confirmed.

After 18 months of teaching

When interviewed after 18 months of teaching, the BSTs noted that there was a marked difference between being a first year and a second year teacher. A recurring theme that emerged from their responses when asked to describe what it was like being a second year teacher was that they felt "different" from the first year. First, they stated that they felt more confident and in control of their teaching roles. Second, they felt that teaching in the second year was easier and

better. Third, they were more satisfied with their teaching roles in the second year and felt that they did not need as much support and guidance as they did in the first year. According to Sophia, in the second year they just “flow with the system”. To illustrate what I understood them to mean by those different themes I provide an interpretation and examples of each theme in the following sections.

First, the BSTs reported that they were more confident and in control of their teaching roles than when they were in the first year. They attributed their increased level of confidence to their familiarity with the school processes, procedures and expectations. Moreover, they felt more confident in their teaching roles because they had already taught most of the topics in their subjects during the first year. Such experiences are summarised in the following statements:

I think there is a difference between being a first year and second year teacher. This time I feel more confident in planning, preparing and presenting my lessons compared to last year, and in other areas in teaching. For example, last year I felt nervous standing in front of the class, but now I felt more confident. Looking back on the topics I taught last year, I felt much more comfortable teaching them this year. I think I am happy and more satisfied with my teaching role this year compared to last year because I felt more confident and feel that I am in control of my teaching than last year. I also feel that students see me more as a teacher now. (Paul)

I think I have improved a lot in my teaching compared to last year. This time I felt more confident and I think I improved a lot in my lesson presentation, interaction with students, and I felt more in control in my teaching role. (Josephine)

Second, they said that they found their teaching roles easier and better in the second year. They thought that this was because they had lesson plans and resources available for some of the topics they had taught in the previous year, which they could use in their lessons. Furthermore, they felt that they performed

better in their teaching roles in the second year because they were more aware of their students' learning needs. Hence, they tried to prepare their lessons in a way that would help address the learning needs of their students. This is illustrated in comments made by Henry:

In my second year of teaching I find that teaching is a bit easier, because I have already done some lesson planning and preparation of resources during my first year of teaching, for most of the topics I teach this year. In my first year of teaching I tend to ignore my students' learning abilities, but this year I am more aware of how they learn, and I do all I can to help them learn better. (Henry)

Third, they reported that they felt more satisfied with their teaching roles in the second year. All participants reported that they felt more confident in their teaching roles during the second year, especially in the way they presented their lessons and interacted with their students and colleagues. Table 4, in the next page, shows this improved level of satisfaction. However, four of the 11 BSTs seemed to be satisfied with their teaching roles right throughout the two years.

Despite challenges the BSTs faced during the first two years of their teaching, it was evident from their responses that there was a slight increase in their level of satisfaction as they progressed from the first year to the second year. For instance, Sophia rated her level of satisfaction at 2 during the first month of her teaching, which means that initially she was dissatisfied with her teaching role, as shown by this comment:

I would rate it at 2, because I feel that I still need to improve in a lot of areas in my teaching. With more experience I hope to improve in my teaching. (Sophia)

Table 4: Level of satisfaction in their teaching roles

Names	First month	After nine months	After 18 months
Alex	3	3	3
Debbie	3	4	4
Doris	3	4	3
Eugenie	3	3	3
Marcia	3	4	4
Henry	3	3	3
Jeremy	2	3	3
Josephine	2	3	3
Paul	3	3	4
Sophia	2	3	4
Zinnia	3	3	3

Scale: 1=*very dissatisfied* 3=*satisfied*
2=*dissatisfied* 4=*very satisfied*

However, Sophia rated her level of satisfaction at 3 after nine months of teaching, which means that she had become happier with her teaching role. This was illustrated when she said:

I think I am more satisfied with my teaching role now. So, I will rate it at 3. I think I gained more confidence in my teaching role now. (Sophia)

When asked about her level of satisfaction after nine months of teaching in the second year, she used the term “flow” to express how she felt as a second year teacher:

Being a second year teacher makes me feel that I just ‘flow’ with the system. I feel that I do a better job this year than last year. Some ways that I developed and noticed a difference in my teaching was on how I presented my lessons. I applied more variety of teaching activities in my lessons this year, and I interact more with students and staff, than I did last year. This year I am closer to my students and other colleagues because I tend to know them better. I am more satisfied with my teaching role now and would rate it at 4. (Sophia)

‘Flow’ is an expression used in Solomon Islands Pidgin to mean that someone is satisfied with what they do in particular situations, and when they feel that they are part of “the system”, that is, the prevailing social environment. The BSTs generally felt that way about their teaching roles towards the end of their second year of teaching. This is evident in their ratings of their levels of satisfaction after 18 months of teaching, shown in Table 4 above.

The challenges faced by the BSTs during their first two years of teaching are now discussed.

4.5.2 Challenges

This section focuses on the challenges participants said they had experienced during their first two years of teaching. These challenges had been personal as well as contextual.

First month of teaching

The main personal challenges faced by the BSTs in their first month of teaching were lack of confidence, nervousness and being shy. Challenges they faced due to contextual factors included lack of guidance and support, lack of teaching resources, and heavy teaching loads and extra responsibilities.

Lack of confidence

Almost all the BSTs expressed that they lacked confidence in various aspects of teaching when they began their teaching careers. This was despite the strong sense of preparedness and confidence shown in their responses to the Likert scale in the questionnaire.

Some of them said that they lacked confidence in teaching specific content areas in their subject because there were topics in the syllabus that were not covered thoroughly during their pre-service teacher education programme. This is illustrated in the comments by Paul:

What I find challenging is that I am not that confident in some content area in my subject. There are topics in my subject syllabus that were not

covered thoroughly during my training. I think one important area for me is to be more confident in my subject content. (Paul)

Some reported that they lacked confidence in classroom management skills and how to deal with student discipline. Zinnia and Eugenie said:

My main challenge now is how to manage my Form 3 class, when students don't listen to what I ask them to do. Not like in the Form 1 class where the students listen to me more. The most important thing for me, as I see it, is for me to gain more knowledge, confidence and experience in my teaching so that I can teach all classes up to Form 3 level. (Zinnia)

I enjoyed my teaching career, so far. But, I find it difficult to discipline or control students who misbehave in class. I need to be more confident in how I deal with students' behaviour problems. (Eugenie)

Nervousness and shyness

Some BSTs reported that they tended to be shy and nervous when they are in front of unfamiliar faces and a big class of students. Such experiences are summarised in the following comments:

During my first week of teaching I was a bit nervous, as I was not used to standing in front of the class with more than 50 students, especially the Form 3 class, because there are big students in that class. I feel more comfortable with the Form 1 class and found it easier to manage the students because they are smaller in size. (Zinnia)

I find being a new teacher tough because I am a shy person. So far, I find teaching a bit challenging especially because I have to teach big classes of students. During my teaching practice, I was placed to teach at a Mission School with a small number of students in the class and that helps me to build my confidence in standing in front of the class. But now I have a class of 50 plus students and that is difficult for me. (Marcia)

However, they all believed that with more experience and time they would gain more confidence and be able to deal with the above challenges.

Lack of guidance and support

The majority of BSTs reported that they found their first month of teaching challenging because they were not given the kind of guidance and support they expected. They said that they were left alone to seek help and advice as they chose. They reported that as new teachers they did not know whom to approach, from whom they should seek assistance, and where to get the assistance they needed. This was illustrated in comments made by Paul and Henry:

I felt lost when I arrived at this school because there was no one there to meet me and tell where to go, or who to see. I was just directed to the room where my other colleague works, which happens to be our subject office. Since then, I just worked with him and asked him for help whenever I needed it. (Paul)

I find teaching a bit difficult at this school compared to other schools where I did my teaching practice in because I did not receive the kind of support I expected, in order to settle down in my job as a new teacher. There was no orientation for new teachers at this school since I arrived here. The school admin did not do anything to advise new teachers on what to do and where to go. I had to seek the help I needed from my colleagues, and just worked closely with teachers in my department. I observed that the teachers here are a bit slack in their teaching roles. Teacher absenteeism is a big problem here; there seemed to be some weakness at the admin level. (Henry)

They suggested that new teachers should receive as much guidance and support as possible during their first month of teaching so that they could settle into their teaching roles quickly, and deliver quality teaching to their students.

Lack of teaching resources

One of the main challenges faced by all the beginning teachers who participated in this study was the general lack of teaching resources at the schools where they were posted. All participants cited lack of resources as one of the major challenges in their new teaching roles. The type of resources the BSTs thought they needed to help them apply more effectively the knowledge and skills they had learnt from their initial teacher education included curriculum materials for their specific subjects —teachers’ guides, students’ work books, textbooks, notes, and subject syllabuses. This is illustrated in comments made by Zinnia and Marcia:

I was also assigned to teach a Form 3 class. But I insisted that they must provide me with the necessary resources to teach Form 3, particularly the notes for some Form 3 topics. One key area I think is to ensure that beginning teachers are provided with the kind of teaching resources they need to teach their subjects. For instance, notes, textbooks, students’ and teachers’ books, etc. Next, they should make sure that the school library is well resourced. (Zinnia)

I do not have the resources I needed to help me apply what I learnt during my teacher training here at this school. I do not even have a subject syllabus to use. This has affected my teaching. (Marcia)

Those teaching practical subjects such as Industrial Arts, Home Economics, Science, and Agriculture reported that there was a general lack of specialised classrooms for their subjects, and of tools and equipment that would enable them to apply the knowledge and skills they had learnt during their initial teacher education. Paul and Doris reported:

Some areas that need to be developed in my department in order to help me in my teaching includes; specialised classrooms and tools for the different areas in Industrial Arts, for example, carpentry, mechanics, etc. (Paul)

We need proper classroom facilities and resources for specialised subjects like Agriculture. (Doris)

They also expressed the need for schools to provide support facilities such as computers, internet access, PowerPoint projectors, and photocopiers in schools to help teachers in their lesson planning and preparation. Jeremy and Zinnia said:

I don't have the necessary resources and facilities to help me perform to my best. For instance, no facilities such as computers, PowerPoint projectors, to help teachers prepare and present their lessons better. (Jeremy)

We need resources such as computers and internet access. They should provide photocopiers and computers for teachers to use, and also provide internet access for teachers in our school. I think the school management is responsible for the induction of teachers and school resources. (Zinnia)

The BSTs believed that they could not effectively apply the teaching strategies they learnt through their initial teacher education due to lack of teaching resources in their schools. They were also concerned that the lack of teaching resources might affect their chances of becoming a registered teacher at the end of their probationary year. Henry said.

One of the main challenges for me is the lack of resources, and textbooks. I do not know where to get them, or how to get them. I think for me as a beginning teacher and a probationer, I need the support from those responsible, so that I can perform my best and pass my probation at the end of this year. (Henry)

The BSTs stated that the general lack of teaching resources at their schools made them feel less prepared for their lessons, and this consequently affected their confidence in their teaching roles. Some of them reported that they coped with this issue by providing their own teaching resources. Debbie said:

One of the main challenges I faced so far is the lack of text books and resources. I had to provide my own resources for most of the lessons I teach, so far. As a beginning teacher, I think if I have everything like resources and support available, I should be able to do my job well. Schools should have teaching resources available for us teachers to use. (Debbie)

Some of them took the initiative to make copies of curriculum materials they needed for their classes at their own expense. Zinnia reported that she did so on the advice of her HOD:

I struggled by myself to get the resources I needed for my Form 3 class. I photocopied one text book from one of my students to make a class set for my class. I was advised by my HOD to photocopy the text books I needed for my subjects because we don't have any in our department. And I did just that and found that it helped me a lot in terms of the teaching resources I needed for my subjects. I think if the admin staff at this school can respond to the request and concerns of teachers and purchase the resources we needed, then I think things should have worked out better for me. I think the school management is responsible for providing resources for teachers. (Zinnia)

While they acknowledged that it is part of their responsibility to provide the best possible learning opportunities for their students, they believed that schools should ensure that teachers have the necessary resources and support to enable them to do their job more effectively. The BSTs also suggested that their pre-service teacher education course should be designed in a way which would enable pre-service teachers to accumulate the basic teaching resources they need to begin their teaching careers. They said that they needed guidance and support to show them how to get the resources they needed to help them in their teaching.

Workload

The BSTs reported that they were assigned at least two classes to teach during the first six months of their teaching careers—one was allocated four classes to teach, seven of them three classes, and three of them two classes per week. For the BSTs teaching core subjects such as English, Maths, Social Studies and Science this would mean six hours per class per week, and for those teaching elective subjects such as Home Economics, Industrial Arts, New Testament Studies and Agriculture, it would mean four hours per class per week. In essence, a BST who was allocated Forms 1 to 3 Science, and a Form 2 Maths class to teach each week, would have a total teaching load of 24 hours per week, which is approximately four to five hours of teaching per day.

In addition to their teaching loads, the BSTs were assigned at least two extra responsibilities each during their first month of teaching. This added another two to four hours per week to their teaching loads. These extra responsibilities were an expectation from the school, and BSTs had no choice but to accept the responsibilities assigned to them.

The BSTs generally reported that they found their teaching load and extra responsibilities challenging because they were new to their teaching roles and needed guidance and support from experienced teachers. They believed that they would have appreciated being able to work alongside experienced and senior teachers before they were asked to take up such responsibilities on their own. Alex said:

During this year, my first year of teaching, I faced a lot of challenges. I find school as a new environment that I need help and advice from my senior colleagues in order to settle down with my work. As a beginning teacher I need to know how to handle students. Especially as a new teacher responsible for a class and sports, I sometimes find it difficult to carry out these extra duties. For example, I find it difficult to deal with senior students in Form 4 or Form 5 during sports. The school administrators might think that this is an easy task, but for a beginner it is a huge

challenge, especially when the duty teachers are not around to help and I am expected to do everything to organise students myself. I enjoy my teaching and begin to gain confidence and know what to do, but I still need support, advice and resources to help me continue to improve. I am a person who wants to learn from my mistakes, so if senior teachers can help me to identify my problems and weaknesses in teaching then I will know what I need to improve on, and will work on my weak areas. So, I enjoy my teaching so far, despite the challenges, but I need to know what my weaknesses are, and I need support and guidance in order to improve in the future. (Alex)

The BSTs reported that they were assigned the same workload as their experienced colleagues right from the beginning of their teaching careers, with little support and advice on how they should carry out their extra responsibilities.

After nine months of teaching

Participants reported that they continued to encounter a number of challenges throughout their first year of teaching. It was evident from their responses that they still faced some of the same personal and contextual challenges they had encountered at the beginning of the first year. The workplace challenges they faced were related to availability of teaching resources; time management; planning and preparation of lessons; student discipline; and the lack of professional guidance and support in schools. They also faced some personal challenges that affected their motivation to teach. These challenges are illustrated in the following examples.

Continuing lack of confidence

Although the BSTs said that they felt more confident in their teaching after nine months of teaching experience, a significant number of them reported that they still lacked the confidence to effectively implement their teaching roles. At least three of them said that they still felt nervous sometimes when presenting their lessons. However, they stated that this was not so much to do with their tendency to be shy, but rather that they felt nervous when they felt inadequately prepared to

teach certain topics in their subjects. This is illustrated in the following examples. Zinnia said:

I am not really confident yet as a beginning teacher. I feel confident a bit, but I still feel nervous at times in my class. There are topics that I still feel not very confident to teach. I still seek help from my HODs in English and Social Studies. I sometimes approach my Principal to help me overcome some of these challenges, when my colleagues could not help me. (Zinnia)

I still feel nervous at times, especially when I am not really prepared for my lessons. I feel that my students find my lessons boring when I am not prepared. But when I am really prepared for my lesson and involve students in a variety of activities, my students seemed motivated and willing to learn, and I feel happy about my teaching too. (Doris)

Lack of teaching resources

Lack of teaching resources remained a key challenge in the BSTs' first nine months of teaching, and was a contributing factor to their feeling of lack of preparedness and confidence to deliver their lessons. Although some of them managed to get some help with the teaching resources they needed for their subjects, the majority still expressed the need for more teaching resources to help them deliver better lessons. Sophie and Eugenie said:

I still have some problems with teaching resources, but I was able to improvise and use whatever resources available in my teaching. (Sophia)

I enjoyed my teaching role, so far, but I still have problems with teaching resources. I think if I get all the teaching resources I needed, I would do better in my teaching. (Eugenie)

Some of them reported that although they were taught how to improvise using resources that were available at their schools, they found that the amount of

improvisation they needed to do was beyond what they could manage, as illustrated in Josephine's comment:

I learnt from SOE-SICHE that I need to improvise in terms of teaching resources for my science classes. But, I realised that I had to do more improvisation of teaching resources than I learnt during my training. I could not improvise resources for some of my lessons. (Josephine)

The BSTs reported that they tried to apply the knowledge and skills they learnt during their ITE but their efforts were hindered by various contextual factors, including the lack of basic teaching resource materials at their schools.

Lesson planning and preparation

Some of the participants found the routine of having to plan and prepare their lessons before going to class a challenge. They said that they were aware of the need to plan and prepare lessons before going to class but that inadequate office space and the lack of teaching resources made it difficult for them to prepare well for their lessons each day. Such sentiments are summarised in the following comments by Sophia and Henry:

Since we last talked, teaching to me was challenging. I see the need for me to prepare well before I go to class. But, with the lack of teaching resources, I find preparing for my lessons in advance difficult. I cannot prepare well without having the teaching resources I need for my lessons. (Sophia)

I find planning and preparing for my lessons challenging because of lack of teaching resources and no space for me to do my work at school. Since I arrived at this school, I don't have an office space of my own. I usually do my work on other teacher's desk, if they are absent from work on that day. So, on the days when all the staff come to work, I do not have anywhere to do my work. (Henry)

The BSTs also indicated that time constraint was a challenge as they tried to keep up with their work plans and school expectations. Some of them felt that their teaching load and extra responsibilities were challenging, because they did not have enough time to plan and prepare their lessons. However, they realised that if they were able to give themselves enough time to plan and prepare for their lessons they would do better in their teaching roles. Jeremy said:

Generally, I find teaching interesting and enjoyable, although I feel that there are areas that I could have done better, in terms of lesson preparation. I feel that I did not give myself enough time to prepare my lessons due to time constraints, given the demands of my teaching load. (Jeremy)

The BSTs also reported that lack of proper housing and transport made it difficult for them to manage their time well, as described in the following section. However, how teachers actually utilise their free time both during and after working hours needs further investigation.

Lack of housing and transport difficulties

The BSTs also pointed out some of the personal and family issues that affected their teaching roles during their first year of teaching. One of the main issues that affected them was the lack of housing for teachers. Five of the 11 BSTs reported having difficulties with housing. They expressed that they found it difficult to live with relatives in overcrowded houses because they did not have the space and privacy to plan and prepare for their lessons, as illustrated by Josephine:

One of the challenges for me now is housing. I am not provided with a house to live in and teach. I live with relatives and this is very difficult for me as I do not have enough space to do my school work after hours. I also live in a populated area where it is difficult to catch a bus in the mornings. So, I often arrive late for my morning classes. (Josephine)

The main challenge for teachers was not only that they considered their salary inadequate but also that there was a lack in Honiara of low rental houses which

they could afford with their meagre salaries. This was particularly challenging for teachers who had a family and had to share a house with another family. Jeremy said:

My workload problem is ok now, except that I tend to be busy with outside matters more often, like family matters at home. This has affected my school work. In fact, I am currently facing problem with housing for my family. My family is sharing a rented house with another family.
(Jeremy)

The 11 BSTs reported that transport to and from school was a major challenge. They would have liked to be provided with housing near their schools, so that they would not have to worry about transport. They said, too, that if they lived near their schools they could spend more time at school to prepare for their lessons and mark students' assignments and tests after school hours. They reported that it was difficult for them to do such tasks after hours where they were currently living because they did not have space and privacy.

Poor leadership and management

One of the challenges expressed by some of the teachers was that they considered they could not do better or improve in their teaching roles because of poor leadership and management in the schools in which they taught. They observed a general laxity on the part of school administrators in dealing with issues such as the need for teaching resources, office space, improved classroom facilities, and high rates of teacher absenteeism. This challenged their beliefs about what school principals should do and affected their motivation to teach. An example of such an experience and view is summarised in the following statement:

Since we last talked, I have enjoyed my teaching and tried my best to perform my role as a teacher. But the behaviour and attitude of those in authority at this school and senior and experienced teachers in general has slowed down my interest and motivation to teach. I know that teaching as a profession has its code of ethics that teachers need to observe as stated in the Teaching Service Handbook. So when I came to this school, I expected

to see that senior and experienced teachers, including the school Principal, as role models to us beginning teachers in terms of punctuality and class attendance. I am sad to say that this is not the case in this school. (Henry)

The BSTs suggested that there is a need to improve leadership and management at their schools so that the issues they encountered could be addressed.

After 18 nine months of teaching

Although the BSTs reported that they were generally satisfied with their teaching roles in the second year of teaching, they continued to encounter some of the same challenges they had experienced during their first year of teaching.

Lack of teaching resources was still an issue for the majority of BSTs. They emphasised that this was the reason they were not fully satisfied with their teaching roles in the second year of teaching. Eugenie observed:

I think I am just satisfied with my role as a teacher this year because there are areas that I still need to develop, and also I still do not have all the teaching resources that would enable me to carry out my teaching role effectively. (Eugenie)

In relation to their teaching load, the BSTs felt that their teaching loads in the second year were heavier than in the first year. Of the 11 BSTs, nine were allocated three classes to teach, and were assigned two extra responsibilities in addition to their teaching loads. The extra responsibilities the BSTs were involved in during the second year of teaching included: class teacher, sports supervisor, club leader, work session supervisor, and school committee member. While some of them were satisfied with their teaching loads, others said that they could not cope with their teaching load because of the demands of their extra responsibilities. This was summarised by Paul:

This year I teach three forms; Form 1, Form 2 and Form 4. With Form 4 I have to do extra work to prepare them for their Form 5 SISC exam. I was

also assigned the responsibility of class teacher for Form 1. In regard to extra curricula activities I am involved in organising sports, and supervising students during sports days. I think this year I have more responsibilities compared to last year. I think my extra responsibilities are affecting my teaching role because I have to attend to those other activities, when required. For instance, as a class teacher I have to meet with my class each week, and also attend meetings with the school principal regularly, apart from teaching and supervising sports. (Paul)

As in the first year, the BSTs saw these extra responsibilities as expectations of the school. Hence, they felt they had no choice but to accept them because they feared the repercussions this might have for their registration and promotion later in their careers. They also felt that as beginners they were just junior in status at their schools, and should obey any directive that was approved by their school principals. They reported that they expressed their concerns only to each other. Marcia said:

We just express our concerns amongst ourselves [beginning teachers], but not during school meetings because we feel that we are just junior teachers and have no right to question what our boss does, or does not do. I think there is a chance that I might raise some of my concerns next year, but this year I still feel like a junior teacher and still shy and had to share my thoughts with my beginning teacher colleagues, and through my HOD. (Marcia)

Generally, the BSTs reported that they had encountered a number of challenges that affected their professional learning and development during their first two years of teaching. They believed that these challenges needed to be addressed if they were to learn from them and improve their teaching practices. They emphasised that they needed the necessary resources and support if they were to learn and develop into effective teachers.

4.5.3 Induction experiences

This section reports the BSTs' induction experiences. It is divided into two parts. The first part reports on the participants' induction experience during the first nine months of their first year of teaching, and the second part on their induction experiences during their second year of teaching.

First nine months of teaching

The 11 BSTs reported that their induction into their teaching roles was mainly informal and not through planned or official programmes. Instead, they were just introduced during their first staff meeting and allocated classes to teach. Then they were left alone to work with their Heads of Department (HODs) throughout their first two years of teaching. There were no special meetings arranged for them during the first year of their teaching careers. This is described by Eugenie:

When I arrived here there was no one assigned to meet me. There was no induction programme organised for us new teachers at this school. So, I just approached my HOD because I believed he was the one responsible for my subject at this school, and we decided on which class that I should teach, then I went on and prepared for my lessons and began attending my classes. There was no special meeting for us new teacher or anything like that. (Eugenie)

They reported that they learnt about their school's expectations and procedures through staff meetings and notices, and from their experienced colleagues, as Debbie explains:

We had no formal induction since we last talked, but they just informed us through announcements and notices about some expectations of the school, or what we need to do in different situations. They informed us during staff meetings about the school policies and regulations, and we were asked to seek further clarification on any of the information if we need to. (Debbie)

While the BSTs reported that they were not formally assigned a mentor during their first nine months of teaching, the majority of them said they viewed their HODs as mentors. They reported that they sought help and advice from their HODs sometimes because there were no formal systems in place at their schools to provide them with the kind of support they needed. A comment made by Sophia showed that she viewed her HOD as her mentor:

There was no formal induction or mentoring support since we last talked, I just went ahead with my teaching and just consulted my HOD whenever I needed help. My HOD was like my mentor since I started to teach at the beginning of this year. (Sophia)

They also reported that although they did not receive adequate formal feedback about their teaching from their HODs or principals, they did get informal feedback from their colleagues, students, and sometimes parents. The positive comments they received through informal feedback enhanced their confidence, and motivated them to do even better in their teaching roles. Doris and Zinnia commented:

I received informal feedback from my colleagues who think that I am a good teacher. My students also tell me that my lessons are interesting. I feel good about such feedback and that motivates me to do better each time I teach. (Doris)

My principal and other colleagues think that I did well in my teaching because my Form 3 students did well in their mid-year English exams. This made me feel good about myself as a beginning teacher and I am motivated to do better in my teaching so that my students will do better in their end of year exam. (Zinnia)

It was evident from the BSTs' responses that they needed someone to "go to" and "talk to" whenever they needed help during the first year of their teaching careers. Ten out of the 11 BSTs indicated one-to-one mentoring as their preferred mode of

support. They said that they would like to work alongside a mentor or an experienced teacher in their own subject areas for at least the first year of their teaching careers. Marcia said:

I would like a senior teacher in my subject to work closely with me and assist me before I work on my own. I would like my senior teacher to observe my teaching and give me regular feedback too, so that I am well prepared when the Ministry of Education staff comes to observe me for my full registration. (Marcia)

The BSTs emphasised that they needed support and advice during the first year of their teaching careers on various aspects of their teaching roles, including subject content, teaching approaches, teaching resources, school procedures and expectations, and the requirements for full registration. They felt they generally needed support in all aspects of their teaching, both inside and outside of the classroom. They also suggested that as new teachers they should be met by the principals and their management team to make them feel welcome, as soon as they arrived at their schools. Paul said:

As a new teacher, I would like to be met and greeted by teachers who are already here at this school, including the Principal and Deputy Principal, as soon as I arrive at this school. I would also like to know about the school processes and procedures, and the classes that I would be teaching, as soon as possible. (Paul)

They believed that this would make them feel a valued member of the school staff, settle more quickly into their new teaching roles, and help them to develop their identity as teacher at the very beginning of teaching careers. Henry observed:

To be honest I have not been formally welcomed to this school till now. I think if they welcome me formally and ensure that I have an office space, and talk to me about the school processes and procedures as soon as I arrive at this school, I would quickly settle down and feel part of this

school. Since I arrived here, I have not been allocated a working desk of my own. I just leave my bag at any corner of this office and use other teacher's desk if they did not turn up to work. (Henry)

They also thought that beginning teachers should have separate meetings with the school principal, deputy principal and HODs at the beginning of their teaching careers. They believed this would enable them to ask questions about school matters that were of concern to them, such as how to get the teaching resources for their subjects, teacher registration processes, and who to approach for assistance. The BSTs felt that they were not treated as a colleague, or even as a visitor, at some of their schools. This is illustrated in a comment made by Debbie:

I needed support and advice on where to get resources, books, where I will sit and do my work right at the beginning as soon as I arrive at this school. This year I did not have any mentor or teacher who would help me in my first year of teaching. We did not even have any separate meeting with the Principal as new teachers since we arrived at this school. I think it is important for us new teachers to have separate meetings with the principal or deputy principal so that we could get answers to some of our questions, and feel part of the teaching team here, as soon as possible. (Debbie)

The BSTs reported that they were aware that the probationary period for beginning teachers in the Solomon Islands is one year, and that they learnt about this from their experienced colleagues. However, they had not been fully informed about the registration process for probationers during their first year of teaching. Only three of the 11 BSTs had had at least one observation done by officers from their education authorities at the time of the second interview, that is, after nine months of teaching in their first year.

After 18 months of teaching

The BSTs reported that induction in the second year was very similar to the first year. Henry noted.

This year is still the same. We did not have any formal induction. But, I continued to seek help from my colleagues. We are fortunate to have a new Principal at this school this year, who is more supportive towards teachers' needs. So, I sought help and advice from my Principal, especially on how to go about assessment of students learning, how to write assessment instruments, analyse assessment data, and so on. (Henry)

The BSTs reported that they felt more confident in their teaching roles and sought help from their experienced colleagues only when they needed it. They said that they continued to seek professional support from their colleagues, HODs, and school principals during the second year. Marcia and Henry commented:

Yes, informal support from colleagues is still important for me this year. We sometimes talk about our experiences and advice each other on what to do in our teaching. (Marcia)

I think informal support is still important for me as a second-year teacher. I still need support from my HOD and Principal in my teaching role. (Henry)

The BSTs realised the need for teachers to have professional learning conversations and offer support and advice to each other and those in their school community throughout their teaching careers. They emphasised that they would need such support as long as they were in the teaching profession, as illustrated by a comment made by Jeremy:

Yes, informal support from colleagues is still important to me, and will always be important as long as I teach. (Jeremy)

In terms of feedback, the BSTs reported that they did not receive any formal feedback from their HODs or school principals. However, they were satisfied with the informal feedback they received from their colleagues and students, despite

the lack of formal observation and feedback. They believed such feedback helped them to develop more confidence in their teaching. Alex stated:

Yes, I have some feedback from my colleagues. One thing they commended me on is that I always attend to my class and always on time for my classes. My students think that my lessons are interesting and that I am a very helpful teacher. Such feedback made me feel satisfied with myself and more confident in my teaching. (Alex)

When asked if they had been fully registered as teachers after nine months of teaching in the second year, eight of the BSTs reported that they had been observed at least once by an officer from their respective education authorities for registration purposes. However, they reported that they had not received any formal feedback from their education authorities at the time of the third interview in this study. They also expressed their concern about the lack of information about their full registration. All 11 BSTs reported that they were not yet fully registered as secondary teachers towards the end of their second year of teaching. Henry said:

I am not registered yet, although they observed my lesson once so far for this purpose. I am still waiting for my confirmation letter from the MEHRD. I am still waiting on my Principal to follow-up the matter with the MEHRD. In fact, I am not aware of the requirements for full registration of new teachers. So, I am just waiting for my letter at the moment, when I receive the letter then I know that I am confirmed. I think such practice is not good enough. We should be fully informed about the registration process right at the beginning, or when we are still at the SOE-SICHE. At the moment most of us probationers did not have any idea about what the teacher registration process really involves, the time frame, number of lesson observations, and so on. (Henry)

The lack of information on the processes involved in the full registration of probationary teachers had prompted some of the BSTs to take matters into their

own hands by following matters up with MEHRD and their respective education authorities. For example, Jeremy had approached the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development:

I am not registered yet. I am just waiting for my confirmation letter. In fact, I was tired of waiting for my confirmation letter so I approached the responsible department at the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development myself. But, I was told that it is still in the process. I am not sure who is responsible for this. I have not been informed about the requirements for full registration, and the processes and procedures involved. (Jeremy)

Similarly, Zinnia and her colleague reported that when they did not hear anything from their principal they contacted their education authority to make arrangements for someone to come and observe their lessons for registration purposes. They were not even sure which education authority their school was administered under, and ended up contacting the wrong education authority. This is summarised in the comments made by Zinnia:

I am not confirmed to be a registered teacher yet. My colleague and I did not hear anything from the principal as well about this. But, we heard that teachers from other schools have already been registered, so we approached our provincial education authority. We contacted the provincial education authority because this school is outside the town boundary. But we think this school should be under our church education authority, but the officers responsible did not do anything, so we approached the provincial education authority. We are still confused about which education authority this school is operated under. We are not fully aware of the registration processes and procedures as well. But I think the Principal should be responsible for ensuring that we are registered on time. (Zinnia)

It was evident from the BSTs' responses that they were inadequately informed about the processes involved in the full registration of probationary teachers. They were not sure about who was responsible for managing teacher registration at their schools—whether it was their school, the education authorities, or the Ministry of Education and Humans Resources and Development. This had caused them a lot of confusion and anxiety. They reported that they were shy about approaching their principals, because of the respect they had for them.

The lack of formal induction and the poor management of their registration process caused the BSTs to be dissatisfied with the level of induction and professional support they received at the Community High Schools to which they were posted. They considered that the level of support they received was inadequate and needed to be improved, as illustrated in a comment made by Zinnia:

As time went on I still struggled to find my own way around. The level of induction at this school is still the same; it is still inadequate and needs to be improved. (Zinnia)

Table 5 indicates that seven of the 11 BSTs were dissatisfied with the level of induction and professional support that they received from the Community High Schools they were posted to during their first two years of teaching. When asked to rate their level of satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 4 six rated their level of satisfaction at 2, and two at 1, which means that they were not satisfied with the level of induction and professional support they received. However, four of them seemed satisfied and rated it 3 and 4.

While the BSTs reported that the level of induction remained unchanged at their schools during the second year, three noted a slight improvement in the level of support they received, due to a change in circumstances at their schools. For example, Henry and Josephine stated that they were more satisfied with the level of support they received during their second year of teaching because they had received some support in relation to teaching resources for their subjects:

I think the level of support at this schools has improved in terms of teaching resources for Maths. But, I think there is a need to provide more support than what they do now. I would rate it at 3. (Henry)

I think the school has improved in terms of providing resources. But there is still no induction. I think I am just satisfied, but it should be improved. (Josephine)

Table 5: Level of satisfaction on their induction and professional support

Names	After nine months	After 18 months
Alex	2	3
Debbie	2	2
Doris	4	4
Eugenie	2	2
Marcia	3	1
Henry	1	3
Jeremy	2	2
Josephine	2	3
Paul	2	2
Sophia	3	2
Zinnia	2	2

Scale: 1=*very dissatisfied* 3=*satisfied*
2=*dissatisfied* 4=*very satisfied*

The BSTs felt strongly that their schools should have formal induction and professional development programmes in place for beginning teachers, who they considered needed proper guidance and support as soon as they arrived at their schools. This, they believed, could enable beginning teachers to settle down, get on with their teaching roles more quickly, and further develop the knowledge and skills they learnt through their ITE. They also felt that the MEHRD, education authorities, and school principals should work together to put in place formal induction programmes for beginning teachers. They were of the opinion, too, that

SOE-SICHE should continue to play a role in beginning teachers' professional learning and development during their first two years of teaching.

None of the participants had shared their thoughts with their HODs or principals. They said that they shared their concerns amongst themselves because they felt that they were just "junior" teachers and should not question the decision and actions taken by their "seniors", or those in authority. Such views may be attached to cultural beliefs and values that are inherent in Solomon Islands culture, whereby children are not allowed to question their parents, nor young people their elders, or those in authority.

4.6 Professional learning experiences

This section report findings about the BSTs' perceptions of their professional learning experiences during the first two years of their teaching careers. It describes areas in which the BSTs felt they had developed professionally, how they learnt, areas they felt they still needed to develop, the professional development opportunities to which they had access, their perceptions of the level of professional support they received, and who they thought should be responsible for beginning teachers' professional learning and development at their schools.

4.6.1 Areas of professional learning

The BSTs' professional learning experiences are reported according to the teaching areas in which they felt they had developed during their first two years of teaching and those areas they thought they still needed to develop.

The areas they felt they had improved in included: improved understanding of their curriculum area; better understanding of their students' learning, improvement in their assessment practices, and improved in their teaching practices.

Improved understanding of their curriculum areas

The BSTs reported that they had developed improved understanding of their curriculum areas over the first two years of their teaching careers and felt more confident about their subject content in the second year compared to the first year.

However, they felt that they still needed to learn more about some of the topics in their subjects, especially those that were not covered during their initial teacher education, and those in subjects they were not trained to teach. They attributed their increased level of understanding about their subject content to their learning experiences in the first year. They stated they had learnt more about specific topics in their subjects by reading through their SOE-SICHE notes and textbooks, and through information they obtained from the internet. They also said that they had learnt through support and advice they received from their colleagues and Heads of Department. Such perceptions are summarised in one of Sophia's comments:

I think I have developed in my understanding of the content in my subject area because I read more about the topics that I needed to teach. I think the availability of resources and information through the internet has also helped me to develop my understanding about my subject. I also received support and advice from my HOD that helped me develop my understanding of my subject. I think my understanding about my subject has improved compared to when I started teaching. (Sophia)

The BSTs believed that they would be able to expand their curriculum knowledge if they were provided with the relevant resources and opportunities in schools to access such sources of information.

Better understanding of students' learning

The BSTs also reported that they had developed a better understanding of their students, how they learnt and the types of activities they were motivated by in the second year of teaching compared to the first year. Nine of the 11 reported that they did not have access to background information about their students at their schools. However, they reported that they came to understand their students better through interaction with them inside and outside the classroom. They stated that this has made them more cautious about how they selected pedagogical approaches they used in their teaching. They reiterated that they were more

concerned about addressing the different learning needs of their students as they progressed from the first year to the second year of teaching.

When asked to identify factors that helped them to develop a better understanding of their students the main themes that emerged from their responses included: classroom interactions, assessment results, parent-teacher interviews, student counselling, and their own observations. Their responses showed that they were aware of how and why they needed to learn more about their students' learning needs. However, participants believed that they would need professional support and advice on how they could sustain such practices throughout their teaching careers. They believed that they needed the support of school principals and HODs to be able to address the learning needs of their students, as experienced by Henry with his new principal during his second year of teaching:

In this second year of teaching I came to realise that my students learn at different phases or levels. So, I tried to help my students as much as possible to learn what I taught them through additional class activities through my own initiative on what I think is right to do. I think this year I am happy to have a new Principal who helped me a lot in how I should go about teaching my students especially in Mathematics. In fact, I am a Form teacher and a lot of my students do come to me to seek help in the subjects I taught them. Some of them came and cried in my office because they could not complete their homework because they have been affected by family problems, or because they had to do house work when they return to their houses after school, especially girls. I think my church background helped me a lot to see teaching as a vocation, and that made me feel that I need to help young people develop as a whole person, physically, spiritually, and also in their school work. (Henry)

The BSTs believed that they needed the support of everybody in the school and the wider community in order to provide their students with the best possible learning opportunities. For instance, Debbie tried to involve other teachers and parents:

I think I understand my students better this year than last year. For example, this year I tried to plan my teaching to meet my students' learning needs. My Form 2 class this year did not have an English teacher last year, so I have to teach them extra classes to get them up to the Form 2 level. The school did not support me on this. When I identified students with learning problems I contacted their families directly. Usually the parents would say that it is up to me to help their children, being their teacher, so it is quite challenging. Even some teachers, did not seem to care about students' learning needs because when I asked them for help, they said "if they do not want to learn, just forget about them". So, I feel that I improved a lot in this area, and that I am more concerned about my students' learning as time goes on based on my own experience. (Debbie)

The BSTs believed that it is vitally important for teachers and parents to play an active role in the learning of their children and students.

Improvement in their assessment practices

Assessment is an aspect of teaching for which the BSTs considered they were less than adequately prepared at the beginning of their teaching careers. It was evident from the BSTs' responses that they thought they had improved a lot in their assessment practices in their second year of teaching. Four of the 11 BSTs indicated that they had sought help from their HODs or school principals on how to go about assessment in their subjects, and some of them have reported attending a workshop on assessment in the first two years of their teaching careers. Two were Henry and Sophia:

I think I have improved in this area. Now I am happy to have a school principal who teaches the same subjects as me and who is willing to help me in this area. (Henry)

I think I have improved in my assessment practices this year. I did get help from my HOD. This helped me to improve in my assessment practices. (Sophia)

However, a number of the BSTs reported that they did not seek any help on assessment but just tried to apply what they learnt about assessment through their initial teacher education programme at SOE-SICHE. They stated that they had improved in their assessment practices using this strategy. Debbie said:

I think I have developed in my assessment practices this year. I used my understanding about assessment that I learnt from the College [SOE-SICHE] and my experiences last year to improve on my assessment practices this year. For example, the Form 2 class I teach this year, I taught last year as Form 1, so I used my assessment results last year to inform how I assess this group this year. I found that most of my students managed to do well because I encourage them to work harder, so a number of them managed to score very good results, compared to last time when only one girl got all A grades in the class. The same applies to their performance in other subjects. So, I feel that my encouragement helped my student a lot in their learning. (Debbie)

The 11 BSTs thought they still needed to improve on their assessments practices up to the ninth month of teaching in the second year. Hence, assessment remains one of their areas of professional learning need. The findings of this study showed that there were opportunities for teachers to learn more about assessment through workshops and from their experienced colleagues. However, participants felt that schools needed to provide more opportunities for beginning teachers to take advantage of these opportunities.

Improvement in their teaching practices

The BSTS also reported that they had noticed a marked improvement in the way they approached their teaching roles towards the end of their first year of teaching.

For instance, they felt they had improved in their lesson planning, preparation, and presentation skills. This was summarised by Zinnia when she said:

I have improved a lot in my teaching, planning, preparation and how I present my lessons. But, I still need to put extra efforts into some areas of my teaching, like applying more variety of teaching strategies, and integrating new ideas into my teaching. Lack of teaching resources is still one of my main problems. (Zinnia)

They reported that they were more organised in their teaching as they moved from the first year to the second year. They realised that they spent more time reflecting on how they taught their lessons, and tried to improve on them, compared to the past when they would just go straight to teaching without much reflection. Generally, the BSTs reported that they had improved in all aspects of their teaching roles. This was illustrated in comments made by Josephine and Paul:

I am more confident in all areas of my teaching now, but still need to improve in some areas and to apply more variety of teaching strategies into my teaching. (Josephine)

I think I have generally improved in all areas of my teaching. The only problem I have is lack of resources and professional support and guidance to help me develop in the areas identified. (Paul)

Despite the improvement the BSTs noted in their own teaching practices, they expressed that they still needed to improve in many areas of their teaching. Hence, they believed they needed continuing support from teachers, principals and others in their school community.

4.6.2 How the beginning secondary teachers learnt

It was evident from the BSTs responses that they learnt through observation, putting theory into practice, interaction with others, reflection, through self-study (private study), and professional development workshops. The BSTs feelings and thoughts about these learning strategies are now discussed.

Learnt through observation

First, the BSTs reported that they learnt by observing how their lecturers and experienced teacher colleagues behaved and applied specific teaching strategies in their teaching roles. They would especially have liked to be given more opportunities to observe teaching during both their initial teacher education (ITE) and their first year of teaching, in order to learn from their lecturers and experienced colleagues. They stressed that they would have liked their lecturers to model best practice during their initial teacher education, so that they could observe how experienced teaching professionals approached their teaching practices, and learn from them. They would also have liked their experienced colleagues to provide similar opportunities as the BSTs began their teaching careers. This is illustrated in the following comment:

One of the important ways that helped my learning was that I observed what my lecturers and teachers who have been in the field for a long time do, in the way they behave, present their lessons, and manage their classes. This gave me some ideas about how I should go about my teaching. But the problem is that I was not given enough opportunity to observe and ask questions during my teaching practice at the College [SOE-SICHE] and last year when I started teaching. (Zinnia)

They also expressed their disquiet at being asked to teach from day one of their pre-service teaching practices, and then from day one of their teaching careers. They felt this had given them no opportunity to observe and learn from their experienced colleagues. Alex said:

When I first started teaching, I found it challenging because I was assigned my classes and was expected to start teaching right away. At that time I did not know my students well yet, and also staff. So, I think it is important for me to observe and learn from other staff first, and get to know my students well, before I actually start teaching. But, I found that most of the things I learn from the College [SOE-SICHE] were helpful and that I did my best to apply them in my teaching. (Alex)

They were also concerned about what they perceived to be poor modelling displayed by some of their lecturers and experienced colleagues. They believed that the lack of good teacher models had a negative effect on their professional learning as pre-service and beginning teachers. All of them said they learnt through observing what their experienced colleagues did and the examples they set. The comments made by Henry below illustrate how beginning teachers considered examples set by their experienced colleagues as a source of influence on their professional learning:

Teachers are leaders and need to be punctual for classes. I value punctuality and would like to see teachers who are punctual to work. But at this school I see the opposite. Teacher absenteeism is a big problem, even the Principal and Deputy are absent from work, and teachers do not seem to work together. During rainy days, any teacher can just send the students home without consulting the Principal. These experiences make me feel that I have not learnt anything positive in my teaching experiences, so far. My view of a good teacher is someone who always attends his or her classes, is always prepared for his or her lessons, is punctual for work, and is involved in extra curricula activities. I think in my first year of teaching my view of a good teacher has been challenged in many ways. There is high teacher absenteeism at this school; teachers are not committed to their work; teachers are not planning for their lessons. But this year, it has improved a lot because we have a new principal. He is a good role model for us teachers. (Henry)

It was evident from the BSTs' responses that they had developed a sound understanding of what it meant to be a "good teacher". The recurring themes that emerged from their responses were that such a teacher shows commitment, is a good role-model, a leader, always punctual, plans in advance and prepares well, manages the class well, understands their students and helps them to achieve good learning outcomes, and is involved in all school activities.

Learnt by putting theory into practice

Second, the BSTs talked about how they learnt by doing, by putting theory into practice during their teaching practicum and during their first two years of teaching. They expressed their wish to be given more opportunity to practise the variety of teaching strategies they learnt in theory during their ITE, and at the beginning of their teaching careers. They said that their teaching practicum (TP) experience had contributed a lot to their professional learning experience during the first year of teaching:

I found my TP experience very helpful in my teaching. It was helpful in that it builds my confidence in teaching and it allows me to experience what it was like to be a teacher in a real-life classroom before I actually started to teach. (Josephine)

They believed that the more they practised, the better their teaching would become, and that with more time and experience in the field they would improve in their teaching roles. This is illustrated in comments made by Sophia, Zinnia and Josephine:

I am just a beginning teacher and I'm yet to learn and experience more about what teaching should be like. I believe with more time and experience I would learn more about teaching, and should gain more confidence in my teaching role. (Sophia)

I can feel that I gained more confidence in my planning and teaching over the last few weeks. So, with more time and experience I believe I will become more confident in my teaching role. (Zinnia)

All in all, the BSTs believed that they would be able to apply more variety of teaching strategies in their teaching, and improve in their teaching roles if they were provided with more opportunities to put into practice the theories they learnt during their ITE and in their first two years of teaching.

Learnt through interactions with colleagues and students

Third, the BSTs talked about how they learnt by interacting with their colleagues, students, and other teachers during workshops. They said that they learnt through professional conversations they had with their colleagues in various roles they played within their schools. For instance, as a class teacher, or a member of the school disciplinary committee, they learnt about their students' learning styles and behaviour, and how to deal with students' learning problems when they met with other class teachers to discuss matters relating to students' learning and behaviour. This, they believe, had improved their understanding about these areas. Paul, Sophia, and Debbie noted:

Being a class teacher I am required to meet with other teachers and discuss matters relating to the progress and behaviour of our students. So far we had two professional conversations. (Paul).

As a class teacher I had to discuss with my colleagues about the behaviour and learning performance of our students. I also meet with the deputy principal and discuss matters concerning student behaviour in my classroom. I come to know more about my students through such conversations. (Sophia)

The BSTs also reported that they learnt through informal dialogues and conversations with their colleagues, especially in the same department or teaching subject. They emphasised that this has been the most important source of learning for them during their first two years of teaching, given the lack of formal induction programmes at the five schools in which they were posted. They learnt by asking their colleagues questions about aspects of teaching they were not sure about and where to get the resources they needed to support them in their teaching. Eugenie and Zinnia stated:

Informal conversation with colleagues is still important for me this year, as it was last year. We sometimes talked about our experiences and advice

each other on what to do in our teaching. This helped me in my learning as a teacher. (Eugenie)

Informal support and advice from colleagues continued to be important for me this year. For instance, I continued to seek help from my colleagues whenever I needed help. This helped me a lot in my teaching. (Zinnia)

They said they would very much like to have more such conversations at the department level on a regular basis. The findings showed that only four of the BSTs felt able to seek advice from their principals or deputy principals.

They also described how they had learnt by talking during workshops about their experiences with teachers from other schools teaching the same subject during workshops. This is illustrated in comments made by Zinnia:

I also learn by talking to other teacher colleagues from other schools during workshops. Through such conversations I was able to ask questions and share ideas, which helped me to reflect on my teaching practices, and make improvements where necessary. (Zinnia)

They believed that informal dialogue with colleagues, students, and other teachers during workshops was important for them right throughout their first two years of teaching. However, they felt that their teaching colleagues, including heads of department (HOD) and principals, needed to talk more with them. This, they believed, would enable them to ask questions of their experienced colleagues and principals, questions about their teaching roles, and also allow their colleagues and principals to see how they are coping with their teaching roles, and offer them the kind of support and guidance they needed. Overall, the BSTs felt that they needed their colleagues at their schools to talk more regularly with them about their teaching roles.

Learnt through reflection

Fourth, the BSTs spoke about how they improved on their teaching by reflecting on their own teaching experiences and, on the basis of that experience, they modified and refined their teaching to suit their students' needs and learning styles. They specifically spoke about how they had selected the teaching strategies they believed their students enjoyed the most, and learnt best from, as illustrated in the following comments made by Henry and Jeremy:

I think I have developed in my understanding of my subject areas, and now I am more confident...because I already had some experience over the last year. As I said, I already taught some of those topics last year, so I just reflected on how I taught the same topics last year, and improved on them this year based on the way my students learnt best. (Henry)

I think I have improved a lot in my understanding of my subject content teaching because I reflected on my previous experience in teaching the same topics last year and try to improve where necessary. I teach the way I do now based on my own experience of what my students enjoy and how they learn. (Jeremy)

Participants also reported that the theories they learnt during their initial teacher education programme helped them to make informed decisions about what content to teach, and the pedagogical approaches they choose to apply in their teaching. They reported that it particularly helped them in their planning and preparation of lessons, classroom management, and lesson presentation. For instance, Debbie said that what she learnt through her ITE programme helped her to make decisions on what to teach and how to teach certain topics:

The theories I learnt during my ITE helped me to think through what I should teach and how I should teach certain topics in my subject areas. (Debbie)

Similarly, Eugenie said what she had learnt during her ITE helped her a lot in the planning and preparation of her lessons. She said that she found the notes useful and used them in her teaching:

I find the ideas I learnt from the College [SOE-SICHE] very helpful in my teaching. And I am happy about this. I find the ideas useful in my teaching, especially in planning for my teaching, year plan, unit scheme of work, lesson plans, etc. Yes, and I did use the notes I got from the College in my teaching. (Eugenie)

Learnt through self-study

Fifth, the BSTs talked about how they learnt through self-study, that is, by reading their SOE-SICHE notes and textbooks that were available in some of their departments. The BSTs found that they needed to do extra reading from textbooks and other sources to enhance their understanding of what they learnt in their subject content at the SOE-SICHE. This is illustrated in Debbie and Henry's comments, below:

Through reading books I learn more about my subject. I did receive some help from my colleagues too, but I learnt more about my subjects through reading books and my College [SOE-SICHE] notes. (Debbie)

In terms of subject content, we did not cover some of the subject content in the secondary school curriculum at the College [SOE-SICHE], especially in Maths. So, I had to do extra reading from available text books that I came across. I also refer to my notes from my teacher training, especially in Business Studies. (Henry)

Nonetheless, they expressed their dissatisfaction over the general lack of textbooks which they could use to upgrade their knowledge about specific topics in their teaching subjects at their schools.

Four of the BSTs expressed their appreciation of being able to access the internet, and described how they were able to use it to learn more about specific topics in their subjects. Paul explains:

I have improved in my understanding about my subject content over the last two years, after I read more about the different topics from my own notes, and also after I gathered more information about the different topics from the internet. This has helped me a lot in the topics that I did not learn much about at the College. This helped too because we do not have any textbooks on these topics here at this school. Last year my level of understanding of my subject content was not that good. (Paul)

They were adamant that having internet access at their schools would have helped them a lot in their professional learning, given the lack of library resources and textbooks. They also emphasised the importance of the internet as a valuable source of information and learning tool that has yet to be fully utilised by the majority of teachers and students in Solomon Island schools. They also pointed out the reality that many teachers at their schools lacked basic computer skills and needed computer training in today's technology context. They also stressed the need for pre-service teachers to learn basic computer skills during their initial teacher education, something which they themselves had not had. Henry said:

I wish we had computers and internet connection at this school, so that teachers could use it to find information and learn more about their subjects, as well as students. We should be up-to-date with technology like a few of the secondary schools have. The other area I think I need help in is in computer skills, so that I can prepare my own notes because we do not have any secretary at this school to help me with typing my notes. (Henry)

Learnt from workshops

Finally, the BSTs talked about how they learnt from professional development workshops they attended during their first two years of teaching. They reported

that the five community high schools they were posted to did not have scheduled professional development programmes for beginning teachers. However, they were encouraged to attend workshops organised by the Curriculum Development Centre, their education authorities, and other non-government organisations. They reported that they attended at least one professional development activity organised by the Curriculum Development Centre, their Education authority, or the Regional Assistant Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) during their first year of teaching. The workshops they attended focused on various areas relevant to teaching, which the BSTs felt had contributed to their professional learning as beginning teachers. The topics covered at the workshops they had attended included: revision of secondary school curriculum; integrating teaching with Christian principles; counselling; assessment; leadership; HIV/Aids; and curriculum development. The BSTs reported that they found the workshops useful and relevant to their teaching roles, as is illustrated in the comments made by Jeremy, Eugenie, and Doris, below:

Yes, I had an opportunity to attend a counselling workshop that was organised for staff at this school recently. I think it is useful and relevant in helping teachers to deal with students who have behavioural and personal problems. (Jeremy)

So far, I attended two workshops. One is on leadership, and one on HIV-Aids curriculum. I think they are both relevant to my professional leaning, but the leadership training was very helpful because I feel that I am a leader too. The HIV-Aids workshop was important too because as a teacher I need to have up-to-date information on this subject, so that I could inform students who are careless with their life to be careful as far as their relationship with the opposite sex is concerned. (Eugenie)

Although the BSTs reported that no professional development activities were planned for beginning teachers at their schools, they had participated in workshops and school activities that involved them in working closely with experienced teachers, and their principals and deputy principals. Such

opportunities had improved their professional learning and development. The BSTs believed that their professional learning was enhanced by observing their lecturers and experienced colleagues, by doing teaching tasks on their own, by interacting with experienced colleagues, by reading information from their notes, textbooks and internet, by reflecting on how they approached their teaching previously, and through professional development workshops. However, they also noted that important contextual factors within their school communities, such as lack of teaching resources, had impacted negatively on their professional learning.

4.6.3 Professional learning needs

When asked to identify aspects of teaching where they needed professional support during their first year of teaching the BSTs identified the following areas: assessment; time management; handling student disciplinary problems; organising curriculum content into unit/term programmes; translating curriculum objectives and outcomes into lessons; incorporating new ideas and curriculum innovations into their teaching; applying a variety of teaching strategies; delivering subject content; working effectively with other teachers in teams to support students' learning; and adapting their teaching to suit students' learning needs. In the second year of teaching important aspects of teaching for which the 11 BSTs considered they needed professional support included assessment, time management, applying a variety of teaching strategies, student discipline, subject content, and skills in preparing teaching resources, including computer skills

Regarding assessment, the BSTs reported that they needed professional support in the planning of assessment tasks, how to score and grade assessment tasks, and how to report students' achievements. They stated that, although they had learnt a about assessment during their initial teacher education, they felt that effective assessment strategies were not adequately covered during their ITE. Hence, they were not able to put the theories they learnt into practice, or make useful reference to their notes. This was summarised in comments made by Jeremy and Josephine:

I think assessment is one area, especially planning for assessment, as well as the allocation of marks and grades, and so on. To me assessment comes every time at the end of each unit I teach, in the form of a test. We learnt

about this at the College, but I felt that it was not enough. But other areas of need for me too are planning and preparation for my lessons, and time management. (Jeremy)

To me, one of my areas of need is assessment. I need to learn how to include assessment in my planning and how to award grades, and report students' learning achievement. I still need help in this area till now. I learnt a bit about this at SOE-SICHE, but I still do not know how to apply it properly in my teaching. Another area is lesson preparation, as well as time management. I think I need to learn to prepare my lessons a week in advance. (Josephine)

As also shown in the two comments above, time management was another significant area of need reported by the 11 BSTs. Five reported that they did not have enough time to plan and prepare for their lessons; three felt that they needed to learn to plan and prepare for their lessons in advance, as illustrated in Josephine's comments; and three of them reported that they need to learn to manage time, in order to finish their lessons on time. Zinnia said:

I need to learn how to finish my lesson on time, or how to manage my lessons. I find that sometimes I finished my lessons before the bell goes, but sometimes I did not finish my lesson in time. (Zinnia)

The BSTs also reported that although they learnt how to apply a variety of teaching strategies during their ITE they were not able to apply them in their teaching. They suggested that this was due not only to lack of teaching resources at their schools but also because they were not given ample opportunity to practise these teaching strategies during their ITE. This was highlighted in the comments made by seven of the BSTs. Typical comments came from Zinnia and Henry:

From my experience, so far, I could not apply a variety of teaching strategies due to lack of teaching resources. (Zinnia)

I think our teacher-training programme at SOE-SICHE should place more emphasis on teaching methodology at the subject level. I mean they should give us enough chance to practice the teaching strategies we learnt about. (Henry)

Similarly, the BSTs said that they were not confident to teach some of the subject content because it was not covered well during their ITE programme, or because they had not enrolled for that subject during their ITE. This is illustrated in the following comments by Henry and Josephine:

In regards to content, I think there are areas that our programme did not cover adequately, especially in Maths, so I needed help in that. Also, I was only trained to teach Maths & Business studies at the College, but I am asked to teach Science at this school because there were not enough science teachers. So, I would also need support in this subject, as I only base my content knowledge about science on my F6 education. (Henry).

I need help in my Maths content because I was only trained to teach Science, but had to teach Maths because there is a shortage of Maths teachers at this school. (Josephine)

Four of the seven female BSTs who participated in this study reported that they needed professional support on how to manage students' behavioural problems in the classroom. They felt inadequate to deal with the behaviour of big students in more senior classes, such as Year 9, or Form 3. This is illustrated in the comments by two of the women participants, Sophia and Zinnia:

I think one area where I am less prepared is classroom management and student discipline. For example, last week there was an incident in my class, where a fight broke out between my students, and I did not know how to handle it. So, I had to call on an experienced teacher at the school to come and sort out the problem. (Sophia)

One area of need for me is how to manage students' behaviour in class, especially in the Form 3 class, because there are big students in the class. I feel more comfortable with the Form 1 class and found it easier to manage the students because they are smaller in size. (Zinnia)

Six of the 11 BSTs reported that they needed to learn how to prepare teaching resources, including how to use the computer to prepare notes and activities for their students. This is illustrated in comments made by Paul and Alex:

I think I need to learn basic computing skills, so that I can make use of the computers that are made available at this school to prepare my lesson plans and notes for my students. (Paul)

I need to learn how to prepare resources for topics that do not have available resources at this school. I also need to learn how to use the computer to prepare teaching resources. (Alex)

When interviewed after 18 months of teaching, the BSTs indicated that they still needed to develop a number of areas of their teaching. The majority of BSTs indicated such areas as: subject content, teaching strategies, assessment, and time management. This was illustrated in the following comment, made by Marcia:

I still need to learn more about how to teach. I think the school should support me further by helping me to learn how to do my planning and preparation of teaching resources, how to manage students in class, and filing systems, and so on. (Marcia)

The BSTs' responses showed that they realised that their learning during their ITE was not complete, and that they needed to learn more and develop more in their professional learning during their first two years of teaching.

4.6.4 Influential contextual factors

There is evidence in the findings of this study to suggest that beginning secondary teachers' professional learning was influenced by prevailing contextual factors in

the Solomon Islands secondary school system. They included socio-economic and socio-cultural factors affecting the schools and teachers, and contextual factors within the school settings. The BSTs talked about how they began their teaching careers with very little, or no money, and had to wait for a number of pay days before their salaries were processed. They said that the lack of financial support during the first few months of their teaching careers affected their concentration on their new teaching roles. Eugenie and Doris said:

As a beginning teacher I need financial support to start me off in my teaching career. I find the first few months of teaching very challenging because of lack of finance to help me settle down into my new career. It took some time before I began receiving my first pay. (Eugenie)

As a beginning teacher I need finance to start me off in my career. If the school can help new teachers with finance to start them off, it would be very helpful. (Doris)

They also reported how a number of issues had challenged their views of a good teacher since they started teaching.

First, they observed that some of their colleagues were continuously absent from work, did not prepare well for their lessons, were not committed to their teaching duties, and were always late for their classes. Sophia said:

I believe that a good teacher is someone who attends his/her classes all the time. I realised that some teachers at this school do come to school but do not attend some of their classes. I value punctuality, but at this school this view has been challenged because a good number of teachers come late for class every day. (Sophia)

Second, the BSTs spoke about the general lack of teaching resources, specialised classrooms, and limited classroom space at their schools when they began their teaching careers. These had also challenged their beliefs of the need for good

teachers to be well prepared for their lessons and, as much as possible, to provide individual attention to students' learning needs. Paul said:

In my view a good teacher is one that first plans ahead. Second, a good teacher should understand his or her students well, and try to meet their learning needs. Third, a good teacher should know about how to manage their class. In my own experience, when I plan ahead I am satisfied with teaching and students are also happy with my lessons, I can see this on their faces. But, the lack of resources and classroom facilities is a challenge to how I want to go about my teaching according to my beliefs of a good teacher. (Paul)

Third, the BSTs spoke of how they had been assigned the same teaching loads and responsibilities as their experienced colleagues soon after they began their teaching careers. This affected their professional learning because they were not given the opportunity to observe and learn from their experienced colleagues, and thus were not well prepared to take on their teaching roles. Jeremy said:

My main challenge was timing, due to my workload. In other words my workload and other responsibilities challenged my view of a good teacher because I found it difficult to prepare well for my lessons due to lack of time. (Jeremy)

Fourth, they reported that in some cases housing and transport difficulties made them realise that it was difficult to avoid being late for their classes. Josephine explained:

Yes, I have my own ideals of a good teacher. But, my view of a good teacher has definitely changed over the last two years because teachers' needs are not met; lack of resources, lack of housing for teachers, which make it difficult for me to be punctual for my classes. The housing issue has really affected me because I had to live with relatives and travel a long

distance to school. So, it was difficult for me to fulfil my ideals of a good teacher because of those issues. (Josephine)

It was evident from the BSTs' responses that they were aware of the qualities of a good teacher and the kind of support and guidance they needed to enhance their professional learning. However, they realised that prevailing work conditions had challenged their beliefs of a good teacher. The BSTs believed that exposure to good teacher models plus availability of teaching recourses and professional development opportunities would help them develop professionally. Furthermore, they believed that effective leadership at their schools would ensure that matters such as new teacher orientation, induction, teacher registration, availability of teaching resources, and teacher management of teacher performance were adequately attended to. This is illustrated in comments made by Henry and Sophia:

I think such simple things such as introducing new teachers to the school and other teachers especially when you arrive at the school, allocating office space to new teachers and showing them where to do their work as soon as they arrive at the school, and clearly explaining teachers' roles and responsibilities and the expectations of the school, organising professional development activities for teaches in areas that are important in teaching, for example assessment strategies, is the responsibility of the school admin. I think there is a lack of formal induction at this school because the school principal and the school management team might not realise the importance of induction, or that they just neglected, or ignored it. (Henry)

We rarely have staff meetings here at this school. If there is a meeting the school management would just make announcements about certain activities that are to take place at the school. I think it is the responsibility of the Principal and deputy principal to provide support in terms of advice, or resources that we need to support us in our teaching. I think the lack of proper induction at this school is due to poor management, or lack of proper management at this school. I think if I am given the opportunity I can offer suggestions on how the induction of new teachers can be

improved at this school, based on my experience as a new teacher graduate. (Sophia)

The BSTs' responses showed that they believed that effective leadership and management practices at their schools would minimise some of the issues and challenges they encountered during their first two years of teaching.

4.7 Summary

The findings of this study indicated that the BSTs were generally satisfied that their initial teacher education programmes at SOE-SICHE had provided them with the foundational knowledge and skills they needed to begin their teaching careers. However, they also reported that there were some areas in which they thought they had needed more preparation, and consequently needed professional support from their school communities. All 11 participants stated that they needed guidance and support to enhance their sense of preparedness and confidence to teach during their first two years of teaching. The BSTs also emphasised the need for teacher educators and associate teachers to model best practice within their initial teacher education, and during their teaching practicum. Furthermore, they indicated that they preferred an iterative process of learning, involving observation and reflection, through which they were given adequate feedback. This, they believed, could help them build confidence in applying specific teaching skills in their daily work. They said that the lack of adequate opportunity for them to be involved in such a process during their initial teacher education and teaching practicum had impacted negatively on their perceptions about their ITE and teaching practicum experiences.

The BSTs reported that unfamiliarity with school expectations, policies and procedures had caused them to feel anxious and unconfident at the beginning of their teaching careers. The lack of teaching resources and specialised classrooms for subjects like science, industrial arts, home economics and agriculture were also considered by the BSTs to affect their ability to apply some of the knowledge and skills they had learnt during their initial teacher education. However, they indicated that their level of confidence and satisfaction in their teaching roles

improved as they became more familiar with their school's expectations and procedures, and developed collegial working relationship with their experienced colleagues.

The BSTs reported, too, that their induction into their teaching roles was mainly informal because their schools did not offer planned or official induction programmes. They reported that they learnt about school expectations and procedures through informal dialogue with their experienced colleagues and this had contributed to their professional learning and their motivation to teach. They reiterated that their professional learning and development depended on collaboration with experienced colleagues, and reflection on their previous experiences.

The study also found that the BSTs were required to assume the same responsibilities as their experienced colleagues, right from the beginning of their first year of teaching. The BSTs reported that these responsibilities meant that they did not have enough time to learn how to teach well. They expressed that taking on, from day one, a teaching load and other responsibilities similar to those of their experienced colleagues had impacted negatively on their ability to put into practice what they learnt during their ITE, as well as to improve on their teaching roles. They thought too that their schools should have formal induction and professional development opportunities for beginning teachers. They suggested that MEHRD, education authorities, and school principals should work together to ensure that formal induction and professional development programmes for teachers were available in schools. They were also of the opinion that SOE-SICHE should continue to play a role in the professional learning and development of teachers during their first year of teaching. The 11 BSTs expressed their disappointment on their non-registration by the end of their first year of teaching. They reported that they had very little knowledge about the registration process for probationers, and that they were not yet fully registered in the second year of their teaching careers.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND THEORISING

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and theorises beginning secondary teachers' (BSTs) initial teacher education (ITE) and induction experiences in the Solomon Islands context. The study's key findings on the BSTs' experiences, and the meanings attached to their experiences by them are presented, and how these experiences might contribute to enhanced opportunities for beginning teachers' professional learning and development in the Solomon Islands, by informing policy decisions to bring about positive change are theorised.

The chapter comprises of ten sections. Section 5.2, provides a brief overview of the context of this study. Section 5.3 considers beginning teachers' motivations for pursuing teaching as a career. Section 5.4 discusses their sense of preparedness, and the implication for teacher education. Section 5.5 looks at the need for appropriate modelling for beginning teachers. Section 5.6 focuses on the need for adequate opportunities for beginning teachers to observe, reflect, and practice. Section 5.7 examines the need for proper orientation and formal induction of beginning teachers, and section 5.8, the need for mentoring. Section 5.9 discusses the need to improve school culture and leadership, to ensure that beginning teachers are viewed more as learners, and are provided the support they needed to enhance their professional learning and development. Section 5.10 theorises conditions that would enhance BSTs' professional learning and development in the Solomon Islands, and contexts similar to that of the Solomon Islands (SI), based on the findings of this study. Finally, section 5.11, provides a chapter summary.

5.2 Study context

This study is based on the premise that differences in socio-cultural contexts between various countries mean that beginning teachers in different contexts enter the classroom at the beginning of their teaching careers with varying degrees of preparation, experiences, expectations, and professional learning needs. Such a

premise is supported by previous studies which indicated that teachers developed most of their ideas about teaching from past experiences and actual practice, primarily from their own experiences, and through observing other colleagues (Kagan, 1992). Furthermore, teachers are seen to begin their teaching careers with differing expectations, and perceptions of their role as a teacher, which are influenced by contextual factors in their previous learning environments (Flores, 2001, 2006). Research has also confirmed that beginning teachers in different contexts enter the classroom from various sets of circumstances and background, and experience diverse challenges. These experiences may influence teachers' sense of preparedness to teach, how they perceive their roles as teachers, their motivations to teach, and the pedagogical approaches they choose to employ in their teaching (Lambeth, 2007).

5.3 Motivations for choosing teaching

The findings of this study indicated that the beginning secondary teachers (BSTs) who participated in this study had a variety of motivations for choosing teaching as a career; and that they had more than one reason for their decision. The reasons the BSTs gave at the end of their ITE for choosing a career in teaching were mainly intrinsic and altruistic in nature. However, six of the BSTs mentioned extrinsic reasons when asked the same question two months into their teaching careers.

This is similar to the findings by Kane and Fontaine (2007) on beginning New Zealand teachers, who note that they gave higher priority to extrinsic reasons when asked the same question six months into their teaching careers. However, the extrinsic reasons cited by the New Zealand beginning teachers were somewhat different from those cited by the Solomon Islands beginning teachers. The New Zealand beginning teachers mainly cited extrinsic reasons that were related to employment opportunities and benefits—salary, reliable income, friendly working conditions, and attractive holiday entitlements. In comparison, the Solomon Islands beginning teachers mainly cited the influence of significant others to pursue teaching as a career—particularly parents, spouse (often a husband), and older siblings (often brothers). This reflects the impact of culture on these six

teachers' choices of a career, that is, families still play a vital role in the decision individuals make about their career choices. Of the six BSTs who cited the above-mentioned extrinsic reasons for choosing teaching, five were females. This has cultural significance, in that the five Solomon Islands female teachers' career choices were influenced by authority male-figures in their families, which is a cultural norm in the Solomon Islands, and in many Pacific Island societies. √

The reasons the BSTs in this study provided for choosing teaching are vital when selecting potential candidates for teacher education programmes, and addressing their professional learning needs, induction, and retention issues in the Solomon Islands. If not taken into consideration such factors may impact negatively on the professional learning, development, and eventually teachers' teaching practices. This is because the reasons individuals have for choosing teaching reflect their beliefs, values, motivations and dispositions towards teaching as a profession. Ideally, teacher education institutions should consider teacher education candidates who are intrinsically motivated or have altruistic reasons for choosing teaching as a career. This is because such motivations reflect individuals' desire to seek intrinsic and altruistic rewards that come from their teaching experiences, rather than seeking extrinsic rewards, which might impact negatively on their teaching practices (Richardson & Watt, 2008). In addition, candidates who have intrinsic or altruistic reasons for choosing teaching are more likely to develop positive dispositions towards their teaching roles.

The literature suggests that teacher educators, policy-makers, and employing authorities have often overlooked the significance of these elements, and the way they shape beginning teachers' aspirations for professional learning and development (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a). Such oversights can have a negative impact on the quality of candidates recruited for pre-service teacher education programmes, and this may in turn affect the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Past studies have indicated that teachers' reasons for choosing teaching reflect not only their motivation for becoming a teacher but also their expectations and commitment to teaching as a life-long career (Anthony et al., 2007b; Feiman-Nemser, 2001a; Kane & Fontaine, 2007; Kyriacou & Kune, 2007; Richardson &

Watt, 2006). This has very important implications for decision-makers and administrators who are involved in the selection of candidates for pre-service teacher education programmes. This study recognises the importance that teacher educators, education policymakers, and administrators need to place on teachers' prior knowledge, values, beliefs, dispositions, and motivations when selecting candidates for pre-service teacher education programmes, and recruiting teachers for teaching positions.

While selecting candidates for teacher education programmes based on academic merit is important, it is also important to consider the reasons applicants provide for choosing teaching as a career. This is particularly important in the Solomon Islands where career decisions made by individuals are still influenced by significant others in their families, and the selection of candidates for teacher education programmes is often influenced by cultural factors such as the “wantok system”. “Wantok”, which denotes “one talk” in English, is a common cultural practice in Melanesian societies, and usually involves doing a favour for someone because they are linked to your family, island, language group, or religion. Such favours include selecting them for a job, a scholarship, or a place in an education institution. This cultural practice has played a significant role in the decisions made by individuals, including politicians, policy-makers, and administrators in the Solomon Islands government (Moore, 2008), and in educational institutions. Although such a practice is acceptable to a certain extent in the Melanesian culture, it has been perceived as one of the main administrative malpractices experienced in government institutions and organisations in Melanesian countries. This cultural practice is purported to be the basis of corruption in government systems in Melanesian countries, including the Solomon Islands (Morgan, 2005). There is a need to be cautious about such practices in the selection of potential pre-service teacher candidates for teacher education programmes in the Solomon Islands, as the recruitment of candidates is the first step in ensuring teacher quality in any education system. Hence, it is important to ensure that the processes and procedures involved in selecting candidates for teacher education programmes are based on sound criteria and on practices that are free from any form of bias, including those that are related to “wantokism”.

5.4 Need for guidance and professional support

The findings of this study also showed that the BSTs were generally satisfied that their initial teacher education programmes at SOE-SICHE provided them with the foundational knowledge and skills they needed to begin their teaching careers. However, they felt less prepared in some aspects of their teaching roles and expressed that they needed guidance and support to enhance their sense of preparedness and confidence to teach during the first two years of their teaching careers. This supports the notion that teacher learning does not stop at the end of their initial teacher education (Loughran, 2007). Rather, it is a life-long process (Murdoch, 1979), and new teachers need scaffolding during their early years of teaching in order to further develop the knowledge and skills they learned during their ITE. There is evidence in the findings of this study to suggest that the BSTs felt more prepared to teach in junior secondary schools that enrol students who are purported to be below average in achievement, than schools that enrol more academically high achieving students. There is a need to further examine such perceptions as it might indicate the BSTs' lack of confidence not only in their subject content knowledge, but also in other aspects of teaching such as assessment and classroom management. This points to the need to further explore and create a stronger link between subject content and pedagogy in the Diploma in Teaching (Secondary) programme at SOE-SICHE. It also calls for the need to integrate theory and practice in all aspects of the Diploma in Teaching (Secondary) programme at SOE-SICHE.

Previous studies have reiterated the need for teacher education programmes to integrate theory and practice, and ensure there is coherence and stronger links between subject matter and pedagogy. Such programmes have been purported to have a greater impact on initial teacher conceptions, practices, and the effectiveness of beginning teachers (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005). Furthermore, teachers who completed such programmes have reported high feelings of preparedness, and are highly rated by teacher employers (Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006). While it is undisputable that ITE is a key contributor to teachers' sense of preparedness and effectiveness in the classroom, there are other factors that can also influence a teacher's performance. These includes the

personal qualities, abilities, skills and life experiences of beginning teachers themselves, and the quality of advice, guidance and professional support teachers receive (Kane, 2005). Although the BSTs in this study felt prepared to begin their teaching careers, they expressed that the level of professional support they received during their ITE and first years of teaching need to be improved, so that they could become more effective in their teaching roles.

It is, therefore, imperative that those responsible for providing beginning teachers' with induction and professional support programmes should identify and prioritise the professional learning needs of beginning teachers in specific contexts, before making decisions on the kind of support and guidance they need. This is to ensure that their professional learning needs are adequately and appropriately addressed. According to a socio-cultural perspective, the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and meaning-making by individuals is embedded in their socio-cultural context (Wertsch, 1997). Moreover, proponents of the socio-cultural view of learning purported that new knowledge and skills are best learnt in contexts that reflect how that knowledge is obtained and applied to everyday situations (Fosnot, 2005). This means that if teacher education experiences are to be relevant and meaningful to pre-service teachers they should be linked in meaningful ways to teachers' specific contexts and experiences. In the case of this study, this means that pre-service and beginning secondary teachers need to be given adequate opportunities to observe, practice, and reflect on teaching that shows best practices in their specific subjects and secondary schools. Also, they need to be given opportunities to observe, practice and reflect on teaching strategies that are relevant to their specific teaching subjects and cultural context. Such opportunities need to be provided during their initial teacher education, especially during teaching practicum, as well as during their initial years of teaching, with support and guidance from lecturers and experienced colleagues.

5.5 Appropriate role-models and modelling of best practice

The findings of this study pointed to a critical role that teacher educators, associate teachers, and experienced teachers need to play in the professional learning and development of pre-service and beginning teachers. That is, the need

for them to not only be appropriate role models, but also model best practices in their teaching. The BSTs in this study particularly expressed the need for good teacher models during their ITE, as well as during their first two years of teaching. In particular, they expected teacher educators, associate teachers, and experienced colleagues to model best practice while teaching their specific subjects, so that they could learn from them. Such expectations reflected the BSTs' beliefs about what they think teacher educators and experienced teachers should do, and how they should behave. In essence, they expected teacher educators and experienced teachers to display ethical behaviour and be of good character, as they are perceived to be 'pillars' of the community. Moreover, they expected them to model appropriate pedagogical approaches in their specific curriculum areas of teaching, so that they could learn from them.

Being a good role model in teacher education is important because everything a teacher educator does models something to pre-service teachers. This could be linked to the notion of apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), which supports the argument that pre-service teachers observe what teacher educators say and do in practice, and this can have a profound influence on their views and expectations about teaching. However, teacher educators, associate teachers, and experienced teachers need to not only be good role-models, but they also need to model ways to help pre-service and beginning teachers "...see into teaching..." (Loughran, 2007, p. 8), and not to just mimic or copy what they do. This means that teacher education institutions and schools need to provide pre-service and beginning teachers with opportunities to observe, explore, reflect, develop, innovate, and adapt new ideas and practices that are relevant to their specific subjects and contexts. Such opportunities would encourage beginning teachers to develop deeper understanding of their own practices, which leads to purposeful development of their personal and professional self.

Findings of previous research confirmed that it is essential for beginning teachers to be exposed to good role models, as it helps them to build their sense of confidence, and enhance their professional learning during the initial years of their teaching careers (Langdon, 2007). According to the findings of this study this

does not seem to be happening at SOE-SICHE, and in the five Community High Schools that were involved in this study. Therefore, it is important to provide teacher educators and experienced teachers in the Solomon Islands with the professional support they need, so that they can model best practice, and become good role-models for pre-service and beginning teachers.

5.6 Adequate opportunities for iterative learning

The BSTs in this study valued an iterative process of learning, involving observation and reflection, trial of teaching strategies and skills, through which they were given adequate feedback. The iterative learning processes involves “...deeper learning [which] typically requires repeated cycles of engagement with learning processes, practices and outcomes” (Timperley et al., 2007, p. 8). This means that pre-service and beginning teachers in the Solomon Islands need to be given repeated opportunities to observe, practice, and reflect, not only during their initial teacher education, but also throughout their teaching careers. Ussher (2010) noted that:

Having limited learning opportunities [to observe, practice, and reflect] often impedes the co-construction of contemporary knowledge on theory and practice. Student teachers whose thinking is not challenged may have their understanding of teaching too deeply embedded in past experiences, being ‘stuck in the past’ .(p. 109).

This means that Solomon Islands secondary schools need to provide learning opportunities for beginning teachers to observe, practice, and reflect, so that they can interpret, question, or evaluate new knowledge, based on their prior knowledge and experiences. This is important as teachers’ existing knowledge can exert a significant influence on how they learn, what they understand, and how they approach teaching (Bransford & Schwartz, 1999). It is particularly important to provide beginning teachers with opportunities to observe, practice, and reflect, during their first two years of teaching as it can allow beginning teachers to relate their own practices to the practices they observed, which they might not have experienced during their teaching practicum. Langdon (2007) who conducted a study about beginning teachers’ induction experiences in New Zealand noted that opportunities for observation and reflection do have a positive impact on

beginning teachers' learning. It is also important to provide professional development opportunities for principals and experienced teachers in Solomon Islands to enhance their professional knowledge and practices in teaching, so that they not only focus on helping BSTs with immediate uncertainties about their teaching roles, but more importantly enable them to think more deeply about their practices, and how they can help promote BSTs' professional learning and development. They also need to be involved in regular professional conversations with experienced colleagues, so that they can discuss areas of concern in their teaching practices, and how they can meet BSTs' professional learning needs.

Past research has also affirmed that professional practices and habits learned during the early years of teaching can positively impact on teachers' future practices (American Federation of Teachers, 2001). Furthermore, the reflexive inquiry approach to teaching and learning is believed to be a means through which teachers can effectively meet students' learning needs (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001a). This means that Solomon Islands secondary schools need to integrate teacher professional development activities into their school programmes, through which beginning teachers are given opportunities to observe, practice, reflect, and give feedback on their teaching practices. This is vitally important as beginning and experienced teachers in the Solomon Islands are often faced with the challenge of having to meet school expectations and their teaching obligations, with little opportunity to reflect and improve on their teaching practices. This can hinder the professional learning and development of teachers.

The implication for Solomon Islands is, therefore, to provide a comprehensive and coherent professional development programme for beginning teachers in secondary schools that would enable them to develop principles of teaching and learning and ensure students' positive learning achievements—"...particularly learning that supports problem solving and transfer of knowledge to new situations..." (Darling-Hammond, 2006b, p. 9). Education researchers who advocated for the provision of appropriate professional development opportunities for beginning teachers in schools have pointed out the uniqueness and complexity

of the teaching-learning process. They also stressed the importance of providing support for beginning teachers, not only, during the early years of their teaching, but throughout their teaching careers (Darling-Hammond, 2006b; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001a, 2001b; Fletcher et al., 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Feiman-Nemser (2001a) also pointed out that the intense learning that takes place during the induction phase can impact on the development of a teacher's professional identity, as teachers' beliefs, values and perspectives are challenged by their experiences in the workplace. Therefore, it is important that education authorities in the Solomon Islands invest necessary resources for teacher induction and professional development programmes in secondary schools that provide teachers with meaningful opportunities for professional learning and development, so they can effectively support beginning teachers' learning.

5.7 Formal induction for beginning teachers

The findings of this study showed that the BSTs' induction into their teaching roles was mainly informal as there were no planned or formal induction programmes at their schools. The lack of formal induction in the five Community High Schools where the 11 BSTs in this study were placed should be a cause of concern for education policy makers, education authorities, school principals, parents, and students in the Solomon Islands. Research shows that if beginning teachers are not provided proper professional support during the early years of teaching they fall back on misconceptions they have about teaching. In many instances, this means that beginning teachers resort to teaching approaches based on their own previous experiences at college and high school, with which they are comfortable, but are not necessarily effective in bringing about positive learning outcomes in students (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005). This could be particularly true for teachers who are assigned to teach subjects they were not trained to teach.

Lack of support for beginning teachers during the early years of their teaching careers not only affects teacher effectiveness but can also lead to a shortage of teachers in specific school systems. Research evidence has indicated that among

the most likely reasons new teachers give for leaving the teaching profession is the lack of support during the early years of their teaching careers (American Federation of Teachers, 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009). A shortage of teachers due to non-retention of beginning teachers has already been experienced in many developed countries including the United States of America (American Federation of Teachers, 2001), United Kingdom (Harrison et al., 2006), New Zealand (Renwick, 2001), and Australia (Bates, 2002). To promote teacher effectiveness, and to deter future beginning teachers from leaving the profession, it is important that appropriate induction programmes are put in place to help beginning teachers build on their pre-service experiences and ensure their ongoing professional development (Luft, 2009).

The findings of this study showed that the BSTs were assigned the same responsibilities as their experienced colleagues, with little support and guidance from their experienced colleagues from day one of their teaching careers. Loughran (2007) pointed out that it is unrealistic to expect beginning teachers to possess all the knowledge and skills or to be able to assume the full responsibility of an experienced teacher during their first year of teaching given the complexities associated with the teaching-learning process. The literature also suggests that it is unfair for stakeholders to perceive beginning teachers as ‘finished products’ at the end of their teacher education programmes, especially in situations where teacher education programmes are underfinanced and of lower status (Boyace, 2001). Rather, beginning teachers should be viewed more as learners, who need to learn from their own teaching practices and those of their experienced colleagues, in order to be able to work effectively with a variety of students and new teachers in a new school culture. This means that beginning teachers in the Solomon Islands need to be provided the support and guidance they require at least during the first two years of their teaching careers, before they can take on full responsibility as teachers. This is crucial not only for the improvement of teacher quality, but also the improvement of education quality for students, which is one of the key educational goals in the Solomon Islands Education Strategic Framework for 2007 to 2015 (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007).

Education policy makers in the Solomon Islands must prioritise the need for formal induction and professional development opportunities for beginning teachers in the Solomon Islands education system, so that appropriate attention can be given to formal teacher induction in secondary schools. This means that the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, education authorities, and school principals need to work collaboratively to ensure that formal induction and professional development programmes for teachers are available in schools. The SOE-SICHE needs to also play a role in pre-service teachers' professional learning and development during their first year of teaching. There has been recent calls by teacher education experts to address the link between teacher education institutions, education authorities and schools (American Federation of Teachers, 2001; Varrati et al., 2009). Advocates of effective teacher induction programmes have proposed that the process of teacher education should not stop at the end of ITE programmes. Rather, it should extend beyond, and include collaboration between teacher education institutions, education authorities, and schools, to ensure that beginning teachers are given the kind of support they needed to develop into a confident and effective teachers (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999; Loughran, 2007). This points to the need for the Solomon Islands education sector wide approach programme to commit time and financial resources to strengthen teacher education, induction, and professional development programmes in the Solomon Islands. This should include the provision of professional development opportunities for teacher educators, principals and experienced teachers, so they are adequately prepared to play an active role in helping pre-service and beginning teachers develop the level of professionalism required, in order for them to become effective in their teaching roles.

5.8 One-to-one mentoring

The findings of this study also indicated that the BSTs preferred one-to-one mentoring as the best mode of professional support for beginning teachers. They believed that if they worked alongside a mentor, preferably an experienced teacher in their own subject areas, for at least the first year of their teaching careers, it would enhance their professional learning and development, and help them gain more confidence in their teaching. This view supports Vygotsky's

(1978b) socio-cultural theory of learning, which emphasises the need for 'scaffolding' for apprentice learners within their zone of proximal development. This is necessary for beginning teachers so they can receive guidance and support from mentors, or experienced colleagues, and successively achieve more complex teaching skills, understanding, and ultimately independent competence in specific areas of teaching and learning. The findings of this study indicated that there is inadequate professional guidance and support for beginning teachers during their first two years of teaching. The reasons for this could be two-fold: first, school administrators in the Solomon Islands hold the misconception that beginning teachers are fully prepared to take on their teaching roles as soon as they graduate. As a result, the BSTS in this study were assigned the same teaching load as their experienced colleagues, and were expected to perform the roles of full-time experienced teachers, unsupported, right from the beginning of their teaching careers. Second, there was a shortage of teachers in the five secondary schools that were involved in this study. Therefore, it is difficult to assign additional roles, such as a mentor, to existing teachers.

Mentors need proper training and professional support, because they are expected to be involved in classroom observations, analysis of students' work, shared planning, and meetings in which they would discuss with beginning teachers specific areas relating to teaching and learning that are important to their teaching roles (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). An effective mentoring programme has been described as one that beginning teachers are engaged in joint enquiry with a mentor who is well prepared to assist beginning teachers in understanding the importance of learning from practice. At the same time they provide useful tools for enhancing beginning teachers' understanding of teaching, through observation, feedback, and analysis of students' work. Mentors in such a programme, work with beginning teachers in managing a class, planning and implementing engaging learning tasks, knowing subject matter, assessing student learning, and learning in and from their practice as teachers. Hence, the guidance provided for beginning teachers in such a programme goes beyond just sharing instructional tips with beginning teachers, to placing mentors in teaching roles that help

beginning teachers build on their knowledge and experiences gained through their initial teacher education (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Previous studies has also affirmed that a formal induction programme with a strong mentoring component was the best avenue through which beginning teachers can be supported during the early years of their teaching careers (Luft, 2009).

Education authorities in the Solomon Islands need to further explore and address the need for mentoring expressed by the BSTs in this study. In particular, to ensure that beginning teachers are provided with mentoring support during their first two years of teaching, preferably from someone in the same department, who is well prepared, and can teach the same subject with a high level of competency. Past research has confirmed that mentoring does contribute positively to the professional development of teachers, as well as teacher retention in some countries (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; Flores, 2006; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Harrison et al., 2006; Langdon, 2007; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997; Rippon & Martin, 2006; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008). Research evidence has also suggested that when mentors have substantial preparation and when the mentoring is instructional and standards based, beginning teachers can have a significant impact on students' achievement (Conyers, Ewy, & Vass, 1999). This means that mentors need to be selected cautiously and adequately prepared before they can assume a mentoring role (American Federation of Teachers, 2001). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) noted that beginning teachers, who are mentored by experienced teachers who are well trained and teach the same subject, are more satisfied with the assistance they get during their induction. Furthermore, they were less likely to move to other schools, or to leave the teaching profession after their first year of teaching. This further justifies the need for education authorities and school managers in the Solomon Islands to seriously consider and address the need for mentors in Solomon Islands secondary schools.

The lack of professional development programmes for teachers in secondary schools, as indicated by the findings of this study, and the high number of untrained teachers recruited in schools, means that it is not possible to provide

effective mentoring support to beginning teachers. This means that education authorities in the Solomon Islands must address the provision of professional development opportunities for teachers, and minimise the recruitment of untrained teachers in schools first, before they can realistically implement one-to-one mentoring support for beginning teachers in secondary schools. The selection and training of potential mentors also need to be carefully considered, if quality mentoring support is to be provided for beginning secondary teachers in Solomon Islands secondary schools. This requires proper planning and collaboration between relevant divisions within the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and Development, education authorities, and school principals, to ensure a strong induction programme, with mentoring support in secondary schools. The Solomon Islands Teaching Service Handbook (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2006) indicates that the first year of teaching is considered as the probationary year for beginning teachers. However, whether schools are expected to provide mentoring support for beginning teachers during their probationary period is unclear. It is also unclear whether education authorities, school boards and principals in the Solomon Islands are adequately informed about the type of induction support needed by beginning teachers, and the importance of such support.

Based on the findings of this study, the conditions that would support effective mentoring in the Solomon Islands includes the following:

- provide training and regular professional development opportunities for mentors.
- provide day release time opportunities for mentors during the school year, so that they have enough time to meet and discuss with beginning teachers how to manage issues that might arise from their teaching roles.
- assign less teaching load to beginning teachers, so that they have the time and opportunity to observe other teachers teach, confer with colleagues, work with their mentors, and reflect on their own teaching.
- provide same office space for beginning teachers and mentors, so that they can easily discuss and share ideas with one another.

- beginning teachers and mentors sharing morning tea or lunch meetings together, as and when necessary.
- beginning teachers and mentors attending professional development activities together, so that the mentor also learns and provides further clarification on matters that the beginning teacher might need further explanation on.
- provide fair remuneration for teachers who take on the role of a mentor.

The study by Anthony et al (2007a) on New Zealand beginning secondary teachers' induction experiences found that two forms of mentoring were needed. First, the formal school mentoring system which involves school-wide policies and systems, and second, the informal 'buddy' mentoring system, which involves beginning teachers in working with a colleague who is available for advice on an informal basis. The findings of this study showed that informal interactions between BSTs and experienced colleagues already existed in the five Community High Schools that were involved in this study. However, there is a need to recognise and harness an informal mentoring system, as it was currently done on an ad hoc basis between beginning teachers and their 'wantok teacher' colleagues—those that speak the same language, come from the same province, or island. Furthermore, there is a need to establish formal mentoring systems in secondary schools, so that beginning teachers' professional learning can be appropriately enhanced through formally endorsed and funded programmes. Such provisions need to involve proper training of potential mentors.

5.9 School culture and leadership

The findings of this study showed that the BSTs were not provided with adequate opportunities to involve in professional conversations, ask questions, receive feedback, and learn from their experienced colleagues. Such experiences have impacted negatively on the BSTs perceptions about the school culture and leadership at their schools. Flores (2001), who examined the influence of biographical and contextual factors on beginning teachers' professional learning and development during their first years of teaching, noted that workplace

conditions have a strong effect on beginning teachers' practices and attitude towards teaching. Flores pointed out that:

...workplace conditions appear to be a powerful variable in the process of becoming and being a teacher. Not only are they crucial in shaping new teachers' professional behaviour, but they lead to the re-analysis of new teachers' thinking and practices. (p. 140).

The lack of formal induction, and planned professional development opportunities for beginning teachers in the five CHSs in this study means that the BSTs were not given adequate professional learning opportunities during their first two years of teaching. This points to the need to change the type of school culture that existed in the CHSs, so that opportunities are provided for beginning teachers' to enhance their professional learning and development. Kardos and Johnson (2007) pointed out that the interaction that goes on in a school, as well as the professional environment within a school, are important contributing factors to beginning teachers' professional learning and development, when seen from a socio-cultural perspective. Furthermore, they reiterated that established modes of professional practice within a school; the norms, interactions, relationships, and the prevailing institutional and individual values, determine what teachers do, and how they do it. Thus, schools should be viewed "...as a social and psychological setting in which teachers construct a sense of practice, of professional efficacy, and professional community..." (Flores, 2004, p. 299). This requires schools to develop into communities of professional learning, where teachers' professional development can be enhanced, so that they can create optimal learning conditions for students to learn and develop (Varrati et al., 2009). School principals in the Solomon Islands need to play an active leadership role in creating an environment in their schools where teachers can continuously seek to improve their practices through shared learning opportunities, so that they can effectively implement what they learned through their ITE. The ultimate goal is for school principals and their staff to enhance their effectiveness as professionals, so that they can provide effective learning opportunities for beginning teachers and students.

Hord and Sommers (2008) noted that a professional learning community is one that promotes a positive school culture and where critical inquiry is practiced by collegial partners, who share common vision and goals, and engage in shared decision-making. School culture refers to important aspects of a school setting that can transmit a sense of meaning which shapes how teachers and students think and act (Barth, 2002). The literature clearly identified five necessary requirements for successful professional learning communities, which Solomon Islands secondary schools can adopt if they are to improve their school culture and learning environment. These include; supportive and shared leadership, collective learning, shared values and visions, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). The findings of this study indicated that there was little evidence of these five characteristics of a successful professional learning in the five CHSs. For instance, the BSTs spoke of how staff meetings at their schools were irregular and that there was very little opportunity for teachers to be involved in decision-making processes at the school level. The findings also indicated that collaboration between teachers and principals was minimal. In fact, the BSTs reported that they had very little contact with their principals, given that no separate meetings were organised for them during their first two years of teaching. The majority of BSTs found it difficult to approach their principals, given the cultural notion that they were junior teachers and should not speak directly with those of senior status, unless they are approached, or spoken to. Such beliefs prevented the BSTs in this study from approaching the principal on important matters relating to their teaching roles, such as the need for teaching resources to teach their subjects, or concerns they had about their teaching load. Principals need to create a school culture that encourages teachers to speak out.

Leadership issues relating to the five characteristics of a professional learning community need to be seriously considered and addressed, if teachers' professional learning and development are to be enhanced in Solomon Islands secondary schools. This means that principals in Solomon Islands secondary schools need to: first, promote shared decision-making in their leadership roles, whereby staff are invited to contribute to decision-making processes on matters

relating to teaching and learning at the school. Such practices can foster positive relationship between school principals and teachers, which can lead to collegial relationship between principals and teachers. Second, they need to work collaboratively and continually together with staff at all levels within the school. Such collaborations can be reflected by regular professional conversations and reflective dialogue about how to improve teaching and enhance students' learning at their schools. Third, they need to discuss with staff the values and vision of their schools, so that staff can share the same value and vision they have for improving professional practice at their schools. This can enhance teachers' commitment to their teaching roles. Fourth, they need to ensure shared professional practice at their schools where teachers accept the review of each other's work as a norm. Such practice is not evaluative but one that involves teachers providing advice and feedback on each other's classroom practices. The intention is for teachers to reflect and improve on their practices, which is enabled by mutual respect and trustworthiness amongst teachers within a school setting. Fifth, they need to ensure that there is optimal physical and structural conditions, and human capabilities and capacities to support activities at their schools. These include: the provision of adequate classroom space, availability of teaching resources, policies that fosters collaboration and enhance effective communication, time and opportunities for professional development at their schools, just to name a few. Secondary school principals in the Solomon Islands need to incorporate these five requirements of a professional learning community into their school culture if they are to promote effective professional learning communities at their schools. The lack of planned induction and professional development opportunities for beginning teachers highlighted in the findings of this study meant that beginning teachers were unlikely to create optimal learning opportunities for their students. Furthermore, inadequate classroom space and lack of teaching resources can also have a negative impact not only on teachers' classroom practices, but also on the learning achievements of the students they teach.

The literature emphasised that school culture can be viewed as a product of the kind of leadership practised in a school, which can determine a school's

effectiveness or ineffectiveness (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003). Therefore, creating a school culture that promotes and sustains learning is what school leadership should be all about. Solomon Islands secondary school principals need to take a more active role in facilitating change at their schools, which would promote a positive school culture and sustain learning for both teachers and students. According to the Solomon Islands Teaching Service Handbook (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2006), school principals are responsible for organising and managing daily activities at their respective schools. Principals' in Community High Schools in the Solomon Islands play a pivotal role not only in the physical infrastructure development at their schools, but also in administrative matters and professional practices. Therefore, school principals have the critical responsibility for providing a school culture which is conducive to teachers' professional development. However, if school principals are not well prepared and supported with the necessary resources to initiate and sustain such a culture in their schools, they are unlikely to provide the type of school culture that would enhance beginning teachers' professional learning and development. Sikua (2002) pointed out that one of the barriers to effective leadership in CHSs was the appointment of individuals as principals who lacked appropriate training in educational leadership and administration, and who possessed inadequate knowledge and skills in financial and school resource management. These issues need to be further explored and addressed so that school principals' professional practices can be enhanced.

There is a need for Solomon Island school principals to provide a school culture where teachers and students not only develop a sense of purpose, share collective responsibility for each other, observe shared values and goals, but also where they can learn and develop together. Such a school culture needs to recognise that formal induction for beginning teachers, and continuing professional development opportunities for teachers are vital to enhancing teachers' professional learning and development. Furthermore, principals need to ensure that their schools function as a professional learning community that is committed to enhancing students' learning. The following section theorises how beginning teachers'

professional learning and development can be enhanced in the Solomon Islands context, using ‘the village’ as a metaphor.

5.10 Theorising beginning teachers’ professional learning and development in the Solomon Islands: The Village

In light of the experiences of the BSTs in this study it is important to theorise conditions that would enhance their professional learning and professional development in the Solomon Islands context. The notion of schools developing a “teacher-friendly village culture” might sound and look very simplistic. However, important lessons could be learnt from how village leaders and villagers treat newcomers or visitors in their villages, and how villagers learn and support each other in their learning needs. The village metaphor provides a powerful model for how schools can support the professional learning needs of BSTs. It is a model with which all Solomon Islanders are familiar.

Schools are viewed both as a social setting and a community of learning in the socio-cultural context (Flores, 2001). This is consistent with the way a village is perceived in the Solomon Islands context, as not only a place where various social processes take place, but also an effective environment for learning. Hence, schools can be viewed as “villages of learning”. Even though this is a metaphor that is relatively new in teacher education context (Ussher, 2010), it is not a new phenomenon in the Solomon Islands context. The concept of a “village” in the Solomon Islands is not unfamiliar, as it has been very much part of the people’s culture and way of life for centuries. The Solomon Islands village setting is, essentially, a place where various kinds of learning are nurtured, and people continue to learn throughout their lifetime, regardless of their age and status. More importantly, they choose to learn skills they need to function fully in their village communities. Village teachers are usually those who are more knowledgeable in various learning areas such as weaving, building, carving, and cooking, just to name a few.

A summary of village characteristics that are useful for promoting beginning teachers’ professional learning and development are summarised in Table 6.

These include; how new villagers are welcomed, how they learn, and how they support each other in their learning.

Table 6: Characteristics of villages of learning

THE VILLAGE	THE SCHOOL
1. Chiefs always welcome visitors, with support from villagers.	1. Principal welcomes beginning teachers by meeting them when they arrive, introducing them to the teachers and students, and welcome feast with support from teachers at the school.
2. The chief, head of family units, and members of a family unit have a sense of collective responsibility for family members' learning needs.	2. Principal, deputy principal, HODs, teachers, and administrative staff have a collective responsibility for beginning teachers' learning needs.
3. Village learners learn new skills through observation.	3. Beginning teachers can learn from experienced colleagues through observation and mentoring.
4. Village teachers usually instruct through modelling and coaching how to perform specific skills.	4. Teachers in schools can model best practices to beginning teachers through modelling and coaching.
5. Village learners are usually given ample opportunity to practice new skills.	5. Beginning teachers need to be given adequate opportunities to practice new approaches to teaching and learning.
6. Chiefs and members of a village community usually provide the necessary support for village learners' learning.	6. Principals and all staff need to provide support for beginning teachers' professional learning through induction, mentoring, buddy system.
7. Villagers foster a sense of belonging among family members	7. Principals, deputy principal, HODs, teachers, and administrative staff can foster a greater sense of belonging in beginning teachers by welcoming them as soon as they arrive in schools and by attending to their learning needs.
8. The village chief plays a crucial role in ensuring that newcomers are treated appropriately.	8. Principals should play a key role in ensuring that beginning teachers are treated appropriately by informing teachers about their arrival, and organising welcome ceremony, separate meetings, and orientation programmes for beginning teachers.

Key characteristics of a 'village', which can be adopted to enhance beginning teachers' professional learning and development in the Solomon Islands context, are now discussed.

5.10.1 Welcome

One village practice that schools can learn from is how village chiefs and villagers welcome visitors and newcomers to their villages. In a typical Solomon Islands village setting, visitors and newcomers, such as relatives who are newly returned from overseas or those who have joined the village for the first time through marriage, are welcomed either by the whole village community, or by the tribes; which includes all relatives from the matrilineal side, or the patrilineal side who are related to the newcomer. When a newcomer arrives at a village, tribal and family members are always there to greet them and make them feel welcome. Usually the village chief, with the support of other village leaders such as senior members of each tribe or family, and the village pastor, is responsible for organising a village welcome for newcomers. This usually involves a church service and feasting. Each family within a village is expected to prepare food to share with other families in the village after the service. After the welcome, the newcomer remains in the care of their respective tribal or family members, who have a cultural obligation to accommodate and feed the newcomer until they can function on their own in their village setting.

School principals and teachers can adopt a culture of welcoming teachers to their schools the Solomon Island (village) way. This means that they need to make an effort to meet with beginning teachers as soon as they arrive at their schools, and greet them individually. Moreover, they need to establish a culture of welcoming new teachers, and ensure that beginning teachers are appropriately welcomed at their schools, taking into consideration the culture of individual beginning teachers, so that they are welcomed in a manner that gives them a greater sense of belonging. In a typical Solomon Islands village setting a welcome without a feast is not valued. The welcome of new teachers requires the collaborative effort of school principals, deputy principals, heads of department, and all teachers and staff in a school setting. Also, teaching colleagues in the same department and subject areas need to be encouraged to interact with new teachers as soon as they arrive, and make them feel welcome during their first few weeks of teaching. Taken together, these attentions would promote a greater sense of belonging in beginning teachers.

5.10.2 Collective responsibility

Another characteristic of a village in the Solomon Islands context which makes it a useful metaphor for the enculturation of new teachers into their school communities is the sense of collective responsibility that individuals have for each other. This obligates village members not only to care for each other but also to be responsible for each other's learning. ✓

Members of specific tribes and families are responsible for teaching each other vital survival skills such as gardening, hunting, fishing, and building. Fundamentally, villagers of the same tribe and family consider that they have a responsibility and an obligation to take care of and support one another in all aspects of their livelihood, including their learning. This is the basic principle that the “wantok system” commonly practised in the Melanesian culture is derived from.

The sense of collective responsibility and obligation that villagers have for newcomers is a village characteristic that schools and teachers can utilise to ensure that beginning teachers' welfare and learning needs are adequately catered for. In a school setting this means that school principals, deputy principals, heads of department and experienced teachers are responsible for the welfare and well-being of beginning teachers, including their professional learning needs. They have a collective responsibility for organising proper welcomes and professional learning opportunities for beginning teachers at their schools. Teachers teaching the same subject, or within the same department, or at the same school, need to cultivate a sense of responsibility for each other's welfare and professional learning. This would prevent the feelings of isolation and being undervalued that were reported by some BSTs in this study. Hord (1997b) identified amongst other indicators that a successful community of learning is one whose culture reduces isolation, increases staff capacity, provides a caring environment, and promotes increased quality. Although activities in schools are more structured than those in a village setting, the notions of collective responsibility for each other and learning together can be built into the school culture. Such a school culture would constitute a discernibly supportive learning environment for beginning teachers

which would enhance their professional learning and development, and promote positive learning dispositions of teachers and outcomes for students.

5.10.3 Learn through observation, modelling, and practice

Teaching and learning in a village situation usually involves repeated cycles of observation, modelling, and practice, until the learner is satisfied that they have acquired the skills to a level that allows them to perform it independently, or until the village teacher is satisfied that the learner has acquired the necessary skills to an acceptable standard. Teaching and learning can be done with individual learners or with small groups of learners.

Village teachers teach new skills through modelling and coaching, using a language that the learners are familiar with, usually the local vernacular commonly used by villagers in specific village communities. This is to ensure that learners understand and make meaning from what is taught, and are able to use the right words that are related to specific learning tasks when performing those tasks. Other experienced family members can provide further mentoring support for individual learners, if necessary. Furthermore, learners are usually given optimal opportunity to observe and learn from each other; and they are allowed to make mistakes. Feedback is usually given immediately by the village teachers, and is usually done in a friendly manner, and with a sense of humour. This makes the learning environment less threatening for beginners, and motivates them to learn more.

Schools and teachers can learn from the village situation in the way they provide adequate opportunities for learners to observe and practice specific skills until they reach an acceptable mastery level, and are able to perform those skills with a high degree of confidence. They can also learn from the way village teachers instruct learners mainly through modelling, which gives learners the opportunity to observe specific skills performed in real-life situations. This requires teachers to not only be good role models, but also model best practices in teaching to, and display appropriate behaviour to beginning teachers. Furthermore, they can learn from the way village teachers provided immediate feedback to learners in a non-threatening way. The main focus of schools should be to support beginning

teachers in their learning until they are confident to fully perform their roles as teachers in their communities of learning. Hence, school principals need to ensure that their school make support systems available to enculture beginning teachers into their teaching roles. The findings of this study pointed to the need for Solomon Islands secondary schools to improve current practices on beginning teacher enculturation. This would require schools to provide not only better support for beginning teachers but also adequate opportunities for them to learn from their teaching practices and those of their experienced colleagues. This can be achieved through adequate opportunities for beginning teachers to observe appropriate modelling of best practices in teaching, and to learn through practice.

5.10.4 Support

Support for learners in a village situation usually comes from village leaders, as well as from individual tribes and family members. Village leaders usually endorse the use of community resources such as church buildings, or the use of community transport if needed. Those in the same tribe or family, can support each other by providing the material resources needed for the learning to take place, and teach each other specific skills. They also support each other financially, as and when necessary.

Schools and teachers can learn from the village situation by ensuring that beginning teachers are provided with the support and resources necessary to enhance their professional learning and development. Principals and their deputies need to establish proper induction and professional learning programmes at their schools for beginning teachers. Heads of department need to ensure that teachers in their departments have regular professional conversations with one another. This should include, for example, conversations about the work of a teacher, how to assess students, and how to report students' learning achievements. Flores (2004) noted in her study of beginning secondary teachers that those who experience a supportive, informative, encouraging, and effective working relationships showed positive attitudes towards teaching. Other research has demonstrated that the quality of support beginning teachers receive in their first two years of teaching is critical to the long-term development of their ability to teach (Anthony et al., 2007a; Harrison et al., 2006; Serpell & Bozeman, 1999).

The school in collaboration with the wider ‘village’ community—education authorities, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, schools boards, and parents are responsible for resourcing community high schools in the Solomon Islands, so that beginning teachers can be supported to learn new knowledge and skills, and further develop their professionalism. Seen in another perspective, teachers should also take responsibility for communicating their learning needs to their principals and deputy principals, and provide some of the resources they can afford to enhance their professional learning.

5.10.5 Sense of belonging

Village communities in the Solomon Islands consist of groups of people who see themselves as being connected to each other and the wider community in significant ways. Therefore, villagers value relationships that link them to families, clans, tribes, and island groupings. Such relationships bring with them a sense of responsibility for one another, which fosters collegiality, a strong sense of belonging, and connectedness within one’s village community. The daily interactions between villagers mean that relationships between individuals and groups are developed and strengthened, which gives each villager a sense of belonging and purpose. Being part of a village also gives an individual a sense of identity. However, this depends very much on how individuals are socialised into their villages and, in particular, on how other villagers, including village leaders, position a new villager in their new village setting.

Schools and teachers can learn from the village situation by ensuring that beginning teachers develop a sense of belonging and purpose in their “villages of learning”. Such a school culture needs to provide opportunities for beginning teachers not only to develop a greater sense of belonging, purpose and identity but also to learn and develop as professionals. This means that schools need to develop a culture that:

- enhances beginning teachers’ sense of belonging and identity,
- recognises beginning teachers as learners and ensure that they receive consistent and continuous professional support,
- fosters collegial relationship between teachers and principals, and

- provide ample opportunities for teachers to learn through observation, reflection, and practice, and allow them to make mistakes, ask questions, and share ideas with other teachers, as well as the school principal.

5.10.6 Village leaders

In a village setting, the role of a village leader is crucial in ensuring that newcomers are treated appropriately. The village leader is responsible for calling a village meeting to inform the people that they are expecting newcomers or visitors and that each family is expected to contribute to the welcome feast. Leaders within each tribe or family would organise tasks within their specific tribes or family units to support the chief's plans. Although the roles of village leaders and villagers are unwritten as compared to the job descriptions of principals and teachers in a school situation, village community members seem to know exactly the roles they need to play in relation to how they should treat newcomers and enculture them into their village practices. This is because such practices have become part of the village culture, and have been practised over the past centuries in the village communities. Villagers usually take such responsibilities very seriously because they do not want to disappoint their chief, and bring disrepute to their village. Village leaders usually work in collaboration with tribes and families to organise learning opportunities for specific group of villagers, for example, men, women, girls, boys, or youth.

School leaders and teachers can learn from village leaders in the way they collaborate to plan and organise learning opportunities for village learners, and the commitment they show in making sure that such learning opportunities are provided. Deputy principals need to work in collaboration with the principal to organise the requisite learning opportunities. The principal needs the collective support of the deputy principal, heads of department and teachers. In fact, the quality of teaching and learning in a school is the collective responsibility of all stakeholders including; policy-makers, teacher educators, principals, deputy principals, heads of department, and teachers. Together, they can create a positive school culture that will enhance teachers' professional learning and development on an ongoing basis, which would bring about the positive learning in students which is the ultimate goal of teaching. In professional learning communities

shared and supportive leadership is encouraged. Hence, principals and teachers are encouraged to collaborate on decision-making that leads to improvement on teaching and learning practices in schools. This may be a challenge for school cultures that view principals as “all-powerful, all-wise, and all-competent” (Hord & Sommers, 2008, pp. 10-11). However, it is believed that a shared and supportive leadership style promotes collegiality and commitment among teachers (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009).

Education stakeholders have within their own cultural context a model of supporting learning that has been practised successfully for centuries in the villages of the Solomon Islands. A model that is embedded in the local cultural context is more likely to be successful in supporting BSTs than one that is imposed from other cultural contexts. It is also a model familiar to the people of the Solomon Islands so transferability of the concepts from a village to a school setting can be readily actioned.

5.11 Summary

This study was designed to contribute to the body of knowledge in teaching and teacher education the professional learning experiences of beginning teachers in the Solomon Islands context. The study highlighted cultural practices that might influence the selection of candidates, and the motivations female teacher candidates have for choosing teaching in the Solomon Islands context, in particular the fact that female teachers’ career choices were still influenced by male authority figures in their families, like husbands and fathers. Such motivations can have a negative impact on their professional learning, as they might not be intrinsically motivated to become a teacher. The reasons beginning teachers have for choosing teaching are vital to addressing their professional learning needs, induction, and retention issues, as they reflect their beliefs, values and motivation to teach. The study also highlighted the need of Solomon Islands beginning secondary teachers for professional support and guidance during their first two years of teaching. The lack of formal induction and opportunities for professional learning, coupled with lack of teaching resources, was a major

concern, and could well have a negative impact on the BSTs' perceptions of their initial teacher education and initial teaching experiences.

The study also points to the need for professional support for teacher educators and experienced teachers in schools so that they can be well prepared to model best practice and become good role models for pre-service and beginning teachers. This means that teacher education institutions and schools need to provide learning opportunities not only for student teachers and students but also for teacher educators and experienced teachers. The study also suggests that there is a need to establish strong links between teacher education institutions, education authorities, and schools, so that they can play a collaborative role in the provision of professional learning opportunities for beginning teachers. This would ensure that teacher graduates continue to learn during their initial years of teaching. This is not only important for enhancing teacher quality, but also the quality of learning experienced by students in schools. Therefore, authorities in the Solomon Islands school system need to invest the necessary resources in initial teacher education, teacher induction and professional development.

Finally, the study points to the need for school leaders to develop a school culture that not only provides ongoing learning opportunities for BSTs but also one that gives them a greater sense of belonging, purpose, identity, and makes them feel valued as new members of their school communities. Hence, the village metaphor was used to theorise how beginning secondary teachers' professional learning can be enhanced in the Solomon Islands context. The emphasis was on schools as "villages of learning" and how schools can provide conditions which will enable teachers to continue to learn and support each other in their learning throughout their careers, and regardless of age and status. Such a school environment would promote a positive school culture for teachers' professional learning and development. Furthermore, by adopting a "village" culture, schools could create and develop a culture where beginning teachers are viewed as learners, and schools as "villages of learning" where teachers and students can learn and develop together. Education stakeholders need to consider the village model of supporting learning that has been successfully practiced in Solomon Island

villages for centuries, and use it to enhance BSTs' professional learning in secondary schools.

Teachers need also to view themselves as learners and be willing to keep on learning new skills that will strengthen their roles in their teaching communities, rather than perceiving themselves as qualified teachers who need no further learning once they have completed their initial teacher education. Teachers need to work in collaboration with their leaders to enhance their ongoing professional learning, and schools need to support teachers with ongoing learning opportunities so that they can continuously improve on their professional practices, in order to provide optimal learning opportunities for students.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to explore beginning teachers' professional learning experiences in a context different to that of developed countries, and to contribute to the fields of teacher learning and professional development. The focus was on beginning secondary teachers' sense of preparedness, their induction experiences, and the implications of these for teacher learning and professional development. This chapter provides an overview of the study design, methodology and limitations, and a summary of the key findings. The chapter also outlines the implications of the findings for education researchers, policy-makers, teacher educators and school principals. These implications could provide direction for policy decisions that would contribute to the enhancement of teachers' professional learning and development in the Solomon Islands context. In particular, this chapter comments on the unique contribution this research has made to our understanding of secondary teacher preparedness in the Solomon Islands and offers the Village Model as a new theoretical and practical tool for beginning teacher induction.

6.2 An overview of the study

The following research questions guided this study.

1. What are the self-perceptions of School of Education, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SOE-SICHE) secondary teacher graduates about their preparedness to teach at the end of their initial teacher education?
2. What are their perceptions of the level of professional support provided in secondary schools to guide their professional learning and development during their first two years of teaching?
3. How did school culture and leadership impact on beginning teachers' self-perceptions of their professional learning and development?

4. What implications do their experiences have for enhancing beginning teachers' professional learning and development in contexts similar to that of the Solomon Islands?

The study sought to gain insight into and an understanding of the experiences of beginning secondary teachers in a Solomon Island, Melanesian context, given current debate on the need to develop teacher education and teacher professional development programmes that are culture appropriate and context specific (Darling-Hammond, 2006b; Flores, 2004).

The study has generated and provided information on beginning teachers' professional learning experiences in an education setting which was undergoing a major education review and reform programme without substantial research evidence to guide policy decisions. In the Solomon Islands, policy-makers often base policy decisions on very little, or no research evidence. Hence, the findings of this study have provided empirical evidence on how beginning teachers' professional learning and development in the Solomon Islands context can be enhanced. Such evidence should be used to inform and improve future policy decisions on teacher education and professional development in the Solomon Islands.

6.3 A summary of key findings

The findings of this study focused on the perceptions of the 11 BSTs of their ITE, induction, and professional learning experiences during the first two years of their teaching careers. The findings are based on recurring themes that emerged from the questionnaire and interview data.

Initial teacher education experiences and sense of preparedness

The findings showed the BSTs were committed to pursue teaching as a career. They all indicated intrinsic and altruistic motivations for choosing teaching, which could be an indication that they were all genuinely motivated to become a teacher. However, five of the seven female BSTs also indicated influence of significant others as a factor that influenced their choice to become a teacher. Such extrinsic

influences could be linked to cultural beliefs and practices that suppress women's freedom of choice—that Solomon Island women are still under the authority of their husbands, fathers, or brothers in the decisions and choices they make, in terms of which career to choose.

The BSTs felt prepared to assume their teaching roles when they completed their ITE, and indicated subject content, planning and preparation, and teaching methods and skills as the key strengths of their ITE programmes. However, they realised when they began their teaching careers that they needed professional guidance and support in specific aspects of teaching to enhance their sense of preparedness and confidence to teach. In particular, they felt somewhat unconfident about planning and preparation of assessment tasks, preparing students' reports, keeping up with teaching plans, time management, meeting students' various learning needs, communicating with students and teachers, preparing teaching resources, classroom management, and dealing with students' behaviour problems.

The BSTs expressed the need for teacher educators to model best practice within their ITE courses. They were also concerned about the examples modelled by associate teachers and the quality of feedback received from associate teachers and lecturers during teaching practicum. They would have preferred more critical feedback that clearly pointed out their strengths and weaknesses and provided them with practical suggestions and opportunities for improvement.

The BSTs' valued the iterative process of learning which involves repeated cycles of observation, practise, and reflection during their ITE. They expressed that they wanted to be given adequate opportunities to involve in such learning processes during their ITE. This, they believed, could help them develop confidence in applying specific teaching skills in their teaching. The lack of adequate opportunity for them to be involved in such a process impacted negatively on their perceptions about their ITE and teaching practicum experiences.

The findings also indicated that the BSTs felt more prepared to teach in Community High Schools than in National Secondary Schools. This could mean that the BSTs concerned were not sufficiently confident in their subject content knowledge.

Induction experiences

The findings of this study showed that the BSTs' induction into their teaching roles was mainly informal because there were no planned or formal induction programmes in the five Community High School in the study. The BSTs indicated that they learnt about school expectations and procedures through informal dialogue with their experienced colleagues and this contributed to their professional learning, and motivation to teach.

It was evident from the findings of this study that the BSTs were unfamiliar with school expectations, policies and procedures and needed guidance and support as soon as they began their teaching careers. The delay in providing them with such support and advice had caused them to feel anxious and less confident at the beginning of their teaching careers. However, their level of confidence and satisfaction in their teaching roles improved as they became more familiar with their school's expectations and procedures and developed collegial working relationship with their experienced colleagues.

The BSTs preferred one-to-one mentoring as the best mode of professional support for beginning teachers. They believed that working alongside a mentor, preferably an experienced teacher in their own subject areas, for at least the first year of their teaching careers, would enhance their professional learning and development.

The main challenges that BSTs experienced during their first two years were both personal and contextual. They included lack of confidence, lack of teaching resources, lack of specialised classrooms for practical subjects, lack of professional development opportunities, delay in salary payment, lack of housing, and transport difficulties.

The findings showed the BSTs were not well informed about the registration process for probationers during the first two years of their teaching careers. They were also confused about who was responsible for their full registration, whether it was the school principal, education authorities, or MEHRD. This had caused a great sense of anxiety and frustration amongst the BSTs. They were not yet fully registered up to the second year of their teaching careers.

Professional learning experiences

The findings indicated that the BSTs' professional learning and development depended on informal dialogue and collaboration with experienced colleagues and self-reflection on their previous experiences. The BSTs indicated that their professional learning could be enhanced by observing what their lecturers and experienced colleagues did, by doing teaching tasks on their own, by interacting with experienced colleagues, by reading information from their notes, textbooks and internet (self-study), by reflecting or thinking about how they approached their teaching previously, and through professional development workshops.

The findings pointed to the need for schools to offer beginning teachers professional development opportunities that are tailored to their learning needs. The BSTs talked about how they learnt from professional development workshops organised by the Curriculum Development Centre, their education authorities and other non-government organisations that they had attended during their first two years of teaching. Although they appreciated such workshops had enhanced their professional learning as beginning teachers, they expressed their wish for their individual schools to organise workshops for beginning teachers based on their professional learning needs.

The findings of this study showed that BSTs assumed the same responsibilities as their experienced colleagues, right from the beginning of their first year of teaching. This made it difficult for them to spend time observing, reflecting, practising, and learning how to teach well.

The findings also indicated the need for schools to be well resourced to enable BSTs to apply a variety of teaching strategies in their teaching. The BSTs believed that they would be able to apply greater variety of teaching strategies in their teaching if they were provided with the teaching resources, classroom facilities, and space they needed to teach their subjects.

The findings also pointed to the need for schools to develop a school culture where beginning teachers are given adequate opportunities to learn from their experienced colleagues, and given adequate feedback and professional advice to improve on their teaching practises. Such a school culture would enhance their professional learning and professional development, not only at the beginning, but throughout their teaching careers. This requires a change in school culture, and effective leadership in secondary schools

6.4. *Limitations*

The limitation of this study could be linked to the number of participants involved, the location of the schools, and the research method employed. These factors limited the generalisations that could be made from the findings of this study.

First, the study involved only a selected sample of beginning secondary teachers. This means that the experiences of beginning secondary teachers reported in this thesis might not be representative of the entire cohort of secondary teachers who graduated from SOE-SICHE in 2007. To do that it would be necessary to replicate this study and include an entire cohort of beginning teachers. It would also be useful to find out the sense of preparedness of teachers who undertook the newly revised Diploma in Teaching (Secondary) programme at SOE-SICHE, introduced in 2009. Such a study could also involve principals and experienced teachers to ascertain their perceptions about the need for induction and professional development opportunities for beginning teachers' at their schools.

Second, the study involved only schools that were located in Honiara. These schools were located in urban and semi-urban settings, and these are very different to schools in rural settings. Hence, the BSTs' experiences reported in this

thesis might be different to those of the same cohort of beginning teachers placed in rural schools. The initial plan was to include of the beginning teachers were placed in the rural schools that could be accessed by road from Honiara. The non-placement of beginning teachers in the rural schools was not anticipated. The inclusion of rural schools might reveal challenges additional to those identified in the findings of this study due to their remoteness and the lack of basic social services and infrastructure in rural Solomon Islands. If I were to repeat this study, I would select a sample of beginning teachers who represented both urban and rural schools equally so that I could compare the experiences of those BSTs with the experiences of the BSTs reported in this study. This means I would need to secure adequate funding and allow myself enough time to travel to remote rural locations.

Third, using the interpretive case study research approach in this study meant that the findings could not be generalised, as they represent only the perceptions and experiences of the BSTs who participated in this study. However, this should not prevent researchers and readers from drawing their own conclusions and transferring findings to other situations because case studies are seen as “a slice of life” (Merriam, 1998, p. 42) which represents an interpretation of real-life practices in specific contexts. The data collected and the triangulation of methods used to generate and analyse those data should increase the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings of this study.

6.5 Implications for enhancing beginning teachers’ professional learning needs

The key findings of this study presented implications that education policy makers, teacher educators, principals, and teachers in the Solomon Islands secondary school system need to address. These are now outlined.

Implications for education policy makers

The lack of induction and mentoring support for BSTs highlighted in this study calls for the need for Solomon Islands secondary schools to provide such opportunities for beginning teachers so that they can further develop various knowledge and skills they learned through their ITE. Such learning opportunities

need to adopt sound pedagogical and ethical teaching practices that promote teacher learning and professional development through an iterative learning process, and are relevant to the Solomon Islands context. This means that ITE, induction, and professional development programmes need to provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with other colleagues reflect on their practices and learn from their previous experiences, with support from principals, and experienced colleagues in schools. Such programmes need to be adequately resourced, coordinated, and effectively managed, in order to be successful.

The establishment of an induction programme that suits Solomon Islands context requires further investigation, proper planning, and the collaborative effort of all stakeholders in the Solomon Islands school system. It is also important to ensure that whatever system the Solomon Islands chooses to adopt to support the professional learning and development of teachers takes into account the workload of teachers and school principals. This will ensure that teachers have the time to teach their students and to be involved in professional development opportunities that will enhance their professional practice. This will certainly be a challenge for education policy-makers, teacher educators, and school leaders in the Solomon Islands. However, it is a worthy goal to work towards, if the Solomon Islands aspire to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Solomon Islands secondary school system.

The lack of teaching resources and poor work conditions highlighted in this study could also have a drastic effect on the professional learning and development of beginning teachers in schools. Poor work conditions, including lack of teaching resources, not only affect teachers' teaching performance and students' learning achievements but are also major factors affecting teacher retention. This may not seem to be an issue currently experienced in Solomon Islands secondary schools. However, it could become an issue in the future if challenges faced by teachers in relation to poor work conditions and lack of teaching resources are left unaddressed.

The fact that beginning teachers' learning continues in school settings means that the kind of teacher models they are exposed to can influence their perceptions about their teaching roles and practices. It is important to note that principals and teachers in schools where beginning teachers are posted are in the best position to support beginning teachers' learning and professional development. It is therefore logical to invest the resources and provide the training for principals and experienced teachers that will equip them to offer appropriate professional support and guidance for the beginning teachers they recruit each year.

Implications for teacher educators

The call for good role models at SOE-SICHE by the BSTs in this study indicates a need for modelling of best practices in teaching and learning at SOE-SICHE by teacher educators. This requires teacher educators, not only to be good role models but also be able to model best pedagogical practices to pre-service teachers. Exposure to good role models is essential for pre-service and beginning teachers, as it can enable them to reflect on their own practices and make necessary improvement, and can enhance their confidence in their teaching roles.

The BSTs' preference to be involved in an iterative learning process means that ITE programmes at SOE-SICHE need to be designed in a way that they provide adequate opportunities for teachers to collaborate with other colleagues, reflect on their practices and learn from their previous experiences, with support from teacher educators and associate teachers.

The BSTs' preference to teach in CHSs, compared to national secondary schools means that SOE-SICHE need to strengthen beginning teachers' subject content knowledge during pre-service teacher education.

Implications for schools, principals, and secondary teachers

The many challenges experienced by the BSTs who participated in this study means that Solomon Island secondary schools need leaders who can ensure an enriching school culture for beginning teachers—a culture that would enhance their professional learning and development. Beginning teachers need to teach in

an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning, in order to perform their teaching roles more effectively. This means that principals need to ensure that adequate space is provided in classrooms to ensure optimum working and learning space for teachers and students. Physical and structural conditions in schools, including the classroom physical environment, and opportunities for ongoing learning for teachers in schools, need to be conducive to beginning teachers' professional learning.

There is a need for mentoring and modelling of best practices in teaching in Solomon Islands secondary schools. This means that principals and experienced teachers not only to be good role models but also be able to model best pedagogical practices to beginning teachers. Principals are responsible for the support beginning teachers need in their preparation for full registration. They also need to make information about the registration process easily available to each year's beginning teachers. Beginning teachers need to be viewed and treated as learners, whose learning and professional development is the collective responsibility of members of the school community.

Implications for further research

The findings of this study point to the need to further explore aspects of teacher learning and professional development, including teacher induction and registration in the Solomon Islands, and the factors that hinder or promote beginning teachers' professional learning and development.

To ensure quality, there is a need to examine what policies are in place in the Solomon Islands secondary education system to enhance sound practices in teacher education and induction of beginning teachers. Furthermore, there is a need to examine how policy and individual schools can ensure all beginning teachers experience sound induction and learning as they develop their pedagogy and identity as professionals.

There is also a need to investigate teacher work conditions and satisfaction on their teaching roles, as such issues can affect beginning teachers' motivation to

commit themselves fully to their teaching roles at the beginning of their teaching careers, and this can potentially have a negative impact on their overall learning and professional development.

The processes involved in the full registration of probationary teachers and the quality of judgement made about teaching performance before they are fully registered need to also be explored. This is important as the quality of judgement made on probationary teachers' performance, and the kind of support provided to help them improve on their weaknesses before full registration can ensure teacher quality in any education system.

The relationship between induction and leadership also warrants further investigation. Questions such as these need to be explored in more depth: who should be responsible for teacher induction? Who should assess probationers before they are fully registered? What role do principals play in the induction and assessment of probationers?

6.6 Recommendations

In light of the key findings of this study in relation to beginning teachers' sense of preparedness, it is recommended that:

- The Head of School—School of Education (HOS-SOE) SICHE work in collaboration with programme coordinators and teacher educators to review existing ITE programmes and practices to ensure adequate opportunities are provided for pre-service teachers to observe, reflect, and practice various pedagogical approaches during the pre-service teacher education phase.
- The HOS-SOE, SICHE work in collaboration with programme coordinators and teacher educators to ensure there is a strong link between theory and practice in each of the ITE programmes offered at SOE-SICHE, so that pre-service teachers can develop a stronger content knowledge and can link theory to practice in their teaching after they graduate.
- The HOS-SOE, SICHE work in collaboration with the SICHE Deputy Director and Human Resources Manager to develop a performance

management system to be implemented at SOE-SICHE to ensure teacher educators not only model best pedagogical practices to pre-service teachers, but also display appropriate ethical behaviour to pre-service teachers.

In light of the key findings of this study in relation to teacher induction, it is recommended that:

- The Director—Teacher Training and Development Unit, the Director—Inspectorate Division, the Director—Secondary Division, and the Director—Teaching Service Division (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) work in collaboration the National Teacher Education Committee and education authorities to develop policies on teacher induction and professional development for secondary teachers.
- The Director—Secondary Division, (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) ensure secondary school principals take the responsibility to collaborate with relevant education authorities to provide induction programmes for beginning teachers in their schools.
- The Director—Secondary Division, , the Director—Teacher Training and Development Unit (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development), and the Head of School—School of Education SICHE ensure beginning teachers undergo a formal induction programme, which includes proper orientation into their teaching roles, a day or two before they begin their teaching careers. This would not only assist BSTs in their preparation for full registration but also help them to make the transition to competent and professional teachers.
- The Director—Secondary Division and the Director—Planning, Coordination, and Research Unit, at the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) work in collaboration with education authorities to ensure conditions of classrooms, and classroom space be improved to allow adequate teaching space for teachers, and learning

space for students because the physical condition of classrooms can impact on teachers teaching practices, and students' learning.

- The Director—Secondary Division and the Director—Planning, Coordination, and Research Unit (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) review and reconsider the teacher-student ratio of 1:40 in Solomon Islands secondary schools, so that teachers can be assigned to teach the number of students they can adequately attend to. A student-teacher ratio of 1:30 for secondary schools be considered instead to ensure quality teaching and learning.

In light of the key findings in relation to beginning teachers' professional learning experiences it is recommended that:

- The Director—Teacher Training and Development Unit, and the Director—Secondary Division (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) ensure resources be invested in professional development programmes that provide training for principals and experienced teachers so they are better equipped to offer appropriate professional support and guidance for beginning teachers they recruit each year.
- The Director—Secondary Division (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) and Chief Education Officers at the various education authorities and school principals ensure beginning teachers are assigned a minimal teaching load to enable them to fully participate in induction and professional development activities provided at their schools. Also, they need to be allocated few extra-curricular responsibilities.
- The Director—Secondary Division (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) and Chief Education Officers at the various education authorities and school principals ensure beginning teachers work with an experienced teacher or mentor during their first two years of teaching and are assigned to teach only subject/s that they were trained to teach.

- The Director—Secondary Division, the Director—Inspectorate Division (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) and Chief Education Officers at the various education authorities and school principals ensure beginning teachers are provided clear written instructions on the processes and procedures involved in teacher registration, and be fully informed about the processes and procedures involved in their induction and registration at the beginning of their probationary period. This would avoid the confusion and frustration experienced by the beginning teachers who participated in this study.
- The Director—Secondary Division, the Director—Inspectorate Division (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) and Chief Education Officers at the various education authorities and school principals ensure the probationary period for teachers in the Solomon Islands be increased to two years instead of the current practice of one year. This would give ample time for beginning teachers to gather enough evidence of planning, involvement in reflective practice and professional development activities and to demonstrate that they have developed pedagogical knowledge and skills up to the level required for full registration.
- The Director—Secondary Division, the Director—Inspectorate Division (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) and Chief Education Officers at the various education authorities and school principals ensure proper assessment of beginning teachers' performance during their probationary period be established. This should include principals in the assessment of beginning teachers' performance prior to their full registration, and adequate professional learning opportunities for beginning teachers to address any weaknesses observed in their teaching practices before full registration.
- The Director—Secondary Division, the Director—Inspectorate Division (Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) and Chief Education Officers at the various education authorities and chairpersons of school boards ensure school culture and leadership styles in Solomon Islands secondary schools be strengthened,

so that secondary schools provide the kind of environment where students and teachers can learn and develop together, as members of a learning community.

This thesis has argued that all stakeholders in the Solomon Islands secondary school system need to work collaboratively to strengthen the professional culture in secondary schools. The emphasis was; schools as “villages of learning” need to provide conditions for beginning teachers’ professional learning and development after they graduated from their teacher education institutions. The study acknowledges that schools have already been established as “villages of learning” in the Solomon Islands, and principals have already assumed their roles as “village chiefs” or school leaders. However, there is a need to strengthen and support the role school principals play to provide professional learning opportunities and support for beginning teachers, which will enable them to continue to learn and support each other in their learning throughout their careers. This would nurture in beginning teachers a sense of belonging to their schools and identity as professionals, which would motivate them to continue to learn and improve on their professional practices right from the beginning of their teaching careers.

In deciding the type of teacher induction and professional development model that is relevant for the Solomon Islands, education stakeholders in the Solomon Islands need to realise that they have within their own cultural context “the village” model of supporting learning that has been practised successfully for centuries in the Solomon Islands. More importantly, they need to be made aware that a model of teacher induction and professional development that is embedded in the local cultural context is more likely to be successful in supporting BSTs than one that is imposed from other cultural contexts. Hence, policy decisions on the model of teacher induction model to be adopted in the Solomon Island should take into account how learning can be enhanced in the Solomon Islands cultural context. This is important as this is a model that is familiar to Solomon Islands teachers, so they can easily transfer or implement the concepts they learned through their ITE or induction programmes to a school setting. How villages operate provides a

powerful and effective model for the induction of beginning teachers and is a unique contribution of this research.

6.7 Concluding summary

The findings of this study point to the need for formal induction and professional development opportunities for beginning teachers in Solomon Islands secondary schools. The lack of formal support and guidance coupled with the lack of teaching resources experienced by the BSTs who participated in this study need to be addressed if beginning teachers are to develop professionally and become effective in their teaching at the beginning of their careers, or throughout their teaching lives, for that matter. The challenge for education policy-makers, education researchers, teacher educators, school principals and teachers is to ensure that beginning teachers are provided with the learning opportunities and professional support they need during their initial teacher education and at the beginning of their teaching careers, within a context of very limited resources. Current research findings point to the need for such learning opportunities for teachers to be grounded in sound pedagogical and ethical teaching practices that are relevant to teachers' socio-cultural contexts, and supported by a collaborative school learning environment. This requires effective planning and coordination of school activities to ensure time and resources are properly invested in the provision of such learning opportunities for teachers.

If the issues and challenges which have been described are not addressed they will continue to have ramifications for the quality of teaching and learning in Solomon Islands schools. Effective school leadership coupled with a school culture that promotes effective teacher learning can make a crucial contribution to a beginning teacher's learning and professional development. The findings of this study point to the need to improve teacher education and professional development practices, and school leadership and school culture in Solomon Islands secondary schools. Education stakeholders in the Solomon Islands need to realise that they have within their own cultural context a model of supporting learning that has been practised successfully for centuries in Solomon Islands villages. This model of supporting learning needs to be further explored and adopted to ensure that pre-

service and beginning teachers are appropriately supported in their professional learning and development in the Solomon Islands.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Dean's Office
School of Education
Te Kura Toi Tangata
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4466
Ext 8283
www.waikato.ac.nz



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

MEMORANDUM

To: Patricia Rodie
Cc: Associate Professor Jane Strachan
From: Dr Rosemary De Luca
For School of Education Research Ethics Committee
Date: 28 September 2007
Subject: Research Ethics Approval

Thank you for submitting the revisions to your research proposal:

Self-Perceptions of Beginning Teachers about their Preparedness to Teach: A Case Study of Beginning
Secondary Teachers in the Solomon Islands

I am pleased to advise you that your application has received ethical approval.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

Dr Rosemary De Luca
Chairperson
For School of Education Research Ethics Committee

Appendix B: Solomon Islands Research Permit

FORM – R.B

THE RESEARCH ACT 1982 (No. 9 of 1982)

RESEARCH PERMIT

Permission is hereby given to:

1. Name: ***Patridia Rodi***
2. Country: ***Solomon Islands***
3. To undertake research in (subjects): ***The self-perceptions of beginning Teachers about their Preparedness to Teach.***
4. Ward(s): ***Honiara***
5. Province(s): ***Guadalcanal***
6. Conditions:
 - a. To undertake research only in the subject areas specified in 3 above.
 - b. To undertake research only in the ward(s) and Province(s) specified in 4 and 5 above.
 - c. To observe with respect at all times local customs and the way of life of people in the area in which the research work is carried out.
 - d. You must not, at any time, take part in any political or missionary activities or local disputes.
 - e. You must leave 4 copies of your final research report in English with the Solomon Islands Government Ministry responsible for research at your own expense.
 - f. A research fee of *SBD300.00* and deposit sum of *SBD200.00* must be paid in full or the Research Permit will be cancelled. (See sec. 3 Subject. 7 of the Research Act).
 - g. This permit is valid until ***31/12/08*** provided all conditions are adhered to.
 - h. No live species of plants and animals may be taken out of the country without approval from relevant authorities.
 - i. A failure to observe the above conditions will result in automatic cancellation of this permit and the forfeit of your deposit.

Signed: _____
Minister for Education and Human Resources Development



Date: ***22 January 2008***

Appendix C: Letter to Permanent Secretary MEHRD

27 Carrington Avenue
Hillcrest, Hamilton 3216
New Zealand

2 November 2007

Mr. Barnabas Anga
Permanent Secretary, MEHRD
P.O Box G28, Honiara
Solomon Islands

Attention: Mr. Timothy Ngele
Undersecretary (Administration)
MEHRD

Dear Sir,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

I hereby wish to seek your permission to use selected secondary schools located in Honiara and Guadalcanal, to conduct a research study, on beginning secondary teachers, as a requirement towards my doctoral thesis. Please find attached is a completed Solomon Islands Research Application Form including relevant attachments.

My research topic is on the self-perceptions of beginning secondary teachers about their professional learning experiences in the Solomon Island context. The focus of my study is planned within the parameters of the expected outcomes, in relation to 'quality', that is highlighted in the SIESF (2007-2015) document, in an effort to contribute towards the improvement of teacher quality in the Solomon Islands education system. The outcome of this study will contribute invaluable information towards future efforts to improve beginning teachers' induction and professional development programmes in Solomon Islands secondary schools.

I will ensure that necessary ethical considerations are observed throughout the study as stipulated in the Solomon Islands Research Act (1984). Please refer to the research description provided for more details about my proposed research.

I would appreciate it if your office could favourably consider my request and grant me permission to pursue the above mentioned research study.

Please respond to my request by the 30th November, 2007, via e-mail, so that I could make necessary arrangements to begin my data generation as soon as possible. My e-mail address is: pr33@waikato.ac.nz. I will follow-up on this request via telephone, after the above date, should I fail to receive a response from your office.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Patricia Rodie
(Doctoral Student)
University of Waikato, Hamilton, NZ

Appendix D: Letter to SICHE Director

27 Carrington Avenue
Hillcrest
Hamilton 3216
New Zealand

19 September, 2007

Director
SICHE
P.O Box R113
Honiara
Solomon Islands

Dear Sir,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY AT SOE-SICHE

I hereby wish to seek your permission to involve the 2007 cohort of pre-service secondary teacher graduates at the School of Education, Panatina Campus, in a study I will be conducting as a requirement towards my doctoral thesis as of next year (2008).

My research topic is on the self-perceptions of beginning secondary teachers about their professional learning experiences in the Solomon Island context. The objective of my study is to investigate the self-perceptions of beginning secondary teachers about their initial teacher education programmes, their professional learning experiences during their first two years of teaching, and the quality of support they receive from the schools they are posted to.

I will ensure that necessary ethical considerations are observed throughout the study. Necessary measures will be taken to ensure that all participants' identities will be concealed in the reporting of data, although maintaining anonymity in our tight-knit communities can be a challenge. To ensure confidentiality, participants in the research will be assured that any data they provide will be kept confidential for an indefinite period of time.

Please refer to the research information sheet attached for more details about the research itself.

I would appreciate it if your office could render me permission to involve the 2007 cohort of pre-service secondary teacher graduates at SOE in this study. Please respond to my request by the 25th September 2007, via e-mail, so that I could make necessary arrangements to begin my data generation as soon as possible. My e-mail address is: pr33@waikato.ac.nz I will follow-up on this request via telephone, after the above date, should I fail to receive a response from your office.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Patricia Rodie
(Doctoral Student)

cc: Head of School, SOE-SICHE

Appendix E: Letter to Education Authorities

27 Carrington Avenue
Hillcrest
Hamilton 3216
New Zealand

19 September, 2007

Dear Sir,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

I would like to seek your permission to involve secondary schools that are operating under your education authority (EA), in a research study I will be conducting as a requirement towards my doctoral thesis as of next year (2008).

My research topic is on the self-perceptions of beginning secondary teachers about their professional learning experiences in the Solomon Island context. The objective of my study is to investigate the self-perceptions of beginning secondary teachers about their initial teacher education programmes, their professional learning experiences during their first two years of teaching, and the quality of support they receive from the schools they are posted to.

I will ensure that necessary ethical considerations will be observed throughout the study. Necessary measures will be taken to ensure that all participants' identities will be concealed in the reporting of data, although maintaining anonymity in our tight-knit communities can be a challenge.

To ensure confidentiality, participants in the research will be assured that any data they provide will be kept confidential for an indefinite period of time. Please refer to the research information sheet attached for more details about the research itself.

I would appreciate it if your office could render me permission to involve selected secondary schools under your EA in this study. Please respond to my request by the 30th November 2007, via e-mail, so that I could make necessary arrangements to begin my data generation as soon as possible. My e-mail address is: pr33@waikato.ac.nz. I will follow-up on this request via telephone, after the above date, should I fail to receive a response from your office.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Patricia Rodie
(Doctoral Student)
University of Waikato

Appendix F: Letter to Principals

27 Carrington Avenue
Hillcrest
Hamilton 3216, NZ

30 January 2008

Dear Sir,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY AT YOUR SCHOOL

I would like to seek your permission to involve your school, more specifically the beginning secondary teachers that are deployed at your school this year (2008), in a research study I will be conducting as a requirement towards my doctoral thesis, from 2008 to 2009. The MEHRD has granted me permission to conduct this research in selected secondary schools in Honiara and Guadalcanal. Please find attached is a copy of a letter from the MEHRD secondary division supporting my research.

My research topic is on the self-perceptions of beginning secondary teachers about their professional learning experiences in the Solomon Island context. The objective of my study is to investigate the self-perceptions of beginning secondary teachers about their initial teacher education programmes, their professional learning experiences during their first two years of teaching, and the quality of support they receive from the schools they are posted to.

I will ensure that necessary ethical considerations be observed throughout the study. To ensure confidentiality, participants in the research will be assured that any data they provide will be kept confidential for an indefinite period of time. Please refer to the research information sheet attached for more details about the research itself.

I would appreciate your support in giving me permission to conduct this research study with beginning secondary teachers at your school. You may respond to my request by the 8th February 2008, in person or via telephone, as I need to make necessary arrangements to begin my data generation as soon as possible. My contact details in Honiara are as follows:

Postal Address: School of Education, SICHE, P.O Box R113, Honiara, Solomon Islands.

E-mail address: pr33@waikato.ac.nz.

Mobile Phone: 88712

I will follow-up on this request via telephone or by visiting your school, after the above date, should I fail to receive a response from you.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Patricia Rodie
Doctoral Student
University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

Appendix G: Letter to Participants

27 Carrington Avenue
Hillcrest, Hamilton 3216
New Zealand

30 September 2007

Dear Year 3 Diploma Students,

Kia ora! Greetings from the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

I am seeking your cooperation to help me in a research study I am undertaking over the next 2 years. The study is on the self-perceptions of beginning secondary teachers about their professional learning experiences in the Solomon Islands. I would like to invite you to participate in this research study.

At the beginning of this study I will be administering a questionnaire that I would like you to complete before you begin your teaching careers, to give me an indication of how well you think your initial teacher education (ITE) programme has prepared you for your teaching career that will begin next year (2008). I will also be conducting three interviews during the course of this study in February 2008, October 2008 and October 2009, to find out your experiences as a beginning teacher, including your induction experiences during your first two years of teaching. Only 10 of you will be randomly selected to involve in the interviews. Please indicate in the Consent Form provided whether you would like to involve in the interviews, or not.

I would appreciate it very much if you could complete the Consent Form provided and spend some time to complete the questionnaire that will be administered by Dr. Daiwo. Please answer the questions in the questionnaire as honestly as possible, as your responses will determine the validity of the data collected for this study. I need you to write your name at the top of the questionnaire, so that I can identify those who will be involved in the interviews, in order to see how their ideas and feelings have changed over the first two years of their teaching.

I can assure you that the information you provide through the questionnaire and the interviews later on, will be kept confidential, and that I will not reveal your identity at any time in the future. What you said in your responses may be quoted in my report, but your name will not be revealed.

Thank you so much for your time. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Patricia Rodie
(Doctoral Student)
University of Waikato, Hamilton, NZ

Appendix H: Questionnaire

NAME: _____

PERSONAL DETAILS (PLEASE TICK BOXES)

1. **Gender:** a) Male ☐ b) Female ☐

2. **Age** a) 20 years or less ☐ b) 21-30 years ☐ c) 31-40 years ☐
d) 40 years or more ☐

3. **Which Province do you most strongly identify with or come from?**

a) Western ☐ b) Isabel ☐ c) Central ☐ d) Malaita ☐ e) Guadalcanal ☐
f) Choisuel ☐ g) Makira ☐ h) Temotu ☐ i) Renbel ☐

4. **Did you enter your Initial Teacher Education programme (ITE) directly from secondary school?**

a. Yes ☐ *Please go to question 10*
b. No ☐ *Please answer all questions*

5. **I began my Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme..... (You may tick more than one)**

a. following completion of a degree ☐ d) after some years at home ☐
b. following completion of a diploma ☐ e) as a change in career ☐
c. following completion of a certificate ☐ f) other, specify: _____

Major subject/s in highest qualification: _____

6. **Number of years of full-time employment before entry to Initial Teacher Education (ITE)**

a. None ☐ (Go to question 11) 4) 11-15 years ☐
b. 1-5 years ☐ 5) 16 years + ☐
c. 6-10 years ☐

7. **Key field of previous full-time employment**

a) Administration/Management ☐ 6) Technical ☐
b) Clerical ☐ f) Education ☐
c) Trades ☐ g) self-employment ☐
d) Business ☐ h) Professional service ☐
e) Agriculture/Fisheries ☐ i) Other, specify: _____

8. **Level of annual income in previous full-time employment**

a) Less than \$25,000 ☐ b) \$25,000 to \$35,000 ☐ c) Greater than \$35,000 ☐

9. **Highest academic qualification before entry into your teacher education programme**

a) Certificate ☐ b) Diploma ☐ c) Degree ☐ d) Postgraduate diploma ☐
e) Masters ☐ f) Other, specify: _____

10. **a. Course enrolled in Initial Teachers Education programme**

a) English/Soc. Studies ☐ e) Industrial Arts ☐
b) Maths/Bus. Studies ☐ f) Home Economic ☐

c) Science ☐ g) Agriculture ☐
d) Chaplaincy ☐ h) Other, specify: _____

Reasons for choosing the course you enrolled in:

11. Likert Scale

In the following table a number of statements about teaching and learning are presented. The purpose of this Likert scale is to gather information about your sense of preparedness to teach at the end of your initial teacher education. Therefore, there are **no right or wrong answers**. I am only interested in your frank opinions on these statements. Your responses will be kept confidential.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate your personal opinion about each statement in the table below by circling the appropriate response at the right column of each statement.

KEY:

1=strongly agree

2=Moderately Agree

3=Agree more than disagree

4=Disagree slightly more than disagree

5=Moderately Disagree

6=Strongly Disagree

Statements about Teaching and Learning	RESPONSES					
	<i>Strongly Agree</i>				<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	
1. I feel confident that I have acquired adequate planning skills to help me in my lesson planning and preparation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I feel confident that I will be able to plan my lessons to meet students' different learning needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I am confident that I can organise the curriculum content of my teaching subject into a unit scheme of work/term programmes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I am familiar with the curriculum content and curriculum goals of my teaching subject syllabus.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I am confident that I can translate curriculum objectives and learning outcomes into lessons.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I believe I have a good understanding of my subject content.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I am confident that I can apply a variety of teaching strategies in my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I am confident that I can apply questioning and explanation skills well in my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I am confident that I can plan and manage effective group-work and discussions in my class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I am confident that I can plan and prepare a variety of teaching resources to help me in my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	66
11. I am confident that I can use locally available materials to construct basic teaching resources for my lessons.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I am confident that I can begin and end lessons effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I believe that time management is very important in teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6

14. I am confident that I have acquired adequate knowledge and skills in appropriate assessment strategies during my teacher education.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I am confident that I can incorporate effective assessment strategies into my planning and teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I am confident that I can use assessment results to improve on my teaching and enhance students' learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I believe I have enough training to deal with any student learning problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I am confident that I can deal with any student behaviour problem in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I believe I can develop a good working relationship with the community and parents of the school I will be posted to.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I believe my initial teacher education programme has given me the necessary skills to become an effective teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6

12. Questions on sense of preparedness

a. My reasons for choosing teaching as a career are.....

b. The areas in which I feel the School of Education has prepared me well are.....

c. The areas in which I feel the School of Education could have prepared me better are.....

d. The things I want to know more about before I start with my first class/lesson are.....

e. The things that I might find problems in as a first year teacher are.....

f. Ideally, the type of school and class level I would prefer in my first job are.....

g. I would like to be interviewed on my experiences as a beginning teacher over the next two years. **(Please tick one box)**

1) Yes ☐ 2) No ☐

-THE END-

Appendix I: Likert Scale Score

KEY:

1=strongly agree

2=Moderately Agree

3=Agree more than disagree

4=Disagree slightly more than disagree

5=Moderately Disagree

6=Strongly Disagree

Statements about Teachers level of preparedness	Av Score
1. I feel confident that I have acquired adequate planning skills to help me in my lesson planning and preparation.	2.0
2. I feel confident that I will be able to plan my lessons to meet students' different learning needs.	1.9
3. I am confident that I can organise the curriculum content of my teaching subject into a unit scheme of work/term programmes.	2.1
4. I am familiar with the curriculum content and curriculum goals of my teaching subject syllabus.	2.1
5. I am confident that I can translate curriculum objectives and learning outcomes into lessons.	2.5
6. I believe I have a good understanding of my subject content.	1.9
7. I am confident that I can apply a variety of teaching strategies in my teaching.	2.3
8. I am confident that I can apply questioning and explanation skills well in my teaching.	2.0
9. I am confident that I can plan and manage effective group-work and discussions in my class.	1.8
10. I am confident that I can plan and prepare a variety of teaching resources to help me in my teaching.	1.6
11. I am confident that I can use locally available materials to construct basic teaching resources for my lessons.	2.1
12. I am confident that I can begin and end lessons effectively.	2.1
13. I believe that time management is very important in teaching.	1.6
14. I am confident that I have acquired adequate knowledge and skills in appropriate assessment strategies during my teacher education.	2.5
15. I am confident that I can incorporate effective assessment strategies into my planning and teaching.	3.0
16. I am confident that I can use assessment results to improve on my teaching and enhance students' learning.	1.6
17. I believe I have enough training to deal with any student learning problems.	2.6
18. I am confident that I can deal with any student behaviour problem in the classroom	2.3
19. I believe I can develop a good working relationship with the community and parents of the school I will be posted to.	1.3
20. I believe my initial teacher education programme has given me the necessary skills to become an effective teacher.	1.9

Appendix J: Beginning Teachers' Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

NAME: _____ (*Please print*)

I have read and understood the information given to me about the research and.....
(Please tick one box)

- 2) agree ☐
3) do not agree ☐
to participate in this research.

(Please tick one box)

- 1) I would like ☐
2) I would not like ☐
to be considered for selections for the interviews in February 2008, October 2008 and
October 2009.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix K: Assisting SOE-SICHE Staff Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

NAME: _____ (*Please print*)

I have read and understood the information given to me about the research study and how I should administer the questionnaire, and I..... (**Please tick one box**)

agree ☐

do not agree ☐

to assist in the study, and will ensure that all data I collected on *Patricia Rodie's* behalf will be kept confidential.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix L: Research Information Sheet A

(for the Permanent Secretary, MEHRD and relevant MEHRD Directors)

Researcher: Patricia Rodie (Doctoral Student)
, University of Waikato, NZ, Hamilton

Introduction:

This research study is pursued as a requirement for my doctoral thesis. However, the data collected will also be used in articles and conference papers that will highlight the professional development needs of beginning secondary teachers in the Solomon Islands. The outcome of this study will have significant implications for teacher education, beginning teacher in-service education, teacher induction and teacher professional development in Solomon Islands, as the data collected can be used to inform policy decisions relating to the above areas. Such policies should help drive the design and implementation of teacher induction, professional development and in-service education programmes in the future. The establishment of such programmes is critical in addressing the 'quality' issues in teaching that are highlighted in the Solomon Islands education working documents, the SIESF (2007-2015) and the SINEAP (2007-2009). The focus of this study is planned within the parameters of the expected outcomes, in relation to 'quality', that is highlighted in the SIESF (2007-2015) document, in an effort to contribute towards the improvement of teacher quality in the Solomon Islands education system. Data for the study will be obtained through a questionnaire and interviews.

Research Title:

The perceptions of beginning secondary teachers' about their professional learning experiences in the Solomon Islands context.

Research Focus /Objectives

The main focus of this study is to investigate beginning secondary teachers' self-perceptions of their preparedness to teach at the end of their initial teacher education and during their first two years of teaching. The study will also examine the support mechanisms, by way of induction programmes or mentoring systems, which are in place in secondary schools to support beginning secondary teachers as they venture into their new careers. Thus, the main objective of this study is to investigate the self-perceptions of beginning secondary teachers of their initial teacher education programmes, their professional learning experiences during their first two years of teaching and the quality of support they receive from the schools they are posted to.

Research Participants

The 2007 cohort of pre-service secondary teachers at SOE-SICHE, who will begin their teaching careers in 2008 are the preferred participants in this study. This is because I would like to explore the professional learning experiences of beginning teachers over a two-year period, in order to establish an in-depth understanding of their induction and professional development needs.

Ethical Considerations:

Permission will be sought from all relevant authorities before this study can begin and proceed. The participants will involve in the study on a voluntary basis, after they have signed a Consent Form. Data collected through this research will be kept confidential for an indefinite period of time and that any personal information obtained from the participants will be securely stored for the duration of the research project. Participants may withdraw from the study up to the time of signing off their first transcripts.

Appendix M: Research Information Sheet B

(All Participants-Education Authorities, Principals, and Beginning Teachers)

Researcher: Patricia Rodie (Doctoral Student)
University of Waikato, NZ, Hamilton

Introduction:

Hello oloketa! Thank you for taking your time to read through this information sheet. Please read on, so that you can have a fair understanding about the research I am about to conduct and the reason why I would like to involve you in this research project.

I am conducting this research study as a requirement towards my doctoral thesis. However, the data collected can also be used in articles and conference papers that will highlight the professional development needs of beginning secondary teachers in the Solomon Islands, as well as the policy issues relating to teacher education and beginning teachers' professional development needs that may need the attention of relevant authorities, in order that necessary measures be taken to address them. Therefore, it is important that we work together to complete this project, so that we can communicate the issues faced by beginning secondary teachers during their first two years of teaching to the relevant education authorities and education policy makers. It is hoped that the outcome of this study will lead to the establishment of beginning teachers' in-service education, induction and professional development programmes that are geared towards improving the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in Solomon Islands secondary schools. This study will be conducted over a period of two years. Data for the study will be collected through the use of questionnaire and interviews.

Research Title:

The perceptions of beginning secondary teachers' about their professional learning experiences in the Solomon Islands context.

Research Focus

The main focus of this study is to investigate secondary teacher graduate's perceived level of preparedness at the end of their teacher training and their self-perceptions, self-efficacy beliefs, expectations and experiences during their first two years of teaching. The study will also examine the support mechanisms, by way of induction programmes or mentoring systems, which are in place in secondary schools to support beginning secondary teachers as they venture into their new teaching careers.

Research Participants

The 2007 cohort of pre-service secondary teachers, who will be starting their teaching careers in 2008, are the preferred participants in this study. This is because the timing of their graduation falls within the time-frame of my research study and that I would like to explore their professional learning experiences, as beginning teachers, over a two-year period. This would enable me to establish an in-depth understanding of their induction and professional development needs.

Ethical Considerations:

Permission will be sought from all relevant authorities (MEHRD/SICHE) and from each participant before this study can begin and proceed. Participants will involve in this study on a voluntary basis, after they have signed a Consent Form. Data collected through this research will be kept confidential for an indefinite period of time and that any personal information obtained will be securely stored for the duration of the research project. Participants may withdraw from the study up to the time of signing off their first transcripts.

Appendix N: Interview Schedule 1

The perceptions of beginning secondary teachers' about their professional learning experiences in the Solomon Islands context

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION: The main purpose of this first interview is to get an understanding of your ITE experiences and how well your teacher education programmes prepared you for classroom teaching as a beginning teacher. I am also interested in your experiences in the first two months of teaching and the type of support you receive so far, as well as the type of support you would want.

Domain and Lead Question	Possible Probe Questions
1. Choosing Teaching	
1.a What are your reasons for choosing teaching as a career?	Can you tell me about any people and/or experiences that influenced your decision to become teacher?
2 Being a beginning teacher	
2.a When you graduated last year , what do you think teaching would be like?	In what ways has teaching met your expectations? In what ways has it been different?
2.b What is it like being a beginning teacher in your school?	What have been the most rewarding experience? What has been particularly challenging? What is frustrating about your role as a beginning teacher? What is the most important thing to you at this time as a beginning teacher?
2.c Please can you tell me what classes and levels you are teaching this year?	Are these the subject areas you were prepared for during your ITE?
2. d Please can you tell me about any extra curricula activities you are involved in at this school?	If not, why do you think you are placed in such a situation? Is this an expectation or are you a willing participant?
2.e If you were asked to rate your level of satisfaction with your role as a teacher on a scale of 1 to 4, how would you rate it at this point in time? 1=very dissatisfied 3=satisfied 2=dissatisfied 4=very satisfied	What is the reason why you feel the way you do now about your role as a teacher?
3. Thinking back to your teacher preparation.....	
3.a In what ways did your teacher preparation programme prepare you for secondary teaching?	Use the following ideas as a checklist after asking questions 3a to 3f.
3.b What areas do you feel less prepared or unprepared to do well?	I am interested in how well you feel your ITE programme has prepared you in the following areas and can you give me examples:
3.c What do you recall as the key strengths of your initial teacher education programme?	a) classroom management b) teaching students with special needs c) teaching gifted/talented students d) planning for teaching/learning e) managing student behaviour
3.d Are there any areas you think your ITE programme should have placed more emphasis on?	f) application of assessment strategies including exams g) reporting students' progress to parents h)working with colleagues in a teaching team
3.e Now that you are teaching, in what ways do you see the more theoretical aspects of your ITE programme	Note: These examples may relate to ITE or the beginning teachers experiences within school over

<p>informing your work?</p> <p>3.f In what ways did your practicum experiences contribute to your professional learning as a teacher?</p>	<p>the first two months of teaching.</p>
4. Making a difference to student learning	
<p>Thinking of yourself as a teacher now, what can you say about your ability to/confidence in...</p> <p>4.a organising the curriculum content in your subject into a unit/term programme</p> <p>4.b translating curriculum objectives and learning outcomes into lessons</p> <p>4.c delivering subject content.</p> <p>4.d applying a variety of teaching strategies into your teaching</p> <p>4.e integrating new ideas and curriculum innovations in your teaching.</p> <p>4.f incorporating effective assessment strategies into your planning and teaching.</p> <p>4.g adapting your teaching to meet the needs of your students.</p> <p>4.h dealing with student learning problems.</p> <p>4.i handling most discipline problems that arise in your classroom</p> <p>4. j working effectively with other teachers in teams to support student learning.</p>	
5. Induction/Guidance & Support from School	
<p>5.a What formal induction activities have you participated in?</p> <p>5.b In what ways have these induction activities helped or supported you in your role as a beginning teacher?</p> <p>5.c Please can you tell me about the ways in which you have been supported informally as a beginning teacher?</p> <p>5.d During these first two months of teaching, what areas of your teaching or working in the school have you sought advise on, and from who?</p> <p>5.e What areas would you like to have more support in?</p> <p>5. f What would be the preferred mode of support? Off-campus workshops, observations, one-on-one mentoring.....)</p> <p>5.g How would you rate the induction in your school on a 1 (inadequate) to 4 (excellent) scale?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have an allocated mentor and/or supervising teacher? • Is there a schedule of beginning teacher meetings? • How many beginning teachers are there in this school? • Have colleagues/mentors/supervising teacher observe your teaching and have provided feedback? • What professional development opportunities have you been offered? • Have you been able to observe other teachers teaching? • How have you felt about the feedback you have had, to date?
6. Looking ahead	
<p>6.a At this stage, how do you see your future career path in teaching?</p>	<p>What are your plans for the coming months and years?</p> <p>Depending on the participant's response to the lead question, explore the reasons:</p> <p>What made you think that way?</p> <p>What motivates you to stay in teaching?</p> <p>What would make you think about leaving teaching?</p>

	What has made you decide to leave teaching?
7. Conclusion	
<p>7.a If you were asked to describe teaching as a metaphor. How would you complete this sentence:</p> <p>“When I am teaching at my best, I am like</p> <p>7.b Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your ITE programme or your first two months of teaching as a beginning teacher?</p> <p>7.c Are you happy with everything that is on the tape?</p> <p>7.d Would you like to be sent an electronic copy of the interview transcript?</p>	

-THE END-

Appendix O: Interview Schedule 2

The perceptions of beginning secondary teachers' about their professional learning experiences in the Solomon Islands context

INTRODUCTION: The main purpose of this second interview is for me to hear your stories about your experiences during the first year of your teaching career. Firstly, I would like to hear about your teaching and learning experiences during this first year of your teaching career. Secondly, I would like you to tell me about how prepared you think you are during this first year of teaching. Thirdly, I would like to hear about your induction and professional learning experiences during this year, especially the kind of guidance and support you receive from your school and the professional learning and development activities that you involved in so far, as well as the type of professional support you would want during the first year of your teaching or that you think you would need during your first year of teaching.

Domain and Lead Question	Possible Probe Questions
1. Beginning Teacher Teaching Experiences During the First Year of Teaching	
1.a Since we last talked in March this year, what has teaching been like for you?	
1.b. During our first interview you told me that... How do you feel about this now?	
1.b Tell me about your best day as a teacher since we last talked.	Why was it a good day for you? What helped you to accomplish this? What did you learn about teaching or as a teacher on this day?
1.c What about the worst day as a teacher?	How did that impact on you as a teacher? How did you move forward from that experience? Did you seek any advice or help? Did you think you could be better prepared or supported to deal with the situation you experienced?
1.d In March this year, you said that you were not really satisfied with your role as a beginning teacher. If you were asked to rate your level of satisfaction with your role as a teacher on a scale of 1 to 4, how would you rate it at this point in time? 1=very dissatisfied 3=satisfied 2=dissatisfied 4=very satisfied	Why do you think about your role as a teacher in the way you do now?
2. Beginning Teachers' Learning Experiences During First Year of Teaching	
2.a Teachers learn a lot during their first year of teaching. Can you tell me about some of the things you have learnt as a beginning teacher since you began teaching this year?	What areas have you learnt a lot from?
2.b In what ways do you see what you learned in your initial teacher education programme continuing to inform your work as a teacher?	Do you find the notes you get from your teacher training useful in your teaching at all?
2.c What other factors have influenced your learning as a beginning teacher this year?	From your experience what do you think are the most effective ways to learn as a beginning teacher? (Induction, colleagues, mentor, formal PD, informal dialogue) Do you seek professional help in your teaching anytime during this year?

	In what ways has the help you sought impacted on your role as a teacher?
2. d Are there any areas in particular that you still feel you need to develop over the next year?	
2.e Are there specific areas that you feel your teaching has improved in?	
2. f In our first interview beginning teachers were quite varied in their thoughts about the role of theory; how do you see theory influencing your teaching over the last six months?	What do you understand by the term theory?
3. Beginning Teachers' Self-perceptions of their Preparedness to Teach.	
<p>3.a In your response to my questionnaire and our first interview you indicated that that these are some areas that you feel less prepared in as a beginning English and Social Studies teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • translating curriculum objectives and learning outcomes into lessons. • applying a variety of teaching strategies. • applying questioning skills. • applying effective assessment strategies. • dealing with students learning problems • time management • how to manage student behaviour. • applying explanation skills <p>How do you feel about each of the above areas now?</p>	<p>Did you seek any professional help or advise to help you address those areas listed?</p> <p>If yes, who did you seek help from?</p> <p>If not, why?</p>
<p>During our last interview, there are areas in teaching that you said you feel confident in and there were areas that you said you still need some help in. What can you say about your level of confidence in those same aspects of teaching now?</p> <p>3.b organising the curriculum content in your subject into a unit/term programme</p> <p>3.c translating curriculum objectives and learning outcomes into lessons</p> <p>3.d delivering subject content..</p> <p>3.e applying a variety of teaching strategies into your teaching</p> <p>3.f integrating new ideas and curriculum innovations in your teaching.</p> <p>3.g incorporating effective assessment strategies into your planning and teaching.</p> <p>3.h adapting your teaching to meet the needs of your students.</p> <p>3.i dealing with student learning problems.</p> <p>3.j handling most discipline problems that arise in your classroom</p> <p>3.k working effectively with other teachers in teams to support student learning.</p>	
4. Beginning Teachers' Induction, Guidance and Professional Development Experiences	
4.a What formal induction and professional learning activities have you participated in since we last talked?	<p>Have colleagues/mentors/supervising teacher observe your teaching and have provided feedback since we last met?</p> <p>What professional development opportunities within or outside the school have you been offered over the</p>

	<p>last six months?</p> <p>Have you been able to observe other teachers teaching over the last six months? Why? or why not?</p>
<p>4.b Have you had any feedback about your teaching over the last six months?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal lesson observations? • Informal feedback from colleagues? • Feedback from students? 	<p>What do they think about you as a teacher?</p> <p>What do they say about your teaching?</p> <p>How helpful are their feedback to your teaching?</p> <p>How have you felt about their feedback?</p>
4.c Please can you tell me about the ways in which you have been supported informally over the last six months?	
4.d Looking back over this year, what have been the most important sources of support for your professional learning?	Are there any areas that you would have liked more support in?
4.e How would you rate the professional learning and induction in your school on a 1 (inadequate) to 4 (excellent) scale?	
5. Looking ahead	
<p>5.a Are you planning to stay on at this school next year?</p> <p>If so, what are the reasons for this?</p>	If not, what sort of school would you like to teach in?
5. b Looking ahead, how do you see your future career path in teaching?	Depending on the participant's response to the lead question, explore the reasons:
6. Conclusion	
<p>6.a If you were asked to describe teaching as a metaphor. How would you complete this sentence:</p> <p>“When I am teaching at my best, I am like ...</p> <p>6.b Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences of teaching so far?</p> <p>6.c Are you happy with everything that is on the tape?</p> <p>6.d Would you like to be sent an electronic copy of the interview transcript?</p>	

-THE END-

Appendix P: Interview Schedule 3

The perceptions of beginning secondary teachers' about their professional learning experiences in the Solomon Islands context

INTRODUCTION: The main purpose of this third interview is for me to hear your stories about your experiences during the second year of your teaching career. Firstly, I would like to hear about your teaching and learning experiences during this second year of your teaching career. Secondly, I would like you to tell me about how prepared you think you are during this second year of teaching. Thirdly, I would like to hear about the kind of guidance and support you receive from your school, as well as the professional learning and development opportunities that you were offered, or involved in this year. Finally, I would like to hear about the type of induction support you think you would need during the second year of your teaching career.

Domain and Lead Question	Possible Probe Questions
1. Being a second year beginning teacher	
1.a What is it like being a second year teacher?	During our last interview you said that you found secondary teaching interesting and enjoyable, compared to your previous experience as a Primary teacher. In what ways is your teaching now different from last year? How have you developed as a teacher since our last interview in September last year?
1.b. What are your teaching responsibilities this year? (class, subject, form) Have you involved in any management responsibilities or extra curricula duties?	How do you compare your teaching responsibilities now with that of last year? How are you managing your work load this year, compared to last year?
1.c How would you rate your level of satisfaction with your teaching role as a teacher at this point in time?	How do you feel now about your role as a teacher? Why has your thinking changed?
2. Teacher Learning/Change	
2.a How has your understanding of teaching your curriculum area (subject) developed over the last 22 months? If you are asked to justify how and why you teach the way you do, what would be the key points that you would make?	Does this reflect what you would have said at the end of your ITE, or when you just started teaching last year?
2.b How has your understanding of how students learn developed over the last 22 months? How have you learned to support your students' different learning needs? In what ways have you been supported to learn about your students' families and community?	What personal/professional understandings have you trialled, developed, or strengthened with regards to student learning, so far? How have you improved? What has contributed to your learning?
2.c In what ways have your assessment practices developed over the last 22 months?	During our last interview you indicated that you were Ok in this area after you attend a workshop on assessment organised by the school. What have you learned about assessment from the workshop, and how has this contributed to the improvement of your assessment practices? What are the key ways that you incorporate assessment in your day-to-day teaching?

<p>2.d Are there areas in your teaching that you still want to develop?</p>	<p>During our last interview you told me that you need to develop your planning skills further this year. How have you developed in this area so far? What other areas do you think you still need to develop?</p>
<p>2.e Has your view of a 'good teacher changed since you began teaching? In what way?</p>	<p>How has the first 22 months of your teaching challenged you beliefs about teaching? Are there any areas in your teaching (e.g. planning, group-work) that you now do differently to how you learnt about it in your ITE?</p>
<p>2.f During our last two interviews, there are areas in teaching that you said you feel confident in and there were areas that you said you still need some help in. What can you say about your level of confidence in those same areas in teaching now, after 22 months of teaching?</p> <p><i>organising the curriculum content in your subject into a unit/term programme.</i> You said you were confident in this area. How do you feel now?</p> <p><i>translating curriculum objectives and learning</i> You said you were confident in this area. How do you feel now?</p> <p><i>delivering subject content.</i> You said you were confident in this area. How do you feel now?</p> <p><i>applying a variety of teaching strategies into your teaching.</i> You said you were confident in this area, during our last interview, but cannot apply more variety due to large class size. How do you feel now?</p> <p><i>integrating new ideas and curriculum innovations in your teaching.</i> You said you were confident in this area. How do you feel now?</p> <p><i>incorporating effective assessment strategies into your planning and teaching.</i> You said you were Ok in this area. How do you feel now?</p> <p><i>adapting your teaching to meet the needs of your students.</i> You said last time that you still need to work in this area. How do you feel now?</p> <p><i>dealing with student learning problems.</i> You said last time that you gave extra work to students whom you think needed extra help. How do you feel now?</p> <p><i>handling most discipline problems that arise in your classroom.</i> You said last time that you managed to deal with some disciplinary problems. How do you feel now?</p> <p><i>working effectively with other teachers in teams to support student learning.</i> Last time you said that you have no</p>	

problem in this area. What about the last 12 months of your teaching career?	
3. Induction in the second year	
3.a During our last interview in September 2008, you said that you have not involved in any formal induction programme, but you were informed of some expectations of the school through announcements and school notices. What about this year, have you received any induction support at all?	Are there any areas that you sought/received advice on from your senior colleagues /HOD/school principal this year? If so, in what areas?
3.b If you did not involve in any induction activities this year, are there opportunities for you to express your concern or offer suggestions as to how your induction experience could be improved?	If you were to offer suggestions for the improvement of your induction experience, what would be the key areas that you think needs to be addressed in your case? Who do you think is to be blamed for the lack of a formal induction programme at your school? Do you think there is a chance for you to work in partnership with your school management team to achieve a better result in your experiences as a beginning teacher?
3.c During our last interview you said that your HOD observed your class on the advice of the EA as a requirement towards your full registration. What about this year? Have you been observed? or Have you been encouraged to observe your colleagues? If yes, how many times? If not, why?	
3.d What professional development opportunities within or outside the school have you been offered or involved in since our last interview?	How relevant or useful are these professional learning and development opportunities to you as a beginning teacher?
3.e Are there activities that have involved you in working closely with your colleagues that have assisted your professional learning this year?	Describe a recent professional conversation that you have had with a colleague, for example on student learning, or classroom management?
3.f During our last interview you said that you only received feedback from your HOD once. What about this year, have you had any feedback about you teaching as yet? Have you had formal lesson observations? If so, by whom? Have you had any informal feedback from colleagues about your role as a teacher? What about feedback from students?	How have you felt about the feedback you receive so far? If there is no feedback, how have you felt about the lack of feedback?
3.g During our last interview you said that you have received informal support from your colleagues. Does informal support continue to be of importance to you this year?	If so, can you please give me an example of how informal support from colleagues helped you in your teaching?
3.h The probationary period for beginning teachers in the SI is one year. Have you been confirmed to be a fully registered teacher yet?	If yes, how many times were you observed before being fully registered? If no, what steps are yet to be completed? Are you aware of the requirements for full

	registration? Who informed you about this? When?
3.i Looking back on the kind of support you receive from your school since you started teaching last year: What aspects would you recommend as essential for beginning teachers? What aspects were not that important? How could things be made better in terms of guidance and support? Who is best situated to give that support?	
3.j We know that learning about teaching takes place on a continuum that includes ITE and the induction phase. What do you think should be the focus of ITE and what areas should be focused on the first two years of teaching?	If yes, who did you seek help from? If no, why?
3.k During our last interview you said that the level of support you received from your school was inadequate and needs urgent attention. Do you think the school has made any improvement in the way they support beginning teachers compared to last year How would you rate the professional learning and induction in your school on a 1 (inadequate) to 4 (excellent) scale now?	How do you think BTs should be supported?
4. Looking back and looking ahead	
4.a Has this school been a good place for you to start your teaching experience? Why? or why not? In what ways has the culture of this school influenced your expectations and understandings of teaching and learning?	How do you see yourself 'fitting' into the school? Are there particular strengths or contributions that you have brought to the school?
4. b What has sustained you in your first 22 months of teaching?	What has kept you in teaching to date?
4.c Are you planning to stay on in this school next year? (If planning to leave teaching) What has made you decide to leave teaching?	What are the reasons for this? If not, what sort of school would you like to teach in?
4.d How happy are you about your decision to choose teaching as a career?	
4.e Looking ahead, tell me about the kind of teacher you would ultimately like to be?	
4.f How do you see your career path in teaching (Class teacher, HOD, Principal, etc)?	What strengths do you see in yourself that would help you achieve this goal?
5. Conclusion	
5.a When you were asked to describe teaching as a metaphor during our first interview, you said that when you teach at your best you were like an owl. Then in the second interview you said that you would still maintain that same metaphor, and that	

<p>you were like a mother owl, and that you would like to see your baby owls fly, will they fly over or just fly and drop.</p> <p>If you are asked to describe teaching as a metaphor now, how would you complete the same sentence?</p> <p>“When I am teaching at my best, I am like</p> <p>5.b Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences of teaching so far?</p> <p>5.c Are you happy with everything that is on the tape?</p> <p>5.d Would you like to be sent an electronic copy of the interview transcript?</p>	
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-THE END-