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**Creating Effective Invited Spaces: Putting the  
lens on early childhood teacher education  
practica**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Education at Massey University, Manawatū,  
New Zealand.**

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## **Abstract**

The teaching practicum offers many opportunities for growth of knowledge, practice and development of new understandings and competencies for student teachers. However, student teachers who are placed within low socioeconomic early childhood settings, if they have little or no knowledge of this habitus, may find this a challenging aspect of their initial teacher education. This study aimed to identify factors that support, facilitate and nurture the positive relationships between associate teachers and student teachers during teaching practicum within low socioeconomic early childhood settings.

A qualitative case study approach was used to gather data, including in-depth interviews with two pre-service teacher education coordinators as well as six associate teachers in a range of low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings. The findings provide insights into associate teachers' pivotal role in allowing student teachers access to the very intimate and specific dispositions and approaches that they implement every day in their practice. In addition, the findings highlight the reciprocal responsibility of student teachers to take advantage of the opportunities to share with their associate teachers during the short passage of time that the teaching practicum allows.

The findings from this study led to the development of a conceptual model which reveals the characteristics of an effective 'invited space'. This invited space is most likely to emerge when both the associate teacher and the student teacher negotiate a respectful and trusting relationship that allows them to share their identity, beliefs, values and practices, and to be prepared to move flexibly between the roles of teacher and learner.



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## **Kua takoto te mānuka, hiki ake, kawe!**

The challenge is for associate teachers to pick up this knowledge, take it, and use these insights to nurture beginning teachers.

Associate teachers hold the power position and the key to creating transformative teaching practices. Utilising the mentor role with a willingness to share, and a view to creating a new genesis of teachers through a collaborative lens, is vital for the success of future teaching. Understanding and guiding our learners today will empower them to use this rich knowledge for navigating tomorrow's world.

**Kia kaha, kia toa, kia maia, kia manawanui!**



# Chapter One

## Introduction

This chapter will explain the background context in which this study is set and the wero (challenge) that has been placed down for associate teachers. Next, the aim of and the rationale for this study will be explained. A brief outline of the organisation of this study will follow.

Pre-service early childhood teachers face a challenging task as they venture out from behind the comfort of books, theories and institutional learning into the realities of ‘ground zero’ teaching practica. Although these practica are an essential facet and at the very heart of contributing to student teacher success (Gebhard, 2009; Tang, 2004), many able and skilled beginning teachers appear to be less competent and confident at meeting the needs of learners within culturally diverse low socioeconomic educational settings (Aspfors & Bondas, 2013; Hansen, McLaughlin & Haworth, in progress; Hess, Lanig & Vaughan, 2007).

The nature and context of the early childhood teaching landscape is dynamic and complex, demanding a multiplicity of knowledge, skills and capabilities from teachers (Hedges, 2000). Consequently, the experiences within these practica, including teachers’ mentorship, could potentially ‘make or break’ the students’ perceptions, competence and confidence in journeying towards becoming a beginning teacher. This insight drives the purpose behind laying down the wero for associate teachers as they hold a wealth of experience, knowledge and expertise about their respective teaching and learning settings. When these insights are shared with student teachers, the potential of empowering them within the low socioeconomic educational setting, as well as transforming deeply set attitudes, beliefs and values, may be a positive way of growing student teacher confidence and success during teaching practica.

## 1.1. The Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the inter-relationships and understandings between associate teachers and student teachers during practica, specifically within low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings. “The term socio-economic status is used extensively in educational policy and research” (Foley, 2007, p.9). This term, *socioeconomic*, is used as a measure of a group or an individual’s social position in the community (Foley, 2007). As social status is not easily determined, the term socioeconomic, takes into account varied economic, social and physical attributes of the locus in which the individuals or groups both work and live (Carroll, Casswell, Huakau, Howden-Chapman & Perry, 2011; Foley, 2007). In Aotearoa New Zealand socioeconomic inequality is becoming deeply entrenched, and the impact of what occurs outside of the educational setting is of critical importance to what occurs inside it (Carpenter & Osborne, 2014).

This study also aims to discover the nature of, and the factors that enhance and create effective ways in which associate teachers and student teachers could co-operate together during practica - within what will be referred to as the ‘invited space’. One way in which student teachers and associate teachers might work effectively during practica is through developing a shared, collaborative teaching and learning environment. In such an environment, student teachers may gain the confidence and skills to teach, learn and share understandings with their associate teacher. An invited space is explained by Clarke, Triggs and Nielsen (2014) as a space where interactions and relational agency are productive and connect to a richness or enhancement of learning that concerns both parties involved. Further, Clarke et al., state that: “This space represents a genuine engagement between the parties and the endpoint of that engagement is not prefigured by one party or pre-empted by the other” (2014, p.188). The word ‘*genuine*’ that Clarke et al. (2014) use to describe the invited space suggests the possibility that an environment could be created that may embrace or highlight a more natural, collaborative, honest and trusting interaction between associate teachers and student teachers.

## 1.2. The Rationale for the Study

For the majority of my teaching career, spanning around twelve years, within the early childhood teaching sector, I have had experience of working mainly in low socioeconomic communities. I have found these particular teaching opportunities to be the most rewarding, stimulating and inspiring teaching and learning settings. Hence, I am a strong advocate for effective teaching within this locus. I find it very interesting to read that beginning teachers often find the low socioeconomic teaching setting a struggle and perceive it to be a difficult challenge to negotiate (Apsfors & Bondas, 2013). I am also curious to understand and discover the reasons why this should be the case for many beginning teachers who are otherwise competent and confident within their practice. This insight is the main motivation for this study as it sparked a strong emotional response for me and a feeling of sadness that all of our newly graduating teachers may not be experiencing the same level of enjoyment and satisfaction with their early teaching careers.

The culture and context of the environments that we teach in, play a crucial role in much of what individuals learn and do (Andersen & Stillman, 2013). As early childhood educational settings produce a level of complex and diverse relationships, it has been said that teachers must be willing to adapt and change to create potential learning opportunities for *all* who step foot into their teaching and learning landscapes (Burke, 2014). Knowledgeable and capable associate teachers within low socioeconomic educational settings can assist and support student teachers to recognise the importance of cultural awareness and difference, as well as in acknowledging the strengths of the learners that they will interact with (Downey & Cobbs, 2007; Yuan & Lee, 2014).

Student teachers have an opportunity to develop new behaviours and competencies alongside the influence of the associate teacher throughout their practicum experience. If these opportunities create a shift in the process of thinking, behaving and responding in the direct teaching and learning setting then this may be beneficial and productive for the student teacher (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). Unfortunately some research has also found that student teachers report negative mentoring experiences when they find their associate teacher has opposing or differing attitudes, values and beliefs to that of their own (Eby, McManus, Simons & Russell,

2000; Rajuan et al, 2007). It has been found that teachers are generally female, white, mono-lingual and their exposure to inter-cultural practices are limited (Duckworth, Walker Levy & Levy, 2005). Therefore, discrepancies in the values between the teachers and the educational context may exist, highlighting possible cultural divides, and possibilities of learning that are driven by the dominant discourses and perspectives of these teachers. Despite the fact that educational contexts hold an abundance of diverse learners, some teachers continue to attempt to connect with them through the same mono-lingual ways (Allemann-Ghionda, 2015).

This study will look to explore ways in which to overcome challenges through the ‘voices’ of associate teachers. I would also like this study to dissolve the stigmas and attitudes associated with low socioeconomic teaching and learning by looking at how the associate teachers form effective relationships with student teachers during the teaching practica in these contexts.

As this study is set within the New Zealand context, Māori terms will be referred to and explained where necessary. I have chosen *not* to italicise these Māori kupu (words). Aotearoa New Zealand is a bi-cultural nation and te reo Māori (the indigenous language) should be given the same equity and respect as English as it is an official language of this country.

### **1.3. Organisation of the Thesis**

A brief outline of the chapters in this thesis follows.

Chapter One introduced a brief background context to the setting of this study, and the wero that has been laid down for associate teachers. The aims of, and rationale for this study followed.

Chapter Two includes a literature review on salient research around the traditional roles in associate-student teacher relationships, invited spaces, the art of active and cultural engagement, effective teaching practices and dispositions for diverse learning settings, and learning through a shared mutual process. The research questions that arise from the literature review are presented and following this the over-arching theoretical framework for this study will be explained.

In Chapter Three the qualitative research approach for this study is detailed. The methodology and research design approach used for this study will follow. Next, the participants, the setting of the study, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations are also presented.

Chapter Four begins with the findings that provide background context, based on information on two pre-service teacher education coordinators. In this chapter I will detail the setting, experience and philosophies of each of the six participating associate teachers.

In Chapter Five I will discuss the emerging themes that have arisen from the findings, and present a conceptual model that was progressively constructed during the analysis phase of this study.

In Chapter Six an outline of the key findings, implications for theory, and the strengths and limitations of this study are explained. Implications and recommendations for practice for associate teachers, student teachers, and initial teacher education providers will also be presented. The chapter concludes with reflections on my research journey.

We will move on now to the next chapter, in which the relevant literature will be reviewed.



## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter will explore and review literature around some of the factors that may be the initiators of a potential opening, creating or developing of invited spaces between associate teachers and student teachers. The research questions arising from the literature review for this study are presented next. Finally, an explanation of the over-arching theoretical framework will conclude this chapter.

First, the traditional roles in the associate teacher and student teacher relationship are described. Second, the literature around the idea of creating invited spaces and the nature of the inter-relationships between associate teachers and student teachers is explored. The third section opens by addressing active engagement and cultural engagement, and discusses what these values or practices may bring for student teachers during practicum in diverse low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings. The fourth section provides a summary of some effective teaching practices and dispositions of associate teachers, and how these can enhance opportunities for engagement in diverse learning settings. Finally, there is an exploration into the practice of a community of learners and how this approach depends on a shared, mutual process of knowledge building between participants.

#### **2.2. Traditional Roles in Associate-Student Teacher Relationships**

The teaching practicum is one of the most influential factors in shaping student teachers' experiences of pre-service training (Lanier & Little, 1986; Ben-Peretz, 2001; Tang, 2003). Traditional accounts of the associate-student teacher relationship highlight the associate as the expert and the student as the apprentice (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; Patrick, 2013). Le Cornu and Ewing's (2008) definition of this traditional associate-student teacher relationship also sees the associate teacher as

being a *critic* or a *judge*. Traditionally, the territory is the associate teacher's and he/she is the sole authoritarian, with the student taking the *visitor's seat* (Cohen-Sayag et al., 2013). What many student teachers experience on their teacher education practicum is that the associate teacher is responsible for modelling good practice, assessing the student teachers' abilities and skills for future teaching, guiding them with their expert knowledge and wisdom, prompting reflective praxis and allowing the student teacher to gradually assume more of the teaching responsibilities as they see fit (Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman & Stevens, 2009). The associate teacher often views the student teacher as a learner who needs to achieve and display specific skills and assignments during the practical experience in order to assess them in their pre-service training (Ferrier-Kerr 2009; Goodnough et al., 2009; Patrick, 2013).

Associate teachers tend to have power and control within their respective teaching domains. In a traditional sense the associate teacher's power is seen as hierarchical from the perspective of the student teacher (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). The power relationship between associate teachers and student teachers can affect the development of learning within this partnership (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; Sumsion & Patterson, 2004). Associate teachers often have '*heavy control*' during the pre-service practica. '*Heavy control*' is explained in Yuan and Lee's (2014) study where they found that the associate teacher is the one who has control and direct supervision over what the student teacher's roles and responsibilities are within the learning setting, and who guides what they get to see, achieve and gain from the teaching practicum. Student teachers are often expected to adopt traditional modes of training where they pick up on recommended teaching techniques and to replicate or mirror that of the '*master teacher*' (Rajuan, Beijaard & Verloop, 2007).

Perceptions of the hierarchical power of the associate teacher may be an important challenge for both student teachers and associate teachers to address if their relationship is to be nurtured in a trusting, collegial environment (Klein, Taylor, Onore, Strom & Abrams, 2014). Traditional accounts of mentoring tend to position this as a linear process where power relationships are infrequently acknowledged (LeCornu & Ewing, 2008; Patrick, 2013). As associate teachers may often have the final say, student teachers can be left with a lack of autonomy to experiment and explore the impact of their learning, and may lose crucial opportunities to discover

insights into their growth as professional teachers (Axford, 2005; Patrick, 2013). This perceived power relationship also influences the student teacher's agency through socialisation and communicative messages that travel to the student from the associate, through both implicit and explicit pathways (Clarke et al., 2014).

Agency, according to Gibbs (2005), is when individuals act with a sense of independence and are deliberate in this action. Individuals specifically choose ways in which to operate that uphold their opinions and ideals in relation to the environment they are functioning in. For example, teachers can display a level of social and relational agency when confronted with new challenges or demands on their teaching, such as having a student teacher enter their setting. These associate teachers may deliberately set up a climate where they are viewed as the expert in the hope of maintaining control over situations and functions that may directly affect the teaching and learning environment (Gibbs, 2005; Van Lier, 2008).

An individual operating with a certain sense of agency can also influence or 'cloud' another's functioning or ability to learn (Bandura, 2002). For example, an associate teacher's social and relational agency can have a significant influence over the way and extent that knowledge that is passed onto the student teacher. Often this may be passed on through a narrow lens or in a 'top down' manner (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). This mode of knowledge transmission may leave student teachers in a vulnerable position where they feel they must be prepared to respond to their associate's expectations and decode these messages carefully. Such situations create a tricky landscape for student teachers to navigate, especially if there is a mis-match of experiences, attitudes, expectations and understandings. (Cohen-Sayag, Hoz & Kaplan, 2013; Ferrier-Kerr, 2009).

Associate teachers assess student teachers on their teaching performance and how they develop working theories within their practice (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). This traditional role may restrict student teachers' creativity and sets up a somewhat powerless environment for them, which can signal deficit and create negative barriers (Axford, 2005). When the student teacher feels they are not able to speak out or act autonomously they are left in a vulnerable position and this creates a conflict and tension for associate teachers in regarding the roles and expectations of the practicum (Patrick, 2013). The teaching practicum creates tensions and pressures

for associate teachers too, as they must negotiate their own expectations of the student teacher who is working within their learning settings, as well as meeting compliance requirements, when considering new ideas that are proposed by the student teacher (Phelan, Sawa, Barlow, Hurlock, Irvine & Rogers, 2008).

The first point of reference for student teachers embarking on practicum is their assigned associate teacher. It is seen as crucial that student teachers develop a good working relationship with their associate teacher (Clarke et al., 2014) and that shared, mutual understandings are cultivated as these are integral components that have an impact on the successful outcome of the teaching practicum (Kabilian, 2013). Finding a personal connectedness within the relationship is important as it assists in building a sense of comfort and confidence for both student teachers and associate teachers. A casual or aimless approach in developing this important relational understanding, can provoke the emergence of perceived 'road blocks' or barriers (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009; Wang, 2001).

This study looks to identify opportunities where both associate teachers and student teachers may grow new awareness during practicum, which may therefore involve defining the traditional associate-student teacher relationship in new ways in order to encourage freer sharing of understandings.

### **2.3. Invited Spaces**

Invited spaces refers to the inter-relationships and collaboration between associate teachers and student teachers. New challenges may arise when student teachers are placed into an unfamiliar learning community for teaching practica (Auhl & Daniel, 2014; Patrick, 2013). For example, some student teachers on practicum within low socioeconomic educational environments may struggle if their own life experiences and understandings differ from those of learners in diverse cultural backgrounds (Arthur-Kelly, Sutherland, Lyons, Macfarlane & Foreman, 2013; Lu, 2010; Patrick, 2013). It has been suggested in the literature that, to enhance student teachers understandings of these environments, they must first explore their own values, beliefs and attitudes so they may be more effective at reflecting and engaging within these distinct learning communities (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2013; Lu, 2010).

In the situation described above, the associate teacher may hold specific knowledge of their particular teaching setting, which is a valuable resource and one that could also benefit the student teacher if it is shared freely (Clarke et al., 2014; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; Patrick, 2013). However, to date there is little known about how these participants may share knowledge and build an inter-dependent relationship. How this sort of relationship can be built is an area in need of further exploration and research (Ambrosetti & Dekker, 2010; Korthagen, 2004; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; Lu, 2010; Patrick, 2013).

The nature of mentoring for student teachers is complex and may develop best alongside interactions with children and their families within the educational setting. In this case, therefore, the setting is an influential contributor to teaching practica success (Clarke et al., 2014). Associate teachers who take the time to introduce the student teacher to the families, and allow student teachers to also take the time to become familiar with the educational setting, are more likely to enhance their confidence and positive attitude in working in a new setting during teaching practicum (Kabilian, 2013).

Introducing the student teacher into the new learning setting through involving them in authenticated tasks is seen as starting this collaborative process (Richter et al., 2013). Associate teachers who involve student teachers in the routines of the setting can support building a strong foundation for relationships (Casperan & Raaen, 2013). Within this partnership both associate teachers and student teachers also create a dialogic agency in each other (Matusov, 2001). Creating a dialogic agency means they work together to accomplish common goals, but also rely on each other to share and contribute experiences and learning. This kind of working together could evolve into a more holistic based delivery of learning experiences for themselves and that of others (Korthagen, 2004). A dialogic agency can also prepare both individuals for the complexities and diverse nature of the educational settings they will undoubtedly encounter during their teaching service ahead (Lu, 2010); and present an effective pathway to creating invited spaces.

For the associate-student teacher partnership to grow and take shape effectively it must first be nurtured through a trusting relationship (Gonzalez, 2010; Kabilian, 2013). A trusting partnership provides a space for understandings to begin

developing so it is a critical element for pre-service teacher success (Auhl & Daniel, 2014; Clarke et al., 2014). Creating trust depends on the participation and sharing by both individuals in the learning setting. Such participation and sharing leads to the strengths of both individuals being fully utilised and positively exploited (Beninghof, 2012).

The ways in which associate teachers interact are significant as student teachers class them as being one of the most crucial factors in having a successful teaching practicum and a quality teaching programme experience (Clarke et al, 2014). A constructivist approach towards facilitating associate-student teacher interactions therefore appears to be an important facet of building collaborative and co-operative relationships (Richter, Kunter, Ludtke, Klusman, Anders, Jurgens, 2013; Tatto, 1996). The nature of a constructivist vista is about individuals creating new knowledge, then connecting and applying this to prior, cemented knowledge (Richter et al, 2013). Research suggests that a constructivist approach, when associate teachers and student teachers work alongside each other during practicum, encourages individuals within the relationship to rely on each other (Henning, 2013; Matusov, 2001).

This study will look further into how this traditional inter-relationship can be challenged to work towards growing new understandings for student teachers on practicum, particularly in low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings. The study will also explore the ways in which associate teachers and student teachers might work in order to create effective invited spaces.

## **2.4. The Art of Active and Cultural Engagement**

Student teachers often need to cope with new and culturally diverse learning settings when they are placed on teaching practica. Therefore, being active in engaging with others is one priority. Another priority is learning to negotiate and explore respectful and culturally responsive ways of engaging with others within that learning community. The following section explores the art of active and cultural engagement in regards to the associate-student teacher relationships during practicum.

### *Active Engagement*

The art of active engagement is a complex yet important process that works on deepening understandings, relationships, influences and mutuality between people within their direct environment (Wenger, 1998). Brighthouse and Woods (2013) suggest that active engagement sits at the core of successful mentoring and teaching. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) also found that strengthening student engagement was about the way in which inter-connections between people are developed through motivation and directing energy towards a common goal. In regards to the associate-student teacher relationship, the common goal would be a successful practicum.

Active and genuine engagement may be beneficial in establishing a climate for invited spaces as it works to uphold a productive climate of growing and developing learning, through sharing and trusting with others (Clarke et al, 2014). The ways in which student teachers can actively be involved and engaged in the practicum setting may be decided upon by the associate teacher (Patrick, 2010); therefore, this study focuses on exploring how associate teachers can build engagement, cultural awareness and confidence for student teachers within the low socioeconomic early childhood educational context.

Associate teachers and student teachers share a relationship that is time bound. Literature suggests that relationships may only evolve and strengthen during this time if there is continual engagement and collaboration is established (Clarkin-Phillips & Carr, 2012; Clarkin-Phillips & Carr, 2009). Therefore, the shared nature of this reciprocity between individuals involving trust and the freedom to speak may underpin the possibility of creating effective invited spaces, but could also bring to the surface disagreements and mis-understandings.

Gonzalez-Mena (2010) suggests that active engagement for student teachers works to develop understandings in a reciprocal, collaborative sense in regards to learning about respective cultures and heritage, and it explores pathways that help to bridge this awareness. In addition, Gonzalez-Mena (2008) maintains that it is useful “to focus on transformative education, where two people or groups come together and everyone is changed by the encounter” (p.27). Within the frame of mentor teaching in low socioeconomic educational settings, this transformative approach can bridge

awareness and understandings for student teachers to begin engaging in culturally appropriate ways.

### ***Cultural Engagement***

Cultural engagement may be a useful transformative approach to adopt within the relationships between associate teachers and student teachers. Attitudes of acceptance and non-judgemental views towards the contributing of prior knowledge to the teaching and learning environment may foreground opportunities to broaden horizons, and experiences for all involved in this process (Klein, Taylor, Onore, Strom & Abrams, 2014; Nguyen, 2009, Tatto, 1996).

There is much diversity within early childhood educational settings (Burger, 2010; Clarkin-Philips & Carr, 2012; Veseley, Ewaida & Kerney, 2013). Such diversity, as well as being community based and family-oriented, gives early childhood settings a unique position within the education sector to foster and nurture cultural engagement and awareness. For many families, the early childhood sector can be their very first experience with education, and an initial starting point for many connections within their respective communities (Veseley et al., 2013). There are many opportunities for student teachers during practicum to explore and develop deeper cultural understandings within their learning communities that celebrate and recognise this diversity (Gibbs, 2005). The life experiences that student teachers have had assist in shaping the way they see the world. Their up-bringing, schooling experiences, cultural heritage and family traditions colour the way in which they see and do things (Nguyen, 2009). However, if student teachers come from a very different background, it may be difficult for them to find connections and links when placed within a low socioeconomic educational setting (Andersen & Stillman, 2013).

Cultural engagement works to connect understandings between people and stems from a strengths-based approach that supports the diverse challenges that many learning communities face (Grace & Trudgett, 2012). Being open and receptive to diversity validates identity, knowledge and learning as it recognises the significance of cultural values (Bevan-Brown, 2003; Bishop & Berryman, 2009; Ritchie & Rau, 2008). Rojas, Alemny and Mohamed (2012) found that it is fundamental for associate teachers to share sensitivity and an understanding of the value of the

culture of the children and families that they will be working alongside if this relationship is to grow and strengthen. However, little is known about how they share and apply this fundamental knowledge to their own inter-relationships with student teachers.

The essence of cultural engagement is about what teachers *do*, and, this involves active praxis that enlivens aspects of soft knowledge (Hildreth & Kimble, 2002). Soft knowledge is the teacher's ways of *being* and *doing* in the environment, the feelings and *ihi* (spirit) you get from a place, a sense of belonging, a yearning to stay, a knowing of love, trust and safety. Payne, Wilson, Corley and Jordan's (2010) study indicates soft knowledge is difficult to explain, however, it can be 'seen' in the implicit, informal and cultural ways of how interactions take place with the children and *whānau* (families) on a daily basis. The nature of soft knowledge practice is therefore intrinsic in the learning setting. However, in regards to student teachers growing their cultural engagement and awareness with others during practicum, there is little documentation on whether or not they pick up on these subtle cues within the teaching/learning setting. There is also a lack of evidence as to how associate teachers might support the student teacher with identifying these subtle cues.

Ministry of Education (2009) are strong advocates for the practice of cultural engagement, as shown in their assessment document which specifically addresses Māori children, *Te Whatu Pōkeka*.

“Observe me as a child of my own indigenous culture. Provide me with an environment that accepts, values, and sustains my individuality so that I can truly feel safe as well as nurtured. Allow me to explore and interact with this environment so that I may reach my full potential” (p.51).

This statement heightens the effect and impact of recognising and empowering culture and how this supports learning and the reinforcement of cultural engagement. Although this statement refers to children in their learning setting, student teachers may need the same acceptance and sustainment of their own cultural identity and individuality to develop feelings of safety and trust, so they too may also reach their full potential. However, there has been little research into how this can be achieved during teaching practicum within low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings.

This study looks to explore how creating invited spaces can further enhance the student teacher's cultural awareness within these settings and move them towards successful teaching practica within these areas.

## **2.5. Effective Teaching Practices and Dispositions in Diverse Learning Settings**

The success of the student teacher practicum may depend on the dispositions and practices of both associate teacher and student teacher for ease of connecting to a space where attitudes and experiences are shared in trust and confidence with each other (Clarke et al., 2014; Kabilian, 2013). Research suggests that particular teaching characteristics make a significant difference to student achievement (O'Neill, Hansen & Lewis, 2014). For instance, student teachers with a well-intentioned view towards supporting diversity were more likely to find a connection with others within the teaching setting easier than others who didn't share this same dispositional outlook during practicum (Garmon, 2005; O'Neill et al., 2014). Thus, dispositional behaviours and teaching practices can provoke the ways in which teachers and learners react to challenges and obstacles within a variety of teaching settings (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012).

Another point that is relevant to the literature review for this study is around how dispositions and teaching practices are closely inter-linked. For instance, Thornton's (2006) study into whether dispositions make a difference in practice found that teacher's thinking or dispositions influenced their practice, "thus representing dispositions in action" (p. 61).

The following section takes a closer look at three particular teaching practices that may hold potential for creating invited spaces. The three teaching approaches of *ako*, *funds of knowledge* and *co-construction* also share interwoven connected dispositions that appear to have similar qualities. However, even though similar links can be drawn between these practices each one of them is unique. Therefore, each of these three practices will be explained separately below.

## *Ako*

*Ako* is a conceptual approach within te aō Māori (the Māori world) that encapsulates both teaching and learning (Bishop & Berryman, 2009; Edwards, 2013; Pere, 1994; Tamati, 2005; Tangaere, 1997). *Ako* is a fluid and dynamic teaching practice that is both responsive and reciprocal in nature. *Ako* positions both teacher and learner in a shared, mutual position or dialogue where both parties are prepared to locate themselves as the learner (Ministry of Education, 2011; Tamati, 2005; Tangaere, 1997). The principles of *ako* are contradictory to that of the traditional view of the role of the associate-student teacher relationship teacher, where the power over what is learnt within the practicum sits with the associate teacher (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010).

The principles of *ako* may work well in regards to the associate-student teacher relationship, and within a dynamic educational setting such as early childhood as it is responsive to change and is based on co-operative working processes (Levine & McCloskey, 2013). These processes support a teaching and learning setting which seeks to utilise and work from a base which acknowledges the strengths of all the individuals involved. *Ako* also supports partnerships that intertwine or weave throughout the learning and teaching process and through this it facilitates pathways to begin seeking and developing *new* meanings together (Education Review Office, 2012).

The student teacher who is placed on teaching practicum where the setting is very dissimilar to that of their own personal experiences and knowledge may need to constantly work hard to learn and understand new skills and practices. *Ako* offers a collaborative, reciprocal practice where both learning and teaching traverses levels of knowing, experience, and the understanding of new concepts (Bishop & Berryman, 2009; Edwards, 2013; Pere, 1994). Teachers who believe in their own learning and teaching potential, irrespective of age or background from which they come, become increasingly confident in their willingness to share and contribute knowledge (Ministry of Education, 1996). However, this may also inhibit them from receiving new knowledge from student teachers. Drawing from *ako*, teachers and learners alike would also be more likely to build determination and perseverance when they come face to face with new challenges or difficulties (Swan, 2012).

The concept of ako may therefore assist in developing the skills necessary for overcoming challenges such as revolving teaching and learning roles; social and cultural awareness; finding a strong sense of identity; and working inclusively. However, little is known about whether associate teachers implement this practice of ako in their guidance and mentoring with student teachers during practicum, or if ako supports the student teacher's cultural awareness within the learning setting.

### ***Funds of Knowledge***

A *funds of knowledge* approach is born from sociocultural approaches about teaching and learning (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Hedges, 2007; Vygotsky, 1986). In sociocultural theory and practice, Vygotsky theorised that much of children's informal experiences and interactions provided a solid foundation for them to draw upon so they may in turn develop more formal, conceptual learning in later educational encounters (Hedges, Cullen & Jordan, 2011; Vygotsky, 1986). It has been suggested that a funds of knowledge approach empowers teachers to work alongside children and their families who are from low socioeconomic educational settings (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Therefore, an individual can hold a wealth of knowledge in areas that others may lack insight. For example, individuals that come to the low socioeconomic educational setting, having previously experienced personal or family social and/or cultural struggle, may make connections within the setting more effectively as they can apply prior knowledge, awareness and understandings (Gonzalez et al., 2005). However, research suggests that this is a paradigm not often thought of or valued in conventional, traditional teaching climates (Hedges et al., 2011). As student teachers are expected to be placed within a variety of diverse teaching settings for practicum throughout their training, the beliefs, values and experiences that they have are influential to their view and knowledge of diverse learning communities.

A funds of knowledge approach supports a positive view that acknowledges the social and cultural competencies individuals bring with them into the educational setting by virtue of their previous family and community experiences (Carr, 2008; Hedges, 2007). Acknowledging each individual's holistic experiences and how these contribute to the learning environment may assist in helping to build shared

understandings and allow them to engage more closely in order to obtain a clearer view of knowing who the individual is and their family background (Hedges, 2007; Payne et al., 2010). Student teachers constantly have to navigate these sociocultural borders with both the associate teacher, and the children and whānau during each practicum, as the cultural nature of each learning setting can be diverse.

Student teachers are also expected to pick up on the practices, dispositions, attitudes and values, through the subtle cues displayed by teachers as they role model their practices during teaching practicum. A lack of connecting with families' funds of knowledge can bring about problems with relational aspects and understandings between the home and the educational setting (Peters, 2010). People have 'histories' that are important. Carr (2008) states that children enter a classroom bringing "their families on their shoulders" (p.9). As a professional practitioner, providing spaces for this style of practice facilitates empowering learning for everyone involved in the process (Carr, 2008). A level of competence, confidence and a strong sense of identity begin to grow when people are genuinely treated and respected for sharing their past experiences, interactions and knowledge (Gonzalez et al, 2005; Wenger, 1998). Accepting and valuing diversity and the contribution it brings to the learning setting is the essence of a funds of knowledge teaching practice (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez 1992).

This study will explore how growing cultural awareness for student teachers in low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings through approaches such as a funds of knowledge may contribute to successful teaching practica in these areas.

### ***Co-Construction***

*Co-construction* is another practice that may be beneficial for promoting a positive and successful associate-student teacher relationship. Through this shared and mutual style of learning individuals are given 'space' and the ability to take charge of their own voice, in a way which empowers them and validates their identity (Hedges et al., 2011). This concept also offers many opportunities for contributing to shared learning opportunities (Kilmanova & Dembovskaya, 2013). Individuals who become increasingly active in the co-construction of new knowledge may develop a

stronger sense of belonging and with this, a sense of pride in their identities (Kessler, 2013). From this state of belonging a ripple effect develops that creates obligatory behaviours where individuals feel a sense of true worth by continuing to contribute (Kessler, 2013).

A co-constructed learning approach works on drawing knowledge and meaning making into a space where both individuals have opportunities to learn through the sharing of knowledge, methods and activities (Rogoff, Goodman Turkanis, & Bartlett, 2001). One way participants do this is by noticing and observing how others think about ideas and solve problems or challenges within a setting that is participatory (Rogoff, 2012; Rogoff et al., 2001).

Participatory learning relies on the fundamental nature of individuals gaining ‘knowledge of’ and developing meaning making together (Bereiter, 2002; Hedges & Cullen, 2012; Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chavez & Angelillo, 2003). Thus, individuals learn through *intent participation*, which is a process of observing, listening and participating. Rogoff (2012) describes this as “pitching in” (p.324). She maintains that through collaborative activities and being active in observing and listening when working with others, individuals become increasingly involved in the process, then feel they can interject when they have something to say or contribute. This collaborative engagement process, as simple as it may appear, can be an empowering and influential way of fostering learning (Hedges & Cullen, 2012).

Student teachers are expected to observe, find and participate in roles, methods and activities that are present within the learning setting during practicum, whilst associate teachers are in the position of guiding the ways in which to participate in these roles and practices with them (Goodnough et al., 2009; Patrick, 2013). According to Wenger (2006) the mutual processes of participation and engagement within the teaching paradigm may be still emerging, and such professional discussions, shared repertoire and joint ventures are still evolving. However, the student teacher’s engagement in critical dialogue and collaboration with their associate teacher is essential for developing their transformative practice (Auhl & Daniel, 2014). This idea highlights a gap in the literature surrounding the nature of the participatory learning climate in the associate-student teacher relationship during practicum.

Being involved in co-constructed dialogue could expose individuals to learning new ways of engaging and connecting with one another, and new ways of approaching challenges within the education sector (Kessler, 2013; Shirky, 2010).

The literature reviewed in this section can be linked to that of the associate-student relationship in which both rely on making mutual connections within the learning setting in the hope of achieving a successful practicum.

## **2.6. Learning Through a Shared, Mutual Process**

A community of learners is a philosophy of practice that influences participatory and collaborative learning and teaching climates (Matusov, 2001; Rogoff 1994; Wenger, 1998). Associate teachers and student teachers must work with and alongside each other throughout the duration of the practicum. Hence, both have to quickly recognise and pick up on the specific social learning processes of each other. A co-operative style of learning is one key feature that may often be found in early childhood educational settings (Ministry of Education, 1996). A community of learners' philosophy links with a sociocultural approach towards teaching and learning, where knowledge is built and understood through collaborative and reciprocal social processes (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky 1978). The nature of the associate-student teacher relationship is such that it relies heavily on this social and communal aspect. The advice, guidance and theories that are supported within the particular learning setting are a key part of knowledge for student teachers to have in order to pass their assessment during practicum.

In a community of learners all individuals are actively involved in shared, mutual efforts or endeavours (Hill & Sewell, 2010; Matusov & White, 1996; Rogoff, 1994; Sumsion & Patterson, 2004). A community of learner's philosophy maintains that through a joint learning setting learners will take shared responsibility for their learning (Matusov, 2001; Newman, Griffin & Cole, 1989; Rogoff, 2003). A community of learners approach encourages participants to be responsible yet have the ability to maintain autonomy throughout this collaborative learning process (Rogoff, 1994; Sewell, 2009).

In creating effective invited spaces this community of learners approach may be challenging for some associate teachers as traditional teaching views that ‘knowledge giving’ is held and controlled by the teacher (Rogoff, 1994; Sumsion & Patterson, 2004). There is also a possibility that some of these teachers may not venture into facilitating a co-operative or joint learning situation within their respective environments as they do not value this as valid academic learning (Rogoff, 1994). Associate teachers do have a position of power over student teachers in their role as they know the learning setting and community well and therefore may be less inclined to negotiate this during the teaching practicum.

The knowledge and skills that are transmitted in the learning setting by the associate teacher may depend on their personal view of how learning and knowledge should be acquired.

## **2.7. Summary**

The review of literature and research around the traditional roles of associate-student teacher relationships and the inter-relationship they share during the teaching practicum suggests that the associate teacher still maintains a powerful position within these roles. Literature suggests that the role of the associate teacher is to be the guide, the provocateur, the modeller, or the judge of the learning that must be passed on in the particular learning setting to student teachers, therefore, placing the associate teacher in a position of power and knowledge. Much of this research has identified that the traditional roles of the relationship between the associate teacher and the student teacher is vitally important and linked to successful teaching practica. However, the student teacher is still in a dis-empowered position as a result, and must adhere and work with the knowledge that is passed on from the associate teacher.

Research supports that associate teachers and student teachers can find and construct relationships or ‘spaces’ with each other that grow over the duration of the teaching practicum. However, much of the literature reviewed discusses how this inter-relationship works between the two participants within existing traditional roles of mentor teacher and student teacher within generalised learning settings.

A closer look into literature on effective teaching practices and dispositions found that there are productive approaches that link to the associate-student teacher inter-relationship, and to that of supporting culturally responsive practice within diverse learning communities. Active and cultural engagement are practices considered in the literature as providing a platform for teacher's competence in making relational connections with others within the low socioeconomic educational setting.

Literature found on ako, funds of knowledge and co-construction suggests that these are effective approaches for diverse teaching and learning settings. According to research the approach of ako respects that individuals can hold their own potential teaching capabilities, and supports a fluid and revolving nature of mentor and mentee within the teaching and learning process. Research supports a funds of knowledge approach for teachers within the early childhood educational setting as a key factor in making meaningful connections and highlighting a view towards inclusion and diversity with learning communities. A funds of knowledge approach respects that people bring with them a multitude of experiences and knowledge into the learning setting. The literature emphasises the importance of co-construction, and the benefits of individuals working together through new meaning making, but so far, this has not been linked to the promotion of inclusion or to effective mentoring of student teachers in culturally diverse early childhood educational settings. Therefore, an opportunity exists to explore how these approaches may support student teachers in their practicum within low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings.

Literature on the approach of learning through a shared, mutual process, a community of learners, strongly supports acknowledging diversity within the learning setting. Yet the learning endeavours within this approach are shared and have a common focus. The associate teacher and the student teacher must also participate in a shared objective – a successful teaching practicum. However, little is known about the way in which student teachers can work together with their associate teachers to make the vital relational connections needed for creating effective invited spaces during practicum that move them towards success.

From the review of the literature this study looks to question and challenge the traditional paradigm of associate-student teacher relationships and to explore the possibilities and shared understandings needed to create effective invited spaces.

## 2.8. Research Questions

The research questions that arise from gaps identified in the literature review frame the basis for this study. These questions are as follows:

1. How are *invited spaces* between associate teachers and student teachers created and negotiated?
2. What are the effective associate teacher practices and dispositions that allow for these *invited spaces* to emerge?
3. How do *invited spaces* promote shared understandings to enhance cultural awareness and contribute to student teacher success during practicum in low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings?

The three research questions will support the aim and rationale for this study (see Chapter One). The findings aim to provide useful insights into how these invited spaces may assist in supporting success for student teachers during teaching practicum.

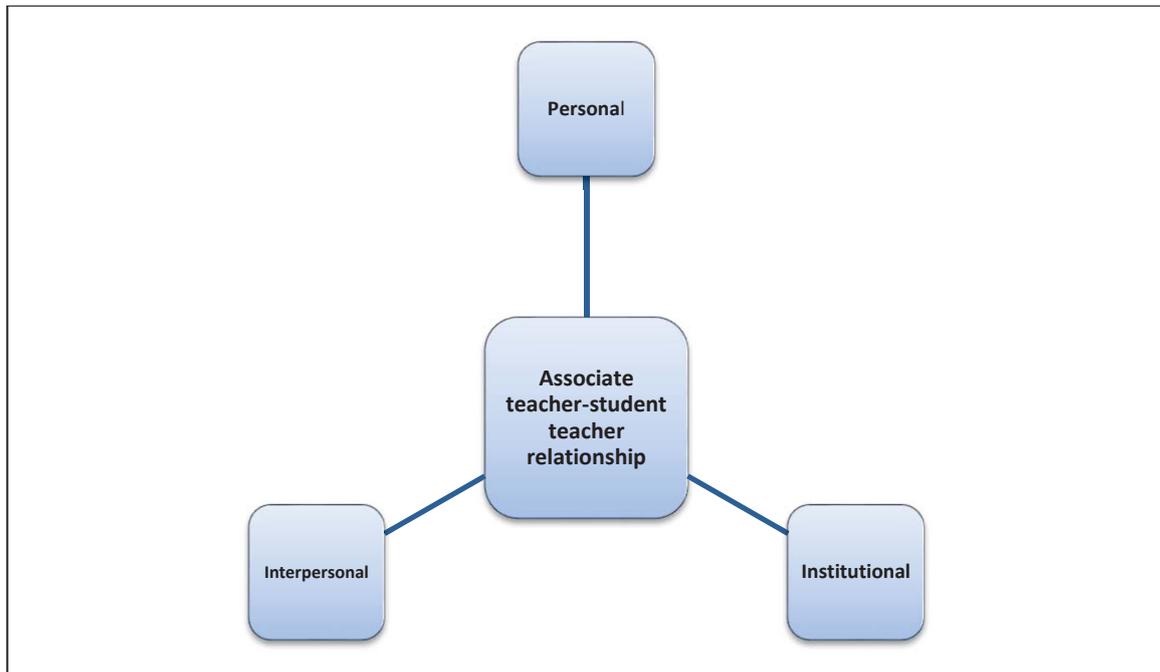
Next the over-arching theoretical framework for this study is briefly explained.

## 2.9. Theoretical Framework: Social constructivism

Social constructivist theories recognise that the individual gains greater consciousness and grows understandings through the direct social environment (Vygotsky, 1978; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The epistemology underpinning this study is based on the personal ‘connectedness’, and the relational or invited spaces that can be created through social interactions. The theory underlying this process is referred to as social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978).

Utilising the social constructivist theory highlights the social context of this study, the nature of the early childhood setting, and the need for in-depth exploration of the inter-relationship between associate teachers and student teachers. In this approach, each participant is viewed as an active and social learner (Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa & Goldsmith, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978).

Barbara Rogoff's planes of teaching and learning (1995; 1998) is an effective framework for supporting a lens on socially constructed studies. Rogoff's theory explains how teachers' and learners' development and practices are influenced by three main planes of activity: the personal, the interpersonal and the institutional/community (Rogoff, 1998). The personal plane is connected to the beliefs, values and past, previous and current experiences that contribute to both the teachers' and learners' knowledge base, their view of the world, what they bring with them into the teaching and learning paradigm, and where they base their ideas (Rogoff, 1998). The interpersonal plane is linked to how teachers and learners connect or engage with others, and how they grow their understandings and communicate within these relationships (Rogoff, 1998). The institutional/community plane is directly related to things that guide and govern both teachers' and learners' everyday practices such as rules and responsibilities, policies and procedures, both personal and team teaching philosophies, and dealing with tensions and expectations that arise (Rogoff, 1998).



*Figure 1: The Associate-Student Teacher Relationship.*

*Adapted from Rogoff, B. (1998). Cognition as a collaborative process.*

Figure 1 depicts the nature of Rogoff's three planes in regards to this study. Each plane, the personal, the interpersonal and the institutional connect and have influence on the teacher and learner. Therefore, it provides a clear framework that draws on theories of social constructivism and learning through social participation in the associate teacher-student teacher inter-relationship.

The following chapter outlines the methodology and research design approaches used for this study.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology and Research Design**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter will begin by explaining the qualitative research approach and the case study research design taken in order to clarify the thoughts, reflective content, the teaching practices and dispositions, social processes and interactions that take place between the associate teacher and the student teacher. Next, the chosen methods of data collection and data analysis for this study are described and the ethical considerations are outlined.

#### **3.2. The Qualitative Research Approach**

Educational research is centered on people, places, and processes broadly related to teaching and learning with the purpose of improving practices and systems within the teaching and learning paradigm that may benefit all concerned (Mutch, 2005). A qualitative research approach has been taken for this study as it is primarily concerned with understanding and interpreting how participants construct the world around them (Crotty, 1998; Glesne, 2006). For this present study, the emphasis was to look closely at the associate teacher-student teacher relationship as it forms, and the social and collaborative processes that assist this.

### **3.3. Method/Approach: Case Study**

A case study design has been selected in this study to highlight, identify and explore how these invited spaces may be created through the relationships, collaborations and negotiations between the associate and student teacher within low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings.

This study focused on the perspectives of associate teachers' and that of two pre-service teacher education coordinators. Case study was selected as the main investigative approach used for this study, and in particular an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) was used. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), instrumental case study is the "intent to gain insight and understanding of a particular phenomenon" (p.550). Case study is also an appropriate choice for the design of this study as the case study approach looks at specific phenomena occurring within real life contexts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Robson, 2002).

In this study, data is firstly presented from interviews with two pre-service teacher education coordinators. Following this, six case studies are presented to provide insights into associate teachers' practices in relation to the creation of invited spaces with student teachers.

The data gathered from the two pre-service teacher education coordinators provided background context, knowledge and understanding around the aims and expectations of the teaching practicum. This background data looked at the broader phenomenon of the invited space rather than presenting individual cases, including information on the pre-service teacher education coordinators' own personal experiences within the teaching paradigm and their processes in deciding and placing student teachers on various teaching practica.

At the time of the study the six participating associate teachers were teaching in low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings. The data gathered from these teachers provide perspectives into and on their mentoring role, and their own views, practices, experiences and philosophies in regards to the teaching and learning paradigm. The inclusion of several participants allows for differences and similarities to be highlighted, and for the study findings to be more easily generalised

to a broader population with similar characteristics (Cohen et al., 2011; Johnson & Christenson, 2008; Glesne, 2006).

The insights in this thesis provide a useful platform for investigating the participants' social teaching realities and how these are shared with student teachers. Particular situations are examined using a close lens with the intention of providing a *thick description* (Geertz, 1973) of the participants' experiences and their thoughts and feelings on these experiences. Case study involves real people, enabling readers to understand ideas and situations with more clarity. Through the resulting insights, readers may also develop understandings of how theories and principles can be linked with these ideas (Yin, 2009).

In particular the use of a bounded case study (Mutch, 2005) in this research enabled the researcher to explore the shared decision-making process within the associate-student teacher relationship. Case studies have been described as a 'step to action' (Adelman, Kemmis, & Jenkins, 1980). The insights therefore provide direct interpretation that may be utilised in areas such as self-development, formative evaluation and educational policy making (Adelman et al., 1980).

### **3.4. Participants**

Two pre-service teacher education coordinators included in this study framed the background context around the aims and expectations of the teaching practicum, and the expectations for the student teacher's role and responsibilities whilst on teaching practicum.

The six associate teachers who responded to my invitation were from identified low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings (ERO, 2015). Their differing perspectives enabled an in-depth exploration of the practicum in each particular context, and to explore answers to the research questions through the voices of associate teachers who currently work in these settings. Choosing the willing participants who teach within low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings allowed for opportunities to explore similar themes and findings around practices and dispositions that these teachers implement in their practice daily, and

how they viewed their role as an associate teacher in this setting with student teachers during practicum.

### **3.5. The Setting of the Study**

In Aotearoa New Zealand there are many diverse early childhood contexts that co-exist from home based care, to private education and care, to sessional and full day community based settings (Hedges, Cullen & Jordan, 2011). This study was situated in the lower North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. This study looked to explore the invited space through the associate-student teacher relationship during practicum specifically within low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings. The rationale for locating this study in this particular area was explained earlier around how the low socioeconomic educational setting can be challenging due to cultural unfamiliarity for many student teachers (see Chapter One). Each of the participating associate teacher's specific learning settings will be described and outlined in further detail in Chapter Four.

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

The integrity of socially based research agendas relies on the researcher applying sound ethical principles. Qualitative researchers need to have strong and strict ethics as they are visitors who are privileged with the insight into the personal world of their participants (Stake, 1994). Addressing these issues before the study begins is an important part in the ethical process, and ensures the well-being and safety of both the researcher and participants. Hence, the guidelines and principles of the Massey University Code of Ethics were read, understood and followed in the conduct of this study. Ethical approval for the procedures in this study was sought and granted by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (see Appendix A).

As this study focused on relationships it was important to ensure that the participants' interests were protected through gaining informed consent, and that the researcher was careful to avoid misinterpretations and misleading information

(Denscombe, 2007) . This is in keeping with the view that requires the development of a climate of trust, fairness, honesty and respect (Graue & Walsh, 1998). In this study it was crucial to uphold these values, and ensure that the participants received clear, open communication throughout the entire process. Therefore, permission to access and approach participants was initially sought through the institutions. From gaining approval at the institutional level detailed information sheets were sent out and informed consent was sought for each participant (see Appendices B, C, D and E). Cullen, Hedges and Bone (2005) acknowledge that gaining approval to approach participants and informed consent are an important aspect to take into careful consideration within qualitative study approaches.

As the researcher, I recognise my own perceived power in the researching relationship (Cohen et al, 2011). My current teaching role is in the preparation and delivery of a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood, hence, I am actively and continuously working alongside student teachers. I also have extensive experience, knowledge and interest from many years of teaching in the early childhood sector, and in particular, low socioeconomic educational settings. In acknowledgment of this I took great care to consider and maintain respectful, confidential and professional conduct throughout all phases of the study.

Permission from relevant management personnel was initially sought before asking for participants to engage in this study. Once approved, a letter to each participant, asking for their involvement in this study, was sent out. This allowed participants to be completely comfortable in the process of choosing whether or not to be involved. The information letter provided clear guidelines around confidentiality and the option to decline the offer, not answer any questions, or pull out of the study at any point up until the data had been gathered and analysed.

Once participants gave written consent (see Appendix B) to take part in the study then interviews were negotiated at a time that was mutually convenient for both participant and researcher. The data from the interviews was recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions were made available for each participant to read, check and change if they desired, before the data analysis process began.

### **3.7. Data Collection: Semi-structured Interviews**

The reason for choosing semi-structured interviews in this study was to create an atmosphere where the participants could be free to share as much as they liked around their inter-relational connections with others, and in particular, with student teachers. Semi-structured interviews gave participants opportunities to consider and discuss answers to questions from their own viewpoint (May, 2011). Semi-structured interviewing also allowed the researcher to clarify and check answers or discuss points further with participants, without being confined to a rigid question order (O'Hara, Carter, Dewis, Kay & Wainwright, 2011). In this study, interviewing both associate teachers and two pre-service teacher practicum coordinators provided differing perspectives to be considered. These differing perspectives allow for a depth of information, and a robust, rich picture to be understood and validated (Hayes, 2013).

Individual interviews, lasting up to one hour each were conducted with each of the eight participants. However, there was a level of flexibility, and some interviews ran longer or shorter in time, depending on the discussion that was generated, and at the discretion and acceptance of the participant.

The semi-structured interviews involved a series of key questions that were open ended as recommended by Mutch (2005). This process also allowed each participant to be flexible in answering and the extent to which they chose to share their perspectives/ideas. As mentioned above, all eight interviews were recorded to maintain accuracy of the data and information provided.

### **3.8. Data Analysis**

In this section the procedure for analysing the data from this study is described.

Firstly, the audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews from each participant were transcribed to provide a detailed hard copy of the information given.

Following transcription and checking of the interview data, the next challenge was to

find a logical method to analyse and decipher what the qualitative data was revealing (Cohen et al, 2011).

Detailed reiterative reading of these transcriptions provided a platform for constant comparative analysis (Mutch, 2005). The process of constant comparative analysis enables researchers to recognise common themes and patterns emerging from the data. Case study methods and approaches rely on deep, meaningful, rich data that works to create and build a picture of the significant issues within the study (Cohen et al, 2011). In particular, in this study, the significant issue being explored was the inter-relationship between associate teachers and student teachers during teaching practicum. The research questions also provided a guide to the analysis.

The final stage of the analysis process involved recording the coded data on large pieces of paper. This data was then meticulously sorted, collated and highlighted under specific themes that continually emerged. These themes were also linked back to the theoretical framework in order to understand how these helped to answer the research questions for this study which focused on particular gaps in existing knowledge.

### **3.9. Summary**

This study took a qualitative approach. A case study research design was utilised, and the key research tool used was semi-structured interviews. Data analysis aimed to illuminate themes that emerged from the data gathered.

Background context and information was gathered from two pre-service teacher education coordinators around the aims and expectations of the teaching practicum. Case studies on six associate teachers, who worked in low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings at the time of this study, and were active mentors of student teachers during practicum, were also compiled. Ethical guidelines, in accordance with the Massey Human Ethics Committee requirements, were taken into account throughout the entire process of this study.

The next chapter will present the background information and emerging themes from the pre-service teacher education coordinators and the case study findings from six associate teachers that frame the key findings of this study.

## Chapter Four

### Findings

#### 4.1. Background: Pre-service Teacher Education Coordinators

##### Introduction

The interviews with two pre-service teacher education coordinators provided insights into their thoughts about their role with regards to the teaching practicum experience. These findings highlight the key factors that the pre-service teacher education coordinators feel can guide both associate teachers and student teachers towards successful teaching practica. In particular these factors relate to identity and challenging entrenched beliefs, cultural intelligence and understandings, open, trusting relationships, communication, sustaining and preserving relationships, the complexity of teaching practica, and a willingness to be open and flexible. The key themes that are outlined below help to form an awareness and understanding of how creating effective invited spaces may be supported through the context of initial teacher education.

Throughout this section PC1 or PC2 will be used when referring to the respective pre-service teacher education coordinators.

##### *Identity and Challenging Entrenched Beliefs*

Both PC1 and PC2 discussed the importance of identity and challenging beliefs with regard to student teachers and the teaching practicum. PC1 discussed that her own “personal experiences of past contact with students and being an associate teacher still drives and shapes how I lead practicum now”. This quote illustrates how the effect of these prior experiences is quite powerful and highlights that these experiences ‘stay’ with people as they journey through their teaching pathways.

PC1 also expressed her view that “beliefs and values of teachers and students were the hardest thing to change because often they are entrenched”. PC1 felt that “it is important to provoke entrenched values and beliefs at an early stage in teacher training to create a climate of openness and change”. PC1 also discussed how she talks with her student teachers about the teaching practicum as “being on a journey of transformation and guiding them towards this idea”. Through this process students may get an opportunity or ideas to experience or hear another perspective other than their own. PC1 commented that seeing another’s perspective is like “fracturing an existing discourse of beliefs and value system”. PC2 also noted that “being challenged is important for students” in regards to their beliefs and values but that “identity is important”. PC1 also stated that cultural identity was important and that students “outside of the cultural norm find practicum harder”, and that a “significant issue that is challenging is cultural discord” when students are out on practicum. This insight suggests how beliefs and values are closely entwined with identity. It also highlights an area that has perhaps been under-valued in the student teaching and learning paradigm.

### ***A Willingness to be Open and Flexible***

Having a strong sense of willingness to be open and flexible was another key factor that both PC’s discussed. PC2 stated that “Once they [student teachers] develop a sense of belonging they develop open and trusting relationships and they have been able to overcome their challenges and it’s changed their view”, and PC1 explained that “being flexible and open minded takes away judgement”. PC1 described an experience where a student teacher arrived mid-practicum to talk with her, and was quite hostile, feeling like she wasn’t learning anything on her teaching practicum. After lengthy discussion and reflection PC1 stated that it was because “she [the student teacher] didn’t have an open mind”, and PC1 went on and said that “I think having an open mind...there is something about ‘teachability’ and openness to learning that actually feeds into all the rest”. The ‘rest’ may relate to other attitudes, skills or dispositions that teachers develop in their practices, such as cultural understandings, being a team player, sharing knowledge, communication and awareness of their own beliefs.

PC1 also felt that the responsibility for student teachers feeling comfortable within the practicum setting and the “capacity for students sharing knowledge lies with the associate”.

### ***Cultural Intelligence and Understandings***

Another area that came through strongly in the analysis relates to cultural intelligence and understandings. When discussing this in the interview PC1 stated that a “bi-cultural intentionality of welcoming students into the practicum space helps students”. The process described could contribute to a stronger sense of belonging and feeling included in the practicum space for student teachers. PC1 went on to talk about students starting their practicum as hitting an “important topic, as the students often feel like they are thrown in the deep end. Where do I belong? Where do I fit?”. Although PC1 stated that transitional processes through culturally appropriate ways were not in place for students and is a current “weakness of the programme”, PC1 then went on to discuss how they ensured students get placed in different environments from the one they grew up in and know so they may “get a different feel or sense of how different communities function”. The cultural intelligence and understandings student teachers gain during their teaching practicum could be influential. One particular example that PC1 shared was that one of the student teachers on teaching practicum in a low socioeconomic setting ended up being “broken inside, and she arrived in my office and cried and cried about what she had experienced there, but now she understood. It was a defining moment for her, and her teaching”. PC1 found that student teachers were challenged by working in a variety of different settings and finding a sense of place during practicum.

PC2 stated that she also placed importance on developing cultural understandings during practicum as otherwise you begin “talking past each other”. PC2 felt that “the responsibility lies with the associate teacher in regards to telling students about the culture of their teaching space and community”. Although PC2 placed the onus for this role on the associate teachers, she also explained that their programme runs associate teacher briefings pre-practicum in which they support associate teachers to up skill their bi-cultural knowledge and understandings. This showed a commitment

to supporting both student teachers and associate teachers in their professional development.

### ***Open, Trusting Relationships***

Both PC's mentioned that the key to building responsive, reciprocal relationships and understandings with others is critical for connecting to deeper trust and respect bonds during teaching practica. For example PC2 referred to the need for "Open, trusting relationships" and PC1 also explained that "relational connections are key for success in practicum". In addition PC1 also mentioned about the importance of the student teacher feeling like they are part of the team, and how this contributes to teaching practicum success. PC1 shared that "making the student a part of the team was noticeable when you walked into the environment and this is critical to building their connection with the team". PC1 also mentioned that she has great trust in associate teachers within the practicum experience, as they are the ones who work directly in the learning setting, hold specific and particular knowledge about the setting, and they are actively working alongside student teachers. PC1 stated that "We know we can trust the assessment of that really experienced associate/mentor teacher. We know that we can trust that their assessment is going to be solid and well informed".

### ***Communication***

Another key factor that emerged from the data was around communication. PC2 stressed the importance and vital aspect that communication brings to connecting within relationships stating that "communication is big", and "communication is critical". PC1 noted that communication helped towards "building relationships" and that "communication is a priority between the [pre-service teacher education] provider and associate teachers, and the associate teacher and the student teacher. But also pointed out that "the challenge is finding time". Both coordinators also held expectations that it was the responsibility of the student teacher to make first contact. PC1 felt that "[Student teachers need to make the] initial pre-connection and that this is important and expected [by the associate teacher]".

### *Sustaining and Preserving Relationships*

PC1 and PC2 both stated that building effective and sustained relationships came coupled with challenges. “Building relationships is a priority but it is a bit hard when the many associate teachers are spread out [in the ECE setting] and they are always very busy people”. This suggests that making strong connections with every associate teacher may be unrealistic. However, PC2 pointed out that it is “important to be closely connected with the community and that “in-depth good relationships can be built up over years”. PC2’s role was driven by a large focus on knowing students well, “we are very whānau focused – we tend to know the student’s families, and who they are”. This shows that perhaps a more holistic view of the student is gained through this process and therefore potentially helps the coordinator to place students on their teaching practica with a more informed view. PC2 also explained that she discusses with students about “the importance of the practicum experience and that the relationship and connection that they have is short, whereas we [PC’s] still have this relationship for many years to come”. This statement gives an insight into the view that the sustaining of the relationship between associate teachers and the pre-service educational provider is of great importance. PC1 also reflected on:

“considering a change in the programme, moving practicum from four placements to three and extending this practicum time, so students get an increased chance to build sustained relationships and be there longer, making them feel like they are more part of the community”.

Both PC’s also spoke about the different things they do to value and preserve their relationships with associate teachers. PC2 stated “I always follow up to bridge relationships for closure and preservation of connection which is really important”. PC1 mentioned that “I try not to send another challenging student again consecutively as they want associate teachers to know they have a spectrum of different students to keep the relationship healthy”. The data shows that both PC’s are constantly refining and looking for ways to transform their own match-making and relational skills within their respective roles. Even though the approaches of PC1 and PC2 differ, they both share a similar focus and emphasis on ensuring that this

relational connection remains strong with both associate teachers and student teachers.

### *The Complexity of the Teaching Practicum*

PC1 discussed the challenges of her role: “[It is a] complicated process to place students on practicum as this happens early and can cause some tension amongst students if they aren’t willing to go to that teaching space for various reasons”. PC2 stated that her role is to “grow students and grow teaching teams”. PC2 went on to talk about how “this can be a complicated and tricky process but it is the underlying thing that I consider when placing students in their practicum settings”. Complexity around the teaching practicum also comes for associate teachers which was noted by PC1 who described that “associate teachers often work with more than one [pre-service teacher education] provider so that makes navigating the different relationships and differing assessment information for my students a difficult and complex responsibility”.

PC1 also discussed about how the teaching practicum can be “one of the most stressful experiences for students” and that “practicum is a mix of the professional and the personal and managing this comes from an individual needs basis for supporting students”. PC2 also commented that the teaching practicum is a “process that is complex and never cut and dry”.

The following section details each of the associate teacher’s particular learning settings, including a description of the respective associate teachers’ experience and philosophy.

## **4.2. The Setting, Experience and Philosophy of each Associate Teacher**

## **Introduction**

The qualitative interview data from the six associate teacher participants provided useful insights into the way in which they work alongside student teachers during teaching practica.

At the time of the study the six associate teacher participants were all current and active mentor teachers, and they all worked in low socioeconomic early childhood settings as identified by the Education Review Office (2015) within their respective communities.

This section begins with a brief description of each associate teacher's setting/context, and a brief outline of their respective experience and teaching philosophies. Section 4.3 then moves on to highlight the emerging themes that have been revealed from the 'voices' of the associate teachers in regards to their role as mentors, and their relationship with student teachers during practicum.

Pseudonyms for each associate teacher have been used.

### **Associate teacher 1 (Alice)**

#### *Alice's setting*

Alice's early childhood setting was in a small, rural, lower North Island town. Her early childhood setting services up to sixty children. Alice's setting has many diverse learners attending mostly from NZ European and Māori descent (ERO, 2015). This setting prides itself on growing and fostering effective relationships through mutual respect and working together. This ethos underpins the core of the provision of education and care for the children, their families/whānau and the community.

#### *Alice's experience and philosophy*

Alice, at the time of the study, had been actively teaching for around seventeen years. Alice believed that relationships are at the base of how she kept clear communication with others, with an emphasis on respect, and an honest love for all children. Alice reported that she particularly enjoyed the community feel that early

childhood teaching brought and welcomed the different ideas and perspectives that could be shared in this working climate. Listening to others and supporting social and emotional competencies in children was also a large part of Alice's practice and philosophy.

## **Associate teacher 2 (Valerie)**

### ***Valerie's setting***

Valerie's early childhood setting was in the central North Island. Her early childhood setting serviced up to thirty children. The learning community had a diversity of learners attending, pre-dominantly of Māori descent, although learners of NZ European and Asian descent were also represented (ERO, 2015). This setting also had a growing number of children from refugee communities attending. The service's philosophy is heavily based on whakawhanaungatanga (relationships) principles and Valerie describes it as highly inclusive – acknowledging the strengths of both children and whānau. Diverse learning approaches, respect, tautoko (support) and strong links with the adjoining primary school were also identified as key facets of this setting.

### ***Valerie's experience and philosophy***

At the time of the study Valerie had been teaching for over twenty years and through my professional networks I gained the impression that she was very well respected within the community where she teaches. Valerie shared that honouring and respecting bi-cultural practice was paramount in her practice, and doing this through aroha (love) is the way in which she seamlessly transmitted this to others in her setting. Prioritising the education and care of children first, with an outlook that 'every day is a new day', and secondly, finding harmony with the teaching team was reportedly a strong feature of Valerie's practice. Encouraging a sense of wellbeing, trust, belonging, acceptance and love with and for children and their families/whānau/community was also identified as a core principle of her work. In particular, Valerie had a strong focus on supporting ako, establishing and maintaining clear rules and boundaries, as well as enabling, supporting and facilitating children and whānau in developing social skills for coping with everyday life.

### **Associate teacher 3 (Tania)**

#### ***Tania's setting***

Tania's early childhood setting was in the lower central North Island. Her early childhood setting serviced up to forty five children. The learning community had many diverse and multi-cultural learners with NZ European, Māori and Asian descent (ERO, 2015). This service also had a large and growing number of refugee communities attending. The setting was inspired by the philosophy that the environment is the third teacher (Reggio Emilio focus), and the physical environment was set up to provoke imaginative and challenging experiences. Fostering relationships with whānau and the community was reported to be a core principle of this multi-cultural early childhood setting.

#### ***Tania's experience and philosophy***

At the time of this study, Tania expressed a true love for working with children and the belief that having an active part in their growth journey is a very rewarding experience. Enabling and facilitating children towards self-managing their behaviour and gaining skills for life was identified as an important part of Tania's work. Working alongside to guide and grow the staff and team was also reported to be a passionate part of Tania's practice. Tania further shared that she had a strong focus on supporting basic care, education and participation for refugee communities.

### **Associate teacher 4 (Shelley)**

#### ***Shelley's setting***

Shelley's early childhood setting was situated in a small, coastal town in the central North Island. Her early childhood setting serviced up to seventy three children. The learning community had mainly families from NZ European and Māori descent (ERO, 2015). At the time of the study this service had a focus on ICT technologies

and was active in working with children to provoke meta-cognitive strategies in and about their learning. The physical outdoor area appeared to be large and provided many challenges, stimuli and sensory experiences to encourage children to explore and discover. Growing sustained relationships was identified as a core principle in this setting, and there was a strong focus on supporting children and their whānau with regard to their well-being and a sense of belonging.

### ***Shelley's experience and philosophy***

Empowering and supporting children on their learning journey, and watching children's potential as individuals grow appeared to be a passion for Shelley. Respect was also an important part of her teaching, including acknowledging, encouraging and fostering the strengths and contributions that each person brought to the setting. Shelley stated she believed that every day provided new beginnings when working with children and whānau, which highlighted the importance of her focus on nurturing and growing sustained, reciprocal relationships.

### **Associate teacher 5 (Adrien)**

#### ***Adrien's setting***

Adrien's early childhood setting was in a growing medium sized city in the North Island. At the time of the study this setting serviced up to eighty children. The learning community was multi-cultural, including mainly families of NZ European, Māori and Tongan descent (ERO, 2015). Adrien described the service as having a strong focus on diverse learning approaches that provoke growth and challenge for children. The outdoor environment was designed to be natural and inviting – encouraging children to actively explore and discover through both meaningful and enjoyable experiences. A focus on supporting the community and growing strong relationships were also core principles of this service.

### ***Adrien's experience and philosophy***

Respecting children and supporting them was reportedly a passion for Adrien. Adrien stated that communication was crucially important in supporting and encouraging growth in relationships with children and their whānau. Hence, working inclusively and acknowledging diverse needs and learning approaches was seen as a strong focus. Encouraging challenge, discovery, exploration and new learning experiences in the outdoor environment was also reported to be a driving influence in Adrien's practice.

### **Associate teacher 6 (Cindy)**

#### ***Cindy's setting***

Cindy's early childhood setting was located in a small rural town in the central North Island. At the time of the study this setting serviced up to forty seven children. This setting served mostly NZ European families (ERO, 2015). The service had a focus on engaging children in becoming confident and capable through self-initiated learning. Fostering, facilitating and provoking purposeful, sustained conversations with children about their learning also emerged as a strong focus. Growing positive, reciprocal relationships with whānau and the community also underpinned the core principles in this setting.

#### ***Cindy's experience and philosophy***

The uniqueness of each child was something that Cindy reported cherishing about teaching. Encouraging active listening and the freedom of expression were also seen as important for growing children and their families/whānau. Cindy said she enjoyed the versatility that early childhood teaching brought, and she felt that each day could be different, challenging and exciting. Nurturing support networks for both children, whānau and the teaching team was identified as an important facet of Cindy's work. Finding new and different teaching and learning approaches was also part of her focus and was seen as a stimulating challenge.

As shown above, the specific details of each setting, and the experiences and philosophy of each participating associate teacher, illuminated the particular learning environments, practices and beliefs that student teachers have the opportunity to experience during practicum.

Section three highlights the emerging themes in the findings from the six associate teachers.

### **4.3. Emerging Themes from the Associate Teachers**

#### **Introduction**

The findings revealed key personal beliefs, values and sensitivities that associate teachers viewed as being important for their teaching practice; and for working and guiding student teachers on practica in each particular teaching context. These emerging themes are: knowing your identity, respect for cultural intelligence, being open on a personal level and flexibility in the teaching space.

#### ***Knowing your Identity***

Having a strong identity and acknowledging that past experiences shape and form how we see the world was an important personal value for student teachers to hold according to the associate teachers. Cindy explained, “life experiences help student teachers cope with new challenges”, and Alice stated that “an awareness of your own values and beliefs– helps you to know and be confident with others”. Shelley also mentioned growing and knowing your own identity was important for teachers. “Awareness of your own values and beliefs as a foundation is valuable”. This suggests that associate teachers were open to extending their learning journey into their own identity also.

### ***Respect for Cultural Intelligence***

Cindy reported that “creating equitable mana is important”, she referred to this being the case for both working with student teachers and with her teaching and learning community. She noted that a level of respect was shown here to ensure equitable outcomes for all participants who ‘feed’ into the teaching space. Valerie also maintained: “Respect for legacy and being receptive to this is important; it is important to honour our own and our bi-cultural heritage in Aotearoa”. This comment displayed her awareness of the value and importance placed on identity building and culturally intelligent practices in this teaching space. Valerie goes on to comment that, in her teaching space, the “virtues of character teaching is a big part of our philosophy, learning to be respectful, and learning to know who you are”. Valerie went on to share that “cultural richness is the foundation of partnership”. This finding also suggests the potential of cultural intelligence being heightened through the trusting and respectful connections made in this teaching space. Adrien pointed out that after many years of being an associate teacher she is a lot “more aware of the importance of welcoming now in my practice”. This reflection came from past experiences and cultural ‘knowings’ as she believed that welcoming provided a better beginning and a sense of belonging for student teachers coming into the teaching space on their practica, as well as for the children and whānau involved too.

### ***Being Open on a Personal Level***

Being prepared to be open to everything that is in the teaching and learning space was also valued by associate teachers. Adrien reported that “it’s good with new people [referring to student teachers] coming in, as they see different things”. This showed a level of willingness to be open to new ideas from others. Adrien went on to say that “if you’re not open to change then you shouldn’t be a teacher”, and Cindy commented that “when student teachers have an open mind it challenges them to think of alternative ways to practice, and alternative ways of being and doing”. The being and the doing are the ways in which people in the teaching and learning space behave, or interact with each other and the environment.

Being tuned into being open also brought other benefits according to Valerie who stated that “a duality of knowledge is important, knowing the soft and the hard, to feel the place, or to see the place, to experience the wairua here”. This hard and soft knowledge is about the tangible and intangible things around teaching; with tangible things being the environment, the people, the things you can touch, and see when you are immersed in that space; whereas the intangible things are practices and dispositional behaviours, and certain feelings that you may experience from being in that same space - this Valerie believed was akin to the benefits of being open.

Having an openness was also highlighted by some associate teachers as being one key to supporting social and emotional competence. For example, Shelley commented that “social and emotional intelligence is important for openness”. Alice also stated that “finding out more about emotional intelligence and helping children express these helps with being open”. These findings suggest that in order to gain further social and emotional intelligence when working with and alongside others in the teaching space there is a need to be open.

### ***Flexibility in the Teaching Space***

Apart from being open on a personal level there was also a strong focus on the need for flexibility in the teaching space. “An open mind and flexibility helps with understanding the practices of others” Valerie stated. Cindy also pointed out that “flexibility allows for new inspiration and realising that there can be different ways to teach”. It appears that the associate teachers are willing both to be flexible in their own personal teaching practices and to identify flexible practices in others. Adrien also reported that “flexibility and being open is hard for student teachers to learn, but it is where they make the most learning”. She explained that, in her particular teaching space, there needed to be an awareness of flexibility in the way in which teachers communicated with whānau, especially if some parents or caregivers could read and others could not. “There is a different way to do things...this way is not the only way”. Adrien maintained that part of being flexible and use many forms of media both verbal and written to get messages to whānau about their children or explain what is going on in the teaching space, or out in the community.

Important insights into how associate teachers view, build and establish relationships and understandings with student teachers in their respective teaching and learning settings were revealed. In particular, this included setting expectations, negotiation and compromise; showing initiative; growing trust, respect and confidentiality; welcoming new learning; and accepting difference and diverse perspectives. Each of these themes is discussed below.

### *Setting Expectations, Negotiation and Compromise*

All of the associate teacher participants reported that setting expectations and building positive attitudes were very important for developing relationships and bridging understandings with student teachers. Adrien noted that it was “hard to build relationships with someone you’ve only known for two weeks”. Some advice for effectively developing relationships in this situation was provided by Valerie who stated that “negotiation and compromise are important for quickly building relationships with student teachers”. Accepting a climate of negotiation and compromise could also bring other benefits, as Adrien maintained “inter-relationships can change practice for both the associate teacher and the student teacher through being challenged”. Cindy also supported expectation and negotiation as she stated that, “empowering student teachers to make their own discoveries” and “guiding student teachers through teachable moments”, was important. Cindy also mentioned that:

“some student teachers only get to see and experience that learning in practice during teaching practica and to recognise it...it can be challenging for both myself and the student teacher; I can change my expectations of them after seeing them in practice or discussing a scenario with them about how we would both deal with a particular situation, both offering ideas and solutions...it can’t help but change your views and practice”.

Expectations, compromise and negotiation may be positive ways for creating a space within teaching practica where both the student teacher and the associate teacher feel comfortable to share thoughts, ideas and practices. On the other side of this issue though, for student teachers, is the initiation of a collaborative teaching space. As the associate teachers hold the expert knowledge, the ‘upper hand’ and insights

pertinent to their particular setting, the findings suggest that they must be willing to share this information for the relationships and understandings to be established effectively in this space.

### ***Showing Initiative***

The student teacher who showed initiative during their teaching practica was preferred by associate teachers according to the findings that emerged in this study. One associate teacher, Adrien, said “I prepare student teachers to use their initiative by sending out documentation, our philosophy and policies before they begin their practicum here”. Alice also stated that “I like students to come in before starting” practicum. Interestingly, Cindy also commented that the “initiative is on the student teacher side, for making practicum work for them”. It appears that taking initiative for developing a successful teaching practicum and relationship may fall to the side of the student teacher’s responsibility. Adrien also pointed out that a “lack of confidence can hinder relationships from the start”, suggesting that the student teacher needs to use their initiative in a prompt manner. Valerie also added that she “encourages student teachers to come, observe and feel the wairua, the nurturing of this place” prior to the practicum. She went on to say that “this begins the process of belonging for the student teacher”. It is important to note here that the associate teachers placed the onus on the student teacher to initiate the first contact and interactions in this space.

### ***Trust, Respect and Confidentiality***

The attributes of trust, respect and confidentiality were also raised by many of the associate teachers as being very important in building relationships with student teachers in their low socioeconomic settings. As Tania stated, “telling students the back story is crucial to the deeper understandings of our children, whānau and community. We have a lot going on in our day to day running here so trusting the student teacher with this information is important”. Cindy also shared that “in the past we’ve have some student teachers that have been bailed up by some families in supermarkets, and inadvertently families have elicited information out of them”.

Adrien was very clear around her view of trust and respect in her teaching space, stating, “They’ve [student teachers] just got to acknowledge that this is the community they’re working in for now and they’ve got to take what’s going on here”. This insight suggests that there are many different teaching approaches being used by the teaching teams in low socioeconomic settings to support the children and their whānau in their respective spaces, and that a professional manner and confidentiality is a ‘must’ if student teachers in these situations are to gain trust. Valerie also had similar thoughts and commented that “trust and respect builds confidence for student teachers”. When increased confidence is experienced, there may be more likelihood of sharing and gaining deeper understandings from these interactions. Tania further maintained: “A realistic approach is important and expectations with clear guidelines from us helps this process”. Tania’s statement supports that associate teachers also have some responsibility in building trust and respect by setting clear guidelines for student teachers.

### *Welcoming New Learning*

In this study associate teachers overwhelmingly supported and welcomed the student teachers’ ideas and contributions to the learning space. Valerie commented that she tells student teachers “I want to learn from you,” and she also stated that “you need to be teachable if you are a teacher”. This displays a keen interest from the associate teachers in regards to developing new knowledge from and with student teachers. “We love students for the knowledge they have and bring...I don’t know everything” reported Tania, and Shelley also claimed that “being a mentor gives you a lot as a teacher, you grow too, as each student teacher teaches you something”. Welcoming new learning appears to support that these associate teachers are not only mentors, but that they know that student teachers bring in a multitude of new ideas and skills to share with them. Being prepared to welcome new learning in the setting also indicates that these associate teachers were willing to be on a continual learning journey and were open to and encouraged contributions from student teachers.

### *Accepting Difference and Diverse Perspectives*

Accepting difference and diverse perspectives emerged strongly in discussions with associate teachers. “Growing people’s diversity and accepting differences is how to grow deeper connections” reported Cindy, and “diversity is something that really challenges your preconceived ideas, your values and beliefs”. Cindy went on to comment that by encouraging opportunities and environments that look towards different perspectives “gives great learning for student teachers on why things did or did not work”.

Valuing team diversity for creating connections was another reoccurring message noted by Alice who reported that “as a team we are all different, but this is important as our children and families are different too, the important thing is that we listen to each other”. Adrien also stated that “respecting different perspectives and networking within the team is crucial. We are always talking; thinking outside the box is important here”. It appears that the early childhood educational teaching climate is not an individual role for teachers since they work closely with at least two to three other teachers daily. The way in which the teachers relate to others in the learning space was viewed as essential. As Tania stated, “working as a team is important for student teachers – an individual focus is not good as this ripples out and affects everyone else in the team”. The value of empathy was therefore seen as important for relationship building and accepting differences. As Shelley stated, for student teachers:

“Being prepared to understand that children in smelly clothes is not who they are as individuals is important in this environment. It is important so that the children feel ok about themselves. It is about keeping them safe emotionally. This is what helps with the relationship links here”.

Shelley also went on to comment that “every issue doesn’t come down to how good a teacher you are or how good your ethics are around work...it’s about respect for who they [children] are”. These findings suggest that the associate teachers valued the differing perspectives of others, including student teachers who supported and acknowledged the diverse nature of the teaching team, children and whānau within their respective learning spaces.

Further key themes also emerged around the rules and responsibilities of everyday teaching for associate teachers, and the possible impact these have on supporting student teachers during practicum to grow their cultural awareness in the learning setting. These particular themes were: the negative influence of administrative work and the length of practicum time, articulating philosophy and practice and being a responsible mentor.

### ***The Negative Influence of Administrative Work and the Length of Practicum Time***

Three out of six associate teachers reported a dissatisfaction with the amount of administrative procedures that take them away from their 'ground zero' teaching work. For instance, Cindy stated "all the paper work takes me away from my teaching" and "administrative tasks can be a hindrance". There was also a strong emphasis on developing better rules around this. As Valerie commented, "more flexibility around administrative structure would allow me more time for nurturing and teaching". These comments highlight the possible differences in teaching needs of the children, whānau and community that feed into each early childhood educational setting; and that associate teachers are becoming more aware and noticing the tensions between their teaching and growing administrative roles and responsibilities. Shelley shared that "changing climates of work are requiring your brain to be in other areas as opposed to working with the children". She went on to say that "juggling everything is tough...you've got to lose something". There is a real concern emerging here that the time given for teaching is being 'swallowed up' by the continual introduction of more administrative tasks, which is ironically increased by taking on of the mentorship role with a student teacher, therefore taking the teacher away from their primary teaching role. This dilemma also highlights that associate teachers are also potentially having to then 'squeeze' in time for a student teacher during practica on top of their other primary responsibilities.

It is significant that five out of six associate teachers in the study reported that time was a big factor in regards to their responsibilities of mentoring student teachers. Nonetheless Alice stated "even though the environment is busy, giving time is important". This indicates that the associate teacher is willing to make the time for the student teacher regardless of the busy climate they are teaching in, however,

considering time is of the essence during teaching practica, it is understandable that the associate teacher may feel stretched at times in maintaining all their roles – whether it be time for mentoring, time for teaching or time for administrative tasks. Therefore, negotiating time and space can be tricky for both associate teachers and student teachers to navigate.

Time was also a key factor in relation to the teaching practica which has a short timeframe, generally around four weeks, for associate teachers and student teachers to work alongside each other and establish ways of working and becoming part of the teaching team. Cindy claimed that “more time would make practicum better as you can see the student teachers’ evolving practices in relational connections, which normally appears towards the end of their time here”. This is a concern for student teachers as growing and establishing relationships requires trust and respect and ironically this only grows over time. Another related issue is the fact that the associate teacher has to feel confident about giving the student teacher confidential information about the intimate ‘goings on’ of that particular teaching community. Building this relationship also takes time, and goes hand in hand with developing a professional space of trust and respect.

A further issue that surfaced in regards to time and responsibilities was around the student teachers’ knowledge of the early childhood educational setting. Associate teachers explained that student teachers who had spent more time in an early childhood educational setting prior to practica appeared to use more initiative in the locus in contrast to that of those student teachers coming in with little or no prior knowledge of the setting. One associate, Alice maintained that:

“It is a struggle being a mentor to students with little or no exposure to the early childhood educational climate...It is demanding but I put in extra time, and I’m aware I need to...It is just frustrating because they would ask things at inappropriate times...Like when I am dealing with a child that is needing positive behaviour guidance”.

This is an interesting insight, as Alice’s comments suggest that student teachers who have previous experience or are more knowledgeable about the climate of early childhood educational settings are perhaps more favourable in the eyes of the associate teacher. However, there still has to be a first time for each student teacher.

### ***Articulating Philosophy and Practice***

Being clear with articulating the philosophy and practices of their particular teaching setting was another area that came through strongly in the findings. Associate teachers felt that their role and responsibility when working alongside student teachers was to be as transparent as they could. Tania reported that with regard to her teaching team and how they interact with student teachers, there was a need to “clearly articulate why we do what we do here to grow understandings”. Adrien also stated that this sort of “articulating is the key for our community and practice”. Understandings are considered of utmost importance, as Adrien noted: “articulating in this space is important, some people may think that helping is disempowering, but we see it as an opportunity to help if the whānau want it, to get them to an equitable place where they don’t have to struggle”. This example displays that associate teachers are keen to ensure that new people, such as student teachers, entering their locus are fully informed around the intimate ‘goings on’ of their particular teaching community.

### ***Being a Responsible Mentor***

All participating associate teachers reflected on the responsibility of their mentoring role as a way of sharing knowledge that others gave to them. For example, Adrien spoke about this as “paying it forward”. She also commented that when she was a student teacher herself “someone did it for me, so I will continue to pass on the knowledge. I have a want and need for growing good teachers in the sector”. Alice also commented that “it is nice to be a mentor as it is nice to give back”. Tania similarly noted that “somebody took the time out for me when I was training”. This shows that the associate teachers take their role seriously and that they value the importance and responsibility of guiding and sharing knowledge, practices and skills with student teachers. This finding also has a cyclic feeling attached to it and shows that associate teachers feel they have a vested interest in providing time and space for student teachers during their practicum.

#### **4.4. Summary**

Many complex emerging themes and insights have been revealed through talking intimately with associate teachers about their practices, beliefs and values. Associate teachers revealed the ways in which they connect with student teachers during the teaching practicum, and how they assist and support student teachers to grow their understandings and function effectively within their respective learning settings. Associate teachers also revealed specific practices and responsibilities within the teaching paradigm that either enhance or impede their role as mentors.

The chapter which follows deepens the discussion of the background information from the PCs and the insights from the associate teachers, in the light of existing research surrounding the associate-student teacher relationship during practicum. The three research questions have been used to frame this discussion.

# Chapter Five

## Discussion

### 5.1. Introduction

*“Will you walk into my parlour?” said the spider to the fly.*

*Mary Howitt*

This line from the nursery rhyme is poignant here as many student teachers may feel similar anxiety and trepidation when heading into a new space, and approaching their teaching practicum. This is not to say that associate teachers are complex ‘web weavers’, ready to lure student teachers into a ‘sticky predicament’ whilst they are on teaching practicum. However, in a space where both associate teachers and student teachers benefit from finding a way to work cohesively during teaching practicum, the mantle of power, or access to each teaching setting’s holistic nature and everyday ‘rhythms of working’, generally reside with the associate teacher. The associate teacher needs to take responsibility for ‘opening a door to their parlour’ and inviting the student teacher to partake in the intimate ‘goings on’ of their respective teaching and learning communities. Likewise, the student teacher needs to be efficacious and willing enough to step into this space. This move requires trust from both sides.

The early childhood educational setting is organic and dynamic. Many complex and diverse teaching practices that overlap or weave together are evident from the information revealed from both the PCs and the associate teachers in this study. This chapter will discuss the relevant themes that were foregrounded in the findings to answer each of the research questions.

## **5.2. How are Invited Spaces between Associate Teachers and Student Teachers Created and Negotiated?**

This section covers the main findings from the current study with regards to research question one which focuses on how the creation and negotiation of effective invited spaces can occur. The key catalysts that emerged in this area were: trust and respect, time, expectations, taking responsibility and using initiative, and creating a climate of dual challenge. Each of these themes will be discussed next, in the light of existing research.

### ***Trust and Respect***

Trust and respect were considered by all associate teachers to be crucial components for building relationships with student teachers. Without trust and respect all of the associate teachers felt that it would be difficult to connect with the student teachers, and the formation of the important relationship during the very early stages of teaching practicum could be impeded. Interestingly, both pre-service teacher education coordinators also stressed they viewed the importance of open, trusting relationships as the key to student teacher success during teaching practicum. Nguyen (2009) agrees that trust and respect are not only integral to building a shared view, but that trust and respect are crucial for the knowledge growth of both associate teachers and student teachers in the teaching and learning locus.

All of the associate teachers particularly stressed the importance of the student teacher maintaining professional confidentiality within the teaching/learning setting. The precedent behind the emphasis on confidentiality was around the fact that student teachers come and go in the environment. Perry (2007) explained the idea well by stating that “[preservice] students are guests in other people’s lives for a very short time” (p.20). When student teachers maintained confidentiality and worked alongside their associate teachers with integrity, these qualities were well-respected. Likewise, when student teachers were given access to the distinct skills needed for working in the teaching/learning setting it helped to build fundamental threads for engaging in appropriate ways to communicate with the children and whānau. In using these distinct skills, student teachers grew in their awareness of diverse

learners, which led to better cultural engagement and understandings within the learning setting.

Five out of the six associate teachers expressed that they needed to be able to feel that they could share in confidence the intimate ‘goings on’ of their particular teaching/learning settings. Sharing these ‘intimacies’ felt like quite a vulnerable position to be in and the associate teachers discussed how they were taking a risk in doing so. But the associate teachers expressed that they persevered in order to be able to enhance and grow new cultural understandings that would assist the engagement by student teachers in the practicum space. This displayed that a high trust model needed to be established within the associate-student teacher relationship. However, Korthagen’s (2004) study into the essence of holistic pre-service teacher education discusses that the self-concepts of student teachers’ are resistant to change. Therefore, this kind of resistance from student teachers could potentially impede a high trust model from establishing during the practicum.

A recent study on the importance of promoting transformative practice for pre-service teachers in the early years of the primary based sector, also found that a shared outlook of trust and respect is needed between both cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers in order to build confidence within the learning community (Auhl & Daniel, 2014). Their study consistently found that making connections of trust and respect provided a dual benefit for both associate teacher and student teacher, where both began to feel secure and confident with each other. Similarly, in the current study, the associate teachers felt they needed to put more emphasis on the aspects of trust and respect as it was crucially important to have this level of mutual confidence with the student teacher due to the nature of the low socioeconomic setting.

When trust and respect is established within the associate-student teacher relationship both participants are willing to participate on a deeper level within the teaching and learning setting. The term ‘willingness’ has strong impetus here. A willingness and effort shown from the student teacher to explore and learn about the philosophy and routines of the teaching setting, and a keen attitude towards communicating during practicum, was consistently seen as a form of respect by the associate teachers. In contrast, student teachers who lacked a willingness to be

involved and made little effort to communicate were in jeopardy of closing off the connection and pathway towards the invited space. Willingness appears to be a critical aspect that supports how values of trust and respect are facilitated, and then perpetuated during the forming of such relationships (Clarkin-Phillips & Carr, 2009). This idea of mutual willingness during the practicum is something that is not mentioned in other literature in regards to the associate-student teacher relationship.

### *Time*

Time was particularly pertinent as it is literally ‘of the essence’ during teaching practicum. Associate teachers and student teachers only have a few weeks to connect and work simultaneously towards the common goal of a successful teaching placement. Therefore, all of the associate teachers claimed that using the available time effectively during the teaching practicum was a crucial factor in building relationships and confidentiality and confidence with their student teachers. Other studies have noted the length of time as being an issue during practicum also. Andersen and Stillman’s (2013) research was centred on the perspectives of student teachers’ contributions around their pre-service teacher education, and extending the time of practicum was one point raised. It is interesting to note in the current study that associate teachers are also raising a similar viewpoint.

The importance of having a longer practicum time was highlighted by one of the associate teachers. Cindy commented that she often saw the changes and growth happening for some of her student teachers towards the end of their time on practicum. At that stage the student teacher seemed to turn a corner into becoming an accepted part of the team, with children and whānau asking them for support and advice, and actively seeking them out within the teaching/learning setting.

Associate teachers discussed how they would set aside a specific time every day to engage and meet with their student teacher (normally at the end of the session). Setting aside this time was important given the short duration of teaching practicum. At this time the associate teachers stopped and gave their full attention to the guidance and discussion with the student teacher without interruptions. Associate teachers also took advantage of time to discuss practical issues with the student

teacher, such as routines, policies and teaching approaches, ‘on the floor’. When time was effectively used the associate teachers could highlight and articulate specific practices as they were unfolding in the direct environment with the student teacher. Using time in these ways was also consistently found to be an effective means of growing the student teacher’s awareness and understandings of the teaching/learning setting, and building the relationship with the associate teacher. One idea that foregrounds an effective way of familiarising student teachers with the disparities of teaching life experiences is for practica to be extended (Andersen & Stillman, 2013). As in the current study, an extension of time for the practicum has been identified as being positive for associate teachers, student teachers and families, since a big part of getting to know learners in the teaching environment is reliant on gaining their trust (Clarkin-Phillips & Carr, 2009). Clearly, time is one of the factors that builds trust.

All of the associate teachers expressed concerns about the difficulties faced by student teachers as within the short time allocated for practicum they must come to terms with a new teaching/learning setting, working alongside new teams of teachers, and getting to know the learning community. It takes time to build and establish strong connections with others. However, Perry’s (2007) study found that time during the teaching practicum can create a point of tension. Making relational connections during teaching practicum needs to happen quickly, and for some associate teachers and student teachers this does create tension due to their other responsibilities, as shown in the current study.

### ***Working Through Expectations and Tensions***

One of the difficulties of the student teacher’s role during practicum was having to contend with expectations from both their initial teacher education programme and from the associate teacher. PC1 stated that “Assessments are often tricky for student teachers if they have an issue with the associate teacher or the provider. Is it a personality issue? Is it a language issue? Is it a pedagogical issue? It can be hard to know the root of these issues”. This may leave the student teacher compromising their practice in order to get through the practicum (Phelan et al., 2008). It is interesting, however, that none of the associate teachers noted this.

Another tension in regards to the associate teacher's role during practicum can be dealing with a variety of teacher education providers. PC2 discussed that it was “challenging having to navigate relationships with a number of lecturers and assessment models versus how I would normally assess what my personal expectations are of a student teacher”. In an environment of increasing neo-liberal accountability for teachers and institutions, the role of the professional and their experience plays an integral part to the profession of teaching (Phelan et al., 2008; Patrick, 2013). There could be pressure that builds around the practicum when associate teachers are having to constantly navigate differing assessment expectations of student teachers, and particularly if they clash with their own ideals of what they believe the student teacher should be gaining from the practicum experience. Again, this was an area not mentioned by the associate teachers. Maybe this is because most of the associate teachers interviewed in this study reported that they were willing to be open and flexible in their mentoring roles and working with others.

The associate teachers mentioned that student teachers who were not actively involving themselves in the routines, and beginning to communicate with the rest of the teaching team, the children and whānau, from the first few days, found that the time to grow these connections slipped away. Aspden (2014) also found that neglecting the establishment of relationships in the practicum space with whānau left student teachers at risk and in turn increased a negative vista of the practicum experience. Practicum requires student teachers to assimilate into a new community context, rich with cultural practices and relationships that are unique to that setting (Aspden, 2014; Rogoff, 2003). Teachers and student teachers who are prepared to acknowledge and work through some of the tensions and expectations during the teaching practicum may experience a more successful outcome.

### ***Taking Responsibility and Using Initiative***

Most of the associate teachers (5/6) mentioned that having a high sense of responsibility and taking initiative by the student teacher within the teaching/learning setting was conducive to developing a productive and positive working climate. The associate teachers therefore preferred that the student teachers contacted them before

the teaching practicum started. It is interesting to note that all of the associate teachers also preferred the student teachers to make that initial contact by physically coming into the teaching/learning setting pre-practicum. This initial meeting encouraged a climate of respect from the associate teachers at the start as they could see that the student teachers were keen and interested to be involved. The student teacher also managed to gain subtle cues in and about the teaching/learning setting by going in before their teaching practicum time started. These subtle cues could be very beneficial for building the knowledge and awareness that the student teacher needs to be active in the setting; including how the teaching team interacts with each other, and how the routines and rhythms of the day are set, as well as how the children are working within the locus. In my experience as an associate teacher, if student teachers take the responsibility and initiative to go into the environment pre-practicum, and spend a bit of time familiarising themselves there, the children will also remember them. Having the children remember you when you arrive for your first day on teaching practicum is a bonus for a student teacher, as the trust and relational connections are already starting to thread together. Rozelle and Wilson (2012) agree that student teachers who take the initiative to 'touch base' with their associate teacher before starting their respective practicum placements were considered to have the right attitude and that this fosters a keen working relationship.

Associate teachers are in a powerful position, and they may also be perceived by the student teacher as being powerful because of the status and knowledge they hold in the direct teaching/learning setting. Hierarchical power is recognised as a point of tension that is often attached to mentoring and guidance relationships (Klein, Taylor, Onore, Strom & Abrams, 2014). Student teachers are frequently restricted from acting in diverse ways to that of the associate teacher, which often results in a lack of freedom as the associate teachers are reluctant to let go of this position (Axford, 2005; Patrick, 2013). Therefore, it is important to consider how this power is shared as it can be a big influence in the creation of, or the destruction of, invited spaces during teaching practicum.

Some of the associate teachers (4/6) realised that they held crucial information specific to their teaching/learning settings that they needed to share in order for the student teacher to take responsibility and use initiative within their teaching spaces. One of the associate teachers, Adrien, assisted in building this sense of responsibility

and initiative with student teachers by sending out documentation around the policies and procedures about the particular teaching/learning setting before the student teachers arrived for their teaching practica. Adrien felt that this helped the student teacher to gain an insight into how the teaching/learning setting runs, and thereby helped to create a stronger sense of using their initiative during their teaching practicum. Izadinia (2015) and Aspden (2014) also maintain that associate teachers who adopt these kinds of ‘pre-strategies’ before teaching practicum starts with student teachers create a climate of better connections, and that these strategies play a significant role in empowering the student teacher to take initiative and responsibility within a climate that they know is governed by their associate teacher. The current study consistently found that associate teachers who believed and supported ‘sharing power’ within the setting alongside the student teacher, by giving them some insights into the specific teaching practices both before and during the practicum, felt that this strategy promoted more successful practicum outcomes.

### *Creating a Climate of Dual Challenge*

Five out of the six associate teachers indicated that the new challenge of guiding and working alongside student teachers was one of the best things about their role. Not only did they have opportunities to set challenges for the student teachers but they felt that each student teacher presented unique challenges for them also. These five associate teachers therefore emphasised the importance of challenging student teachers to step out of their comfort zone whilst on practicum. The idea of stepping out of one’s comfort zone provides a climate of dual challenge as the student teacher gains the knowledge and teaching experiences from discussions and observing their associate teacher. Likewise, the associate teacher benefits from their student teacher as they provide opportunities for looking at new perspectives and viewpoints on learning. Nguyen (2009) describes the practicum as a time of intellectual exchange and transmission of knowledge. Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett and Farmer (2015) maintain that “When educators and partners understand the meaning of the work through evaluation and reflection they define theory and practice within their local context” (p.109). The associate teachers in the current study found that sharing their experiences through the discussion and challenges that arose in the interviews helped them to make their implicit practices more explicit. Banks and McGee Banks (2010)

found that creating challenge is important in the mentoring environment, and mentor teachers who were prepared to mutually collaborate and face new challenges invited an increase in meaningful connections and understandings with mentee teachers. This challenge provoked a stimulus towards new learning for both participants.

Hoffman, Mosley Wetzel, Maloch, Greeter, Taylor, Dejulio and Khan Vlach (2015) warn that associate teachers are often more involved and driven towards assisting the student teachers to fit in successfully to the setting as opposed to challenging them to evolve and progress in their learning role. In such situations, the student teacher can become the ‘apprentice’ of the associate teacher, which in turn encourages a cycle of reproducing and conforming to the current regime that exists in the teaching and learning setting. However, it was notable that all of the associate teachers in the current study never expressed concern about reproducing the status quo in their respective teaching settings. In fact, they welcomed innovative and new ideas, and were very keen to learn the ‘gems’ of knowledge that the student teacher brought with them during practicum. A couple of the associate teachers, Valerie and Tania, summed this up nicely in mentioning that they specifically talk to their student teachers about how, even though they are experienced teachers and they are in a guiding role, they are still teachable, and want to learn from student teachers also.

### **5.3. What are the Effective Associate Teacher Practices and Dispositions That Allow for Invited Spaces to Emerge?**

As part of considering the creation of invited spaces, research question two in this study sought to identify the teaching practices and effective dispositions that these associate teachers actively used in their role with and alongside student teachers. The main practices and dispositions identified in this study that seemed to be relevant in supporting the emergence of invited spaces include: the ability to be both the teacher and the learner (ako), being open and listening, and flexibility. These practices and the related dispositions will be discussed below.

### *The Ability to be both the Teacher and the Learner (Ako)*

The current study highlights the importance of ako as this approach not only allows negotiation of shared ownership of the teaching and learning between associate teachers and student teachers, but also negotiation of shared ownership of the roles and responsibilities in this space during practicum.

Many of the associate teachers (4/6) expressed that practicing ako helped to facilitate a better connection and a more inviting space for working alongside student teachers during teaching practicum. These associate teachers explained how the space during each teaching practicum is always filled by two different people each time, and that each and every student teacher brings with them assorted experiences and a variety of new learning opportunities. Edwards (2013) as well as Bishop and Berryman (2009) support this idea suggesting that ako works to bring both participants *into and out of* leading the knowledge transmission and acquisition processes between them. As a result of this divergence from other ways of working, the associate teachers reported learning new mind-sets and the emergence of new abilities with and from the student teacher. Martin-Beltran and Peercy (2014) researched how social negotiation and shared learning within the teaching and learning setting leads participants towards co-constructing and negotiating ownership. It is important to point out here that ako has not been linked to the associate-student teacher relationship in previous literature.

When associate teachers actively involved themselves in mutual and reciprocal teaching/learning endeavours with their student teachers, they reportedly often found they were more inclined to externalise their thinking with the student teacher. Externalising thinking was then said to lead to mutual changes in perceptions, practice and awareness within the direct environment as the barriers to what is sometimes referred to as the 'hidden curriculum' or 'making the implicit practices explicit' were exposed. For example, one of the associate teacher participants, Adrien, discussed the fact that they support their whānau so they might get to an equitable position in the community. It was not until Adrien externalised her thinking and motivation for this, and made her practices explicit that other people could understand the importance of this process. Adrien commented that when she did not externalise her practice with whānau, people have made assumptions that

supporting or helping whānau was disempowering them. She shared that this was a positive learning experience as it also challenged her ideals and reflection on this practice. Nonaka (1991) considers a teacher's implicit practices to be tacit knowledge, and in order to externalise sharing of this tacit knowledge participants must be working in close proximity and in a co-operative sense. This is in contrast to Patrick's (2013) study which found that, although associate teachers were caring and supportive in their mentor role with student teachers, there was still a one way teaching process that barely acknowledged power relationships and collegial ways of working together.

In regards to the current study, ako was found to facilitate and bring forth a 'truth' or a 'knowing' into cooperative teaching and learning situations, as each participant was afforded opportunities to experience a space where they were on an equitable footing with leading, learning and owning the wisdom imparted.

### ***Being Open and Listening***

Choosing to be open was an important skill identified in this study, in regards to creating invited spaces between associate teachers and student teachers. In the current study, when associate teachers made a purposeful decision to be open with their student teachers they seemed to have better all-round experiences and learning benefits from this. All of the associate teachers discussed how being open in their teaching practices helped them to engage with their student teachers. The six associate teachers believed that being open encouraged new ideas and contributions from their student teachers during practicum. Izadinia (2015) also found that being prepared to work with an open mind-set, one that welcomes new ideas and perspectives, challenges both associate teachers and student teachers to learn new ways of communicating. One associate teacher, Adrien, said that she loved having student teachers as they taught her a lot about new information technologies, and how to apply these in the assessment of children's learning. However, Adrien also said that this wouldn't happen if she wasn't eager for new ideas, or if she had chosen not to be open about 'not possessing these skills' with the student teacher.

In this study associate teachers believed student teachers grew in confidence if the associate teacher displayed a level of openness to their ideas, and accepted these in the teaching/learning setting. This finding suggests that ‘not knowing’ is an acceptable part of being a teacher so the emphasis is on finding ways to work together to grow each other’s knowledge. Ord’s (2010) study which looked closely at the experiences of early childhood educators during their initial teacher education confirmed that a willingness to be open with others assisted in making better connections. One of the associate teachers in the current study, Tania, displayed how open she was with her student teachers by telling them that she wanted them to use this practicum time to try things out and to fail. This comment was often met with a surprised gaze from the student teachers’ faces, until Tania would go on to say “Because when you fail you find success!”.

However, two participating associate teachers did not appear to hold trying things out as being so important, and they placed more emphasis on letting the student teacher have a couple of days to ‘find their feet’ in the environment first. Four out of the six associate teachers interviewed, however, maintained that they needed to take the initial responsibility for being open and welcoming in the environment. They believed that this approach supported the relational connection to grow and for associate teachers to become effective mentors for their respective student teachers. These four associate teachers did this by having a set time to welcome and introduce the student teacher to the children and whānau, whether this was in the form of pōwhiri or mihi (formal greeting ceremonies), a mat time, or a morning tea. What these four associate teachers aimed to create from choosing to be open and welcoming was an atmosphere of belonging and acceptance for the student teacher.

Listening may be the quiet art of true interpersonal connection within the teaching realm, a display of the awareness of the importance of power relating to both personal and pedagogical professionalism (Sandvik, 2009). However, it is interesting to note that in this study only half of the associate teachers (3) in this study mentioned that listening was important. A possible reason for this is that early childhood settings are very busy places; they can be loud, vibrant, and a hive of activity. Teachers within these settings are always on high alert and scanning constantly for what is happening with the children, whether it be directly beside them, or over on the other side of the room or the playground. Listening to the

student teacher may not have been a priority at certain points of the day, and perhaps if the student teacher shares information at these times then there could be an increased likelihood of communication breakdown and for misunderstandings to occur.

The three associate teachers who expressed that it was important to listen to their student teachers, believed that listening helped them to be tuned into their student teacher's ideas and even their worries during practicum, and that the ability to listen made for a better, open and honest, solid working relationship. Nguyen (2009) explains that listening is crucial within the mentor teacher-student teacher partnership, and when listening techniques are used effectively this shows that each participant is "working hard at honouring each other's voice" (p. 662). The three associate teachers who valued listening also mentioned that being 'heard' is important for nurturing the values of trust, respect and confidence for both themselves and the student teacher and this needs to be established early on in the teaching practicum. These associate teachers suggested that a climate of listening can be facilitated by taking the time to talk with the student teacher on a one to one basis, without interruptions, and by thinking about creating spaces in the day where the communication that is shared and transmitted is less likely to be misinterpreted.

### ***Flexibility***

Flexibility is a difficult disposition to get a good understanding of in the teaching role, as flexibility could potentially look very different, depending on where you were standing and what you were experiencing at the time. Most associate teachers (5/6) talked about flexible practice as a sort of careful guidance that realised the strengths and weaknesses, both of themselves and of the student teachers. The associate teachers in the current study reported being flexible in acknowledging and enhancing their own and the student teacher's strengths, and adopted the stance that there was a space for mutual contributions of ideas and challenges for overcoming both of their barriers or weaknesses. From this finding a constructive approach towards participatory teaching and learning can be seen, in line with the suggestions of Kessler (2013) as well as Kilmanova and Dembovska (2013), who found that the co-construction of ideas and theories between the associate teacher and the student

teacher can enhance relational connections during teaching practicum. Rajuan, Beijaard and Verloop (2007) also supported the idea that maintaining a positive view towards accepting flexibility in the teaching practices of others created a shared ownership of responsibility.

The current study consistently found that the associate teachers expressed being aware of specific assessment and competencies that student teachers must display during practicum are important. However, particularly within low socioeconomic teaching settings, there is increased need for flexibility and fluidity in the role, and the emphasis and concentration is more importantly driven by and focused on the children, whānau (families) and the community. Interestingly, and in contrast to the finding in the current study, according to Korthagen (2004) flexibility is a teaching disposition that is rarely included in desirable teaching ability lists. This may be the case more generally, as traditional roles of the associate teacher rarely account for such diverse and pliable interactions with student teachers. Yuan and Lee (2014) support this idea as they have found that associate teachers are traditionally set in their roles, concentrating more on the delivery of specific skill sets of competencies with student teachers rather than showing a level of flexibility in the ways in which to grow these competencies with student teachers during practicum.

#### **5.4. How do Invited Spaces Promote Shared Understandings to Enhance Cultural Awareness and Contribute to Student Teacher Success during Practicum in Low Socioeconomic Early Childhood Educational Settings?**

This study was focused on associate teachers who were actively practising specifically within low socioeconomic ECE settings. This section identifies and highlights the particular practices that these associate teachers used to inspire, enlighten and work alongside student teachers. In this section the areas that will be discussed in relation to this context are: valuing identity and beliefs, sharing the intimacies of the setting and articulating practice.

### *Valuing Identity and Beliefs*

All of the associate teachers and both pre-service teacher education coordinators in this study expressed that understanding and having a strong sense of your own identity, beliefs and values is crucial for teaching, and throughout the process of developing and growing as a student teacher. All associate teachers spoke about openly expressing their personal views and how these link to their practice. Through sharing their own identity and beliefs the associate teachers believed that it encouraged the student teachers to look more closely at their own personal identities too; and that this was a positive and productive pathway for building new understandings and confidence in each other. Ferrier-Kerr (2009) and Ticknor (2014), who also carried out studies around student teacher engagement during practicum, found that throughout daily interactions and making connections with others, teachers bring with them a multitude of beliefs and values to the teaching and learning setting. They suggest that sharing and valuing these beliefs and values with the student teacher encourages thoughtful decision-making for both participants. This is a similar view to that held by the associate teachers in the current study.

The associate teachers who spoke about openly sharing their personal identities, beliefs and values expressed the view that they found this practice allowed for more thoughtful decision making, and they also felt they could work alongside the student teacher on a more equal footing. They felt that sharing a more equitable space with the student teacher helped with making a connection, and with building confidence in each other, as they could both grow ‘knowings’ about their respective personal identities and intimacies.

One of the pre-service teacher education coordinators (PC1) also stressed how important and yet difficult it is for both associate teachers and student teachers to see another perspective during teaching practica, stating that this is like “fracturing an existing discourse of beliefs and values system”. Examining practices and unpicking the impetus behind these practices brings beliefs and values into conscious awareness. This can be a difficult, yet enlightening journey for teachers. Ironically, the teaching practicum is a space where the negotiating and articulating of ideas, feelings, and beliefs are foregrounded and are a big part of growing as a student teacher, and finding out about ‘who they are’ as a developing teacher. The

relationship between the associate teacher and the student teacher is important, as highlighted by Izadinia's (2015) study which showed that a lack of collaboration, negotiation, and absence of making a personal connection with associate teachers during teaching practica moved student teachers towards a space of non-engagement. Ultimately the student teachers in that study then felt marginalised in the teaching/learning setting, which is quite different from the picture drawn by the associate teachers in this study.

To support student teachers in the process of knowing their own identity and that of others, two of the associate teachers noted that they involved their student teachers in the 'planning for identity building' programme that they run with their children and whānau within their respective teaching/learning settings. For example, one associate teacher explained how her setting runs a 'golden rules' system or contract, where the children and whānau are fully involved in making and setting their own rules around respectful behaviours and consideration of others. The other associate teacher described how her setting runs a strong virtues programme in which the children and the whānau are active in explaining and discovering their identity and whakapapa (genealogy) links, cultural awareness, and developing ideas, theories and rules about working with others.

In both settings within the current study where the planning for identity programme is run, the associate teachers felt that the children were very expressive and took ownership of these identity forming rules, systems or contracts; and the associate teachers described how both the children and themselves shared, and sometimes assisted in guiding the student teachers through this identity programme also. The associate teachers explained how this exposure enabled the student teachers to develop and process new stimulus, understandings as well as beliefs and values that may be different from their own in that particular teaching/learning setting. Haworth (2015) also supports the notion of growing cultural identity by emphasising that being afforded opportunities to grow awareness of and have exposure to interactive experiences beyond your own cultural background encourages an understanding to that of others.

The associate teachers in the current study consistently reported that student teachers who were enabled, with the support of their associate teachers, to bring their virtual

kete (bag) of knowledge into the space with them, were more confident at interacting with the learning community during teaching practicum. A strong connection can be drawn between the notion of identity building and a ‘funds of knowledge’ (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) teaching approach, where the particular and unique things that each person brings to the teaching/learning setting are valued and acknowledged as significant contributions, and open a pathway to make stronger connections with others. Peter’s (2010) study around transitions into new learning contexts further supports this finding, suggesting that relating to others is supported by the specific cultural experiences that one has that leads them to the distinct and unique awareness and understandings of others’ individuality, identity and diversity.

### *Sharing the Intimacies of the Setting*

Five out of six associate teachers expressed the need for student teachers to actively experience the ‘being’ and the ‘feeling’ during their time out on teaching practicum. The being, doing and feeling of the teaching/learning setting is like the heart of a setting; the unique, distinctive and intimate ways in which each setting works every day, from the structure of the day, to the routines, to the interactions, to the way in which the teaching and learning is delivered. The associate teachers noted that these are qualities that may be difficult to see as they are considered to be aspects of practice that are *soft knowledge* (Hildreth & Kimble, 2002). The direct teaching and learning setting is said to produce both hard and soft knowledge in regards to teaching practices. Hard knowledge is described as the practices you can see, read and touch – assessment and documentation, written philosophies, policy statements and resources (Hildreth & Kimble, 2002; Payne, Jordan, Wilson & Corley, 2010). Soft knowledge is referred to earlier on in the literature review (see cultural engagement, p. 14). Aspects of both hard and soft knowledge can be very diverse throughout each teaching/learning setting. According to Nonaka (1991):

“[Tacit or soft knowledge is] highly personal. It is hard to formalise and therefore difficult to communicate to others...tacit knowledge consists partly of technical skills (and partly) of mental models, beliefs and perspectives so ingrained that we take them for granted and cannot easily articulate them” (p.98).

In the current study, one associate teacher in particular, Valerie, stressed how important it was to invite the student teacher into the ‘knowings’ or growing their understandings of the soft knowledge aspects in her teaching locus. Valerie did this by talking with the student teacher about her practice and clearly articulating her responses and interactions with the children and whānau in the environment. Valerie also encouraged the student teachers to sit in the environment for a time and to observe to get a ‘feel’ for what is going on. Cindy also discussed that “while they’re [student teachers] with us they’re part of the team, and my view is “why shouldn’t they have the same information that we’ve got?”. Sharing and experiencing the being, doing and feeling of the teaching and learning setting is critical for developing personal connections and understandings (Haworth, 2015).

All of the associate teachers shared that developing diverse perspectives was a challenge in their role with student teachers during practicum. However, they all agreed that it was also a space or an area where they could see significant changes occurring. The associate teachers reported that the student teachers who wanted to learn more about the social and cultural aspects within the teaching/learning setting appeared to show more empathy and socio-emotional intelligence. These student teachers in turn displayed more skills in being able to make deeper relational links with the learning community. Cindy discussed that “because we are in a low socioeconomic environment, you’ve got to have an open mind. There is just no one rule”. Yuan and Lee (2014) as well as Ng, Nicholas and Williams (2010) support this idea, maintaining that sociocultural beliefs can be challenged and there is room for change with regards to the interactions and connections that are made during teaching practica. Within the early childhood locus we can see that there are many aspects of practice to be mindful of, particularly so if you are new to the environment, as student teachers are on practicum. The current study found that when associate teachers believed that student teachers had experiences of soft knowledge first-hand in practice – the being, doing and feeling – that they could begin to acutely notice, recognise and respond to the diverse and changing needs of engaging in the direct teaching/learning environment, and, through this process, shared and collaborative understandings grew for them in relation to the teaching team as well as the children, and their whānau.

### *Articulating Practice*

Articulating one's practice as a teacher is important since it is linked to developing both professional and personal teaching philosophies. Articulating practice also enables teachers working alongside each other to develop understandings and reasoning around why 'they do what they do'. Five out of the six associate teachers discussed the importance of being mindful of clearly articulating their own philosophies and practices with student teachers. They felt that unpacking the reasons why these practices and philosophies may differ from other settings the student teacher may have experienced is vital as it grows a solid platform for understandings and increased cultural awareness in that particular teaching/learning setting.

Specifically articulating practice also moved student teachers into spaces where they were afforded specific knowledge about each teaching/learning setting. For example, some of the teaching approaches and strategies that the associate teachers shared could be considered as unorthodox ways of working. A facial expression, an eyebrow raise, or a short sharp "Oi" was considered by some to be far more effective in behaviour management and building social and emotional competence within that particular setting than 'flowery' words, or the 'use your words' line that some teachers use often when working alongside children. Valerie emphasised this by mentioning that you have to "teach straight, tell the children as it is, don't coat it over with 'lovey dovey' words – telling them [children] with respect is non-negotiable here". Cindy also discussed similar ideas in relation to her setting:

"children get spoken to quite strongly, and very minimal words because at home they come from an environment that is huge, loud, unpredictable, and the children have learnt to turn off...we know the culture of the child's home life and sometimes they only respond to a certain tone of voice, and you've got to catch that in order for them [children] to listen to you. Once we get their [children's] attention then we can move forward, it's like working in reverse".

The associate teachers reported that, with this knowledge, the student teachers created a stronger sense of belonging and understanding, connected with the children and whānau more easily, and went on to be more competent and confident in noticing, recognising and responding in the environment during their teaching practicum.

The five associate teachers, Tania, Valerie, Cindy, Adrien and Alice, who consciously articulated their distinctive practices also said they adopted and developed a close relationship between the practices they used within their teaching settings and the way in which they guided, interacted and connected with student teachers. This approach was felt to be important as giving the student teachers the awareness, dispositional skills and developing competencies needed, helped them to be successful at engaging appropriately, actively, and with sensitivity in the teaching setting. Hoffman et al. (2015) and Arthur-Kelly et al. (2013) similarly suggest that associate teachers who guide student teachers in the practices relevant to making connections within their learning communities create further awareness and confidence for the student teacher.

This study highlights specific aspects of practice that may be confronting to student teachers within a low socioeconomic teaching environment. The associate teachers talked about how the student teacher may encounter attitudes and experiences or situations that may challenge them, so they believed that giving them the skills to deal with this was important for a successful teaching placement.

### **5.5. Reflecting on Links to Rogoff's Planes**

Rogoff's theoretical framework (1995; 1998; 2003) formed another lens for making sense of the data that emerged from both the pre-service teacher coordinators and the associate teachers. Each of the planes, the personal, the interpersonal and the institutional share an interwoven or linked nature (see Figure 1, p. 26) and due to this aspect, it provided a strong framework for identifying the many complex, diverse and organic themes that emerged from the findings. Looking at the findings through each plane also extended and added to answering the research questions for this study.

The personal plane helped to deepen and extend the understanding around the creating and negotiating of effective invited spaces. Both the associate teacher and the student teacher need to be willing to respect and value identity, but also make a shift from their personal entrenched beliefs, and then find ways in which to bring these beliefs together. This study found that bringing these personal beliefs together

potentially creates a positive impact on the growth of experiences and understandings needed for creating effective invited spaces, particularly in low socioeconomic early educational settings, during the teaching practicum. This study adds to the dimension of Rogoff's personal plane as it foregrounds an emphasis on the *ways* in which the associate-student teacher relationship makes connection on a personal level that is of great importance.

Reflecting on the interpersonal plane foregrounded that specific teaching practices and dispositions had significant impact on unlocking or creating effective invited spaces in this study. The interpersonal plane is centred on individuals finding ways to engage and cooperate. The PCs also placed importance on maintaining social and relational practices with, for and between associate teachers and student teachers during teaching practicum. For this study an interesting aspect to note, that adds to the explanation of Rogoff's theory around how the interpersonal plane explains the phenomena, is that both the associate teacher and the student teacher needed to share a mutual willingness to be involved and stay interconnected. Through a mutual willingness to stay interpersonally connected, this study found that associate teachers gained a greater awareness of culturally appropriate and sensitive ways of working alongside student teachers, and were able to have the confidence to share more within their diverse learning settings.

Looking through the lens of the institutional plane, the findings from this study foregrounded the tensions and expectations around the teaching practicum. The PCs mentioned the complexities of practicum and the associate teachers discussed the colliding nature of administrative work and time constraints on their roles. In this study, the associate teachers who chose to ensure that part of their role and responsibility was to be explicitly clear with articulating their practice and to share the intimacies of their particular settings with student teachers, displayed that the rules within the institutional plane can be different from setting to setting. If the associate-student teacher relationship is flexible, open and mutual in nature on both the personal and interpersonal planes then the tensions and expectations created by the institutional plane become less influential. There is an important aspect and reflection here for growing shared cultural understandings, and more specifically for student teachers moving into a teaching practicum within a low socioeconomic early childhood educational context.

Through reflecting on how Rogoff's planes/theoretical framework formed another layer to answering the research questions for this study, I began conceptualising a model and visual metaphor throughout the process of this research journey. This model or metaphor helps to describe how the complex themes, found in this study, interact and work together to create effective invited spaces. The next section will move on to describe and discuss this model/metaphor.

## **5.6. A Visual Metaphor for the Invited Space**

Whilst on my journey through this study I progressively developed a visual metaphor to help explain the complex nature of what assists the seeking and creating of invited spaces during teaching practica. The visual metaphor that I have chosen is a buoy. This is significant to me as I lived at the beachside for over sixteen years, and much of my thinking for this study was done directly on the beach. Every time I thought and considered the teaching landscape, and the continual tension and struggle that both associate teachers and student teachers must face to work alongside each other effectively, simultaneously, I would see an orange buoy, where the waves of the sea continually challenged and moved it. In order to stay afloat the buoy needed a strong anchor. What I also noticed about a buoy in the sea is that it still rocks and moves gently with the force of the waves, however, the unseen chain links below the surface of the water support the buoy to stay firmly in place. In the same way, the findings from this study highlight that the associate teacher's relationship with their student teachers will be continually challenged, and at times difficult to navigate. But if the themes that have emerged in this study are implemented and robust within the practicum, then the links in the chain have an increased chance of remaining strong and holding the anchor in place (see Figure 2).

*Kia hora te marino, kia whakapapa pounamu te moana, kia tere te kārohirohi i  
mua i tou huarahi*

*‘May the calm be widespread, may the ocean glisten as greenstone, may the shimmer  
of light ever dance across your pathway’*

The whakataukī above represents my visual metaphor. In this whakataukī, the *calm*, refers to the peacefulness and equity that can be created through an effective invited space. The *glistening* of the ocean as *greenstone*, refers to the special privilege and treasures that we can gain from working with and alongside others. The *shimmer of light*, refers to the seeking of knowledge with others and the hope, enlightenment and unknown understandings that one may attain (P. Kawana, personal communication, 9 July 2016).

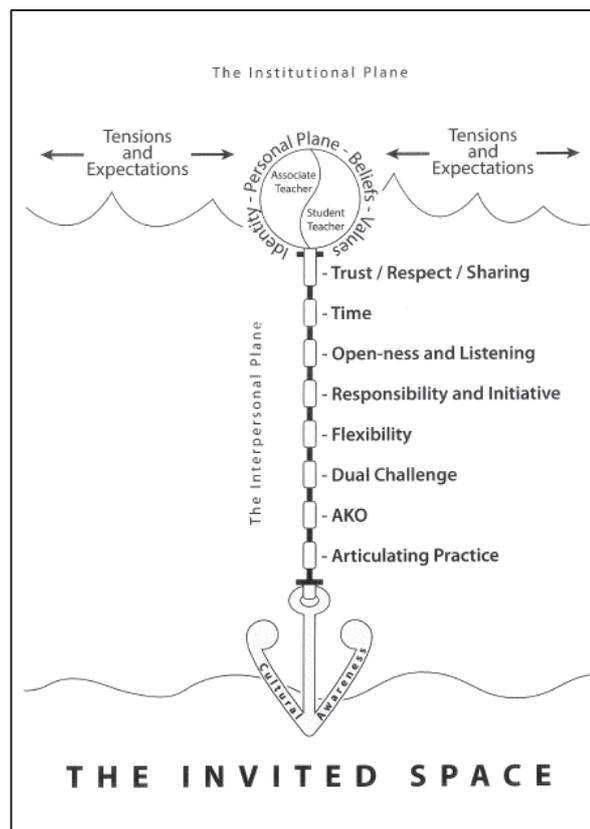


Figure 2: *The Invited Space*.

Adapted from Rogoff, B. (1998). *Cognition as a collaborative process*.

In Figure 2 the buoy represents the associate teacher and student teacher on the personal plane where identity, beliefs and values are joined together whilst they work alongside each other. The waves represent the tensions and expectations on the institutional plane that both associate teachers and student teachers must contend with. Each of the chain links represent the values, skills and dispositions through the interpersonal plane, that are the key findings from this study that lead to the effective creation and of an invited space. The anchor represents cultural awareness and understandings that cement the engagement of the invited space.

## **5.7. Summary**

This discussion chapter identified how the nature of early childhood teaching is bound by multifaceted social situations and experiences that build and grow through many complex and diverse ways. The findings arising from this study foreground areas that the associate teacher's role can contribute to and support in the creation and negotiation of effective invited spaces with student teachers during teaching practica: trust and respect, time, taking responsibility and initiative and creating a climate of dual challenge. These particular dispositions are especially important in low socioeconomic settings as these settings can be both culturally and socially diverse. Student teachers that have the ability to make respectful and reciprocal connections with others within these settings, have been found by the associate teachers in this study, to be a beneficial aspect for supporting a successful teaching practicum.

The practices and dispositions of these associate teachers also had a positive impact on forming and creating the invited space. The climate that was constructed through working with these particular dispositions mentioned above - flexibility, openness and listening, and ako - creates an empowering context. This empowering context assists in the development of an interconnected, reciprocal working lens for supporting and promoting invited spaces with benefits for both associate teachers and student teachers alike during teaching practicum.

Ultimately, shared understandings and an enhancement of cultural awareness can transpire during teaching practicum through the creation of effective invited spaces.

Associate teachers who reported exploring their own and others' personal and professional identity, values and beliefs found a better connection with their student teachers. The ability to share the distinct, unique and intimate ways of working in the teaching/learning settings with student teachers emerged as another useful pathway to creating an effective invited space. In this way, participants felt that student teachers benefited from the journey into deeper cultural awareness, understandings and engagement as they became more active in their teaching role whilst on practicum.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 6.1. Introduction

In this research, a case study approach was used to explore factors that enhance the development of an effective invited space between associate teachers and student teachers during practicum. The study centred on the insights gained from pre-service teacher education coordinators and the associate teacher's voice, in particular, associate teachers in low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings. In this way, the research aimed to gain insights into how associate teachers use specific practices and dispositions to engage on a deeper level with their student teachers. Conversations with associate teachers were thought to lead to greater understandings of the complexities around their teaching roles and responsibilities with regard to guiding and mentoring student teachers, and the interviews uncovered ways in which a deeper cultural understanding, awareness and connection could be developed through creating an effective invited space during practicum.

This chapter will begin with a brief summary of key findings to each of the research questions and reflections on theoretical implications. The discussion will then move on to review the strengths and limitations of the methodology/design approach used. This chapter will then move on to explore avenues for further research into the ways in which effective invited spaces can be created and developed between associate teachers and student teachers during practicum. Next, I identify implications for associate teachers' practice, student teachers' practice and initial teacher education in regards to growing an invited space during practicum. A concluding reflection will finalise this chapter.

## **6.2. Key findings**

The research questions arose out of a review of the literature around the traditional associate teacher-student teacher relationship, as well as the collaborative and inter-relational teaching approaches and processes that enhance teaching climates and support cultural engagement and awareness. Key findings from this study highlight the need for teachers within the low socioeconomic early childhood sector to constantly externalise and articulate their practices clearly with others in their direct teaching and learning environment. Teaching approaches within these settings are not always universal, and can be very diverse; so, growing an awareness and an understanding of particular teaching approaches, for example, *ako*, is important for outsiders who are to be immersed or spend time in this locus.

Another key finding that emerged from this study was the notion of dual challenges. This counter acts the traditional modes of apprenticeship style learning, where the mentor takes the reigns and guides the apprentice towards success. Dual challenge takes place when both the mentor and the apprentice create an environment where they are able to capitalise on equitable opportunities to socially negotiate and acquire knowledge for the growing of new understandings and awareness, and ways in which to work alongside each other.

## **6.3. Implications for Theory**

This study has foregrounded the particular practices of teachers who work within low socioeconomic ECE settings. An effective invited space is created when all three planes of analysis (Rogoff, 1995; 1998; 2003) are acknowledged and utilised by both the associate teacher and the student teacher, including personal aspects (sharing identities, beliefs and values), interpersonal aspects (trust and respect, responsibility and initiative, flexibility, openness and listening, *ako* and dual challenges), and institutional aspects (tensions, expectations and time).

The visual metaphor that I have created adds to the theoretical approaches within social constructivism in providing a framework that both teachers and learners can

apply to their respective roles and responsibilities within the educational setting. The qualities and dispositions that have been found in this study are beneficial for supporting an interrelationship and connection with others within diverse learning communities. Through building a relational connection between individuals and the teaching and learning setting, a reciprocal ‘knowing’ space can be created that allows for a shared mutuality of ideas, perspectives and new knowledge to grow. If we are to consider the future learning styles of our next generation of young learners I think it is timely that socially constructed theories look towards how to integrate new perspectives and learning styles into traditional modes of acquiring knowledge within more equal participatory climates.

#### **6.4. Strengths of this Methodology/Research Design Approach**

The qualitative case study approach used in this study allowed for a data gathering process that used in-depth, ‘close and personal’ individual interviews with two pre-service teacher education co-ordinators, and six associate teachers. Mutch (2005) describes this as “providing rich description of a bounded case” (p.112). Insights from the eight participants helped the researcher to identify and explore the ways in which an invited space during teaching practicum can be created. The interview data included both pre-service teacher education coordinators and associate teachers’ voices, in regards to how they perceive relational connections and practices can be built alongside student teachers. The comparing and contrasting of the data from the different participants in this study allowed for the commonalities and differences to be analysed and the reasons behind their perspectives to be explored.

Choosing to talk explicitly with associate teachers who currently practice in low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings meant that a detailed record and analysis of their views and practices could be built with reference to these specific settings. The results provided insights into how each of the key participants viewed their role of being an associate teacher, how they work alongside student teachers, and the way in which they articulated their practices in regard to their respective teaching and learning settings. These insights then revealed their beliefs about how effective invited spaces were created and developed during the teaching practicum.

Rogoff's planes of analysis (1998) was found to be an effective framework to begin making sense of the data, as throughout the analysis process the components around invited spaces continued to emerge under one or more of the three planes: the personal, the interpersonal and/or the institutional. Using Rogoff's planes of analysis (1995;1998; 2003) provided a good platform for adopting and continuing to use constant comparative analysis (Le Compte & Priessle, 1993) to draw out the key findings. In turn this process assisted in answering the questions in the study while taking into account the diverse perspectives of the two practicum coordinators and the 'voices' of six associate teachers.

Data was gathered from two pre-service teacher education coordinators and six associate teachers through semi-structured interviews conducted in a 'face to face' context. The generous time limit attached to these interviews allowed for lengthy discussion with participants who were able to discuss their personal views/ideas, and specific practices in regards to their teaching and learning setting, and with student teachers, in a non-threatening climate.

As the researcher I had a good base knowledge and experience of teaching, and in particular teaching in low socioeconomic ECE settings. I believe this gave an added advantage in gaining trust from the participants. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) state, when the researcher has a good sense of subject knowledge, understanding and realism about the case being conducted, this creates rapport with participants. Establishing a comfortable and trusting climate during the interview process was crucial as it allowed the participants to discuss their opinions and to expand on these freely without fear and judgement. It is important to add here that, generally, teachers do not often get the opportunity to articulate and discuss their practice with an 'outsider' who is not evaluating their practice, and the participants involved in this study welcomed the opportunity to do so. Participants also enjoyed the interesting and sometimes surprising findings that came out of discussing their thoughts, ideas and aspirations surrounding their respective practices. This process provided an opportunity for them to challenge themselves and to make explicit their implicit practices.

## **6.5. Limitations of this Methodology/Research Design Approach**

The use of semi-structured interviews was an effective way of exploring the key components that can support the creation of an invited space during practicum.

As the researcher I made a conscious choice not to observe the associate teachers' practices for the purposes of this study. The reason for this was to create and maintain an open, non-threatening climate where the participants could feel totally comfortable and free to discuss the intimacies of their practice, without being 'watched' and 'evaluated'. However, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) state, "observation methods are powerful tools for gaining insights into situations" (p.474). So choosing not to observe, and to focus only on capturing the voices of the participants did limit the extent to which data could be verified. It is possible that teachers may have reported ideals rather than actual practice. However, on the other hand, the potential judgement of each teachers' practices would have been likely to impede them from openly sharing their perspectives.

## **6.6. Implications for Further Research**

This study has foregrounded particular areas that support and enhance the 'invited space' between associate teachers and student teachers during practicum. Future study involving observations would help identify examples of some of the practices mentioned in action, and further clarify the perspectives that the associate teachers discussed throughout their interviews. The results from this study might further strengthen understandings and the ways in which teachers' practices work, particularly around the 'being, doing and knowing' in the locus, could become more visible.

As this study focused on both the background information from the pre-service teacher education coordinators' and the associate teachers' voices, further research could be conducted in gaining the voice and perspective of the student teachers. Adding data from the student teachers' voices would help to show if they had similar or differing ideas about creating invited spaces during practicum. Future research

that sought to gain the student teachers' perspective would add some critical new insights to the findings in this study.

Further research could also focus on identifying areas that initial teacher education providers look at in planning around the teaching practicum. In particular action research could identify the effects of differing times for practicum, and the influence of a focus on cultural identity and relevant dispositional training for student teachers. Further research into exploring these two aspects at the institutional level could also uncover how teacher educators perceive the benefits for enhancing the teaching climate, creating better working connections between associate teachers and student teachers during practicum, and retention of teachers in the profession.

There could be further research value in looking more closely at the impetus or drive behind a larger sample of associate teachers' practices and dispositions, exploring why they 'do what they do' in their everyday teaching settings.

I also feel that future action research could involve more conversations and exploration into and around teachers' own reflection on action, externalising 'ways of being' in the teaching locus in order to help to clearly articulate and share these ideas and practices with others.

## **6.7. Implications for Practice**

A number of implications for practice have been identified with regard to the associate teacher's role, the student teacher's role, and for initial teacher education. These implications focus on key components that support invited spaces during practicum. Having found that the associate teacher plays a significant role in the creation of invited spaces it is important to consider how they can be supported in this role. The findings from this study therefore inform the following implications of how invited spaces can be created and negotiated.

## **Recommendations for Associate Teachers**

### ***1: Articulate practice***

- Be specific and share the reasons why you practice in the way you do in your setting and space;
- Ensure your thoughts around teaching and learning are transparent;
- Be open to discussing the ways in which you communicate and interact within your learning community.
- Ensure you are clear in articulating your practice throughout many different learning and teaching situations

### ***2: Identify and focus on specific dispositions and practices***

- Create an open climate, and a willingness to listen to others;
- Adopt a flexible mind-set within your role and practice to allow for diverse ideas and new generational thinking around teaching and learning;
- Support a climate where there is a constant interchange of roles from teacher to learner and vice versa.

### ***3: Accept and set challenges***

- Be prepared to step out of your comfort zone;
- Consider new and diverse ways of working;
- Encourage clear communication and articulation of practice from student teachers;
- Make your expectations clear.

## **Recommendations for Student Teachers**

### ***1: Develop trust and respect***

- Be prepared for and aware of encountering unfamiliar teaching/learning environments on practicum and the need to respond appropriately;
- Go to the practicum with an open mind and the knowledge that every place or space has their own specific and particular uniqueness around the ways in which they operate;
- Remain humble and non-judgemental before and during the practicum;
- Discuss concerns, challenges and thoughts with your associate teacher first before you act.

### ***2: Show responsibility and initiative***

- Make the initial contact with associate teachers;
- Find out information about the setting and ask questions, on the first contact visit, around the philosophy and practices of the setting;
- Find out what the expectations are from the associate teacher;
- Be clear in your expectations of the associate teacher;
- Listen and watch first, then ask questions;
- Be professional and constructive with offering and challenging new ideas;
- Communicate your ideas and thoughts clearly.

### ***3: Develop awareness of your own identity***

- Understand who you are, where you come from and know your own perspectives/ideas around teaching and learning;
- Be open to understanding and looking at other perspectives on cultural and professional identity;
- Try to relate and communicate with others without compromising your own identity or that of others.

## **Recommendations for Initial Teacher Education Providers**

### ***1: Address issues related to time***

- Extend the time allocated for teaching practicum experiences;
- Consider implementing time management strategies into the programme to prepare student teachers for practicum.
- Communicate clearly with associate teachers around expectations of time and workload for the practicum.

### ***2: Increase focus on dispositional training***

- Consider implementing more curriculum structure around communication and how student teachers can be assertive during practicum;
- Consider implementing more curriculum content around the soft knowledge aspects of the teaching practice (e.g. being flexible or being open; consider what these look like in practice);
- Consider implementing curriculum content that explores the complex nature of networking, making cohesive connections, and working within a team whilst on practicum.

## **6.8. Concluding Reflection**

This study has taken me on an enlightening journey of looking at the complexities of teaching practicum and the factors that enhance and grow an invited space during this time. What I have discovered is that there are many interlinking practices and approaches that facilitate and encourage the invited space to emerge and become solidly grounded within the interrelationship that is formed between associate teachers and student teachers.

Key aspects of teaching practices and dispositions emerged from the findings of this study. In particular, trust and respect, time, taking responsibility and using initiative,

openness and listening, flexibility, sharing identity, values and beliefs, articulating practice, dual challenges, and ako, are the integral components that were found to enhance and heighten the creation and negotiation of invited spaces. Based on the findings associate teachers and student teachers who can interlink these practices and dispositions during the short time parameter of practicum may be likely to experience more successful teaching placements, to have better collaborative and co-operative work climates, and to gain a deeper understanding, awareness and appreciation of culturally diverse teaching/learning settings and communities.

This study has encouraged and taught me to be more aware of supporting associate teachers in their role with student teachers and to provide ways in which to do this together so we continue to produce teachers with insight, teachers with heart, and teachers with transformational practices and attitudes in the early childhood education sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. This study has also taught me that it is important to discuss our professional roles to grow understandings as teachers. What I have learnt is that teachers thoroughly enjoy the process of articulating and thinking about the reasons why they practice in certain ways, but they do not often get opportunities to tell others outside of their direct teaching and learning settings. I maintain that growing this opportunity for professional discussion will not only strengthen personal teaching practices, but could also grow awareness, understandings and knowledge between both different early childhood educational settings and the wider education sector.

The contemporary idea of the ‘invited space’ that emerges from the current study has potential to provide a new pathway towards the effective mentoring and guiding of student teachers, particularly within low socioeconomic settings. In time it is hoped that this will result in an increased retention of teachers within the profession, and in particular within low socioeconomic educational contexts. The visual metaphor for the invited space that I have created to display the complex nature of this study will be a useful addition to current theoretical perspectives in regards to socially co-constructed learning. It is hoped that the invited space will be a guiding framework for associate teachers and student teachers in their endeavours and navigation towards more successful teaching practica, and to ignite and deepen this journey through ways in which understandings of cultural awareness can be anchored.



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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Ethical Approval

  
**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

24 April 2015

Claire Wilson  
21 Church Street  
**PALMERSTON NORTH**

Dear Claire

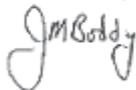
**Re: HEC: Southern B Application – 15/14**  
**Creating effective invited spaces: Putting the lens on low socio-economic early childhood education teaching practica**

Thank you for your letter dated 20 April 2015.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely



Prof Julie Boddy, Chair  
**Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B**

cc A/Prof Penny Haworth Institute of Education PN500	A/Prof Sally Hansen Institute of Education PN500
Mrs Roseanne MacGillivray Institute of Education PN500	Prof John O'Neill, Director Institute of Education PN500

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**Massey University Human Ethics Committee**  
Accredited by the Health Research Council  
Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise

Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T 06 3805573; 06 3805575 F 06 250 5822  
E [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz) [anaethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:anaethics@massey.ac.nz) [erc@massey.ac.nz](mailto:erc@massey.ac.nz) [www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz)

Appendix B: Consent Form – Individual

  
**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION  
TE KURA O TE MĀTAURANGA

***Research Title: Creating Effective Invited Spaces:  
Putting the lens on low socio-economic early  
childhood education teaching practica.***

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to the interview being sound recorded. YES/NO

I wish to have my recordings returned to me. YES/NO

I wish to have the interview/s conducted via TELEPHONE / SKYPE / MEETING FACE TO FACE  
(PLEASE CIRCLE WHICH YOU PREFER).

I would like to receive a summary of the research findings. YES/NO  
e-mail or other contact address to which this can be sent:

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name - printed** \_\_\_\_\_

Te Kōwhiri  
ki Pākehanga

Institute of Education  
Cnr Albany Drive & Collins Road, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T 06 356 9099 www.massey.ac.nz



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION  
TE KURA O TE MĀTAURANGA

**Research Title: *Creating Effective Invited Spaces:  
Putting the lens on low socio-economic early  
childhood education teaching practica.***

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INSTITUTIONAL**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to the researcher accessing staff members at my institution to invite them to participate in the study, as described in the information sheet. YES/NO

I would like to receive a summary of the research findings. YES/NO  
e-mail or other contact address to which this can be sent: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to allow participation in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.  
YES/NO

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name - printed \_\_\_\_\_

---

Te Kōwhiri  
ki Pūrehuroa

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION  
TE KURA O TE MĀTAURANGA

**Research Title: Creating Effective Invited Spaces:  
Putting the lens on low socio-economic early  
childhood education teaching practica.**

INFORMATION SHEET FOR: PRE-SERVICE TEACHING PRACTICUM CO-ORDINATORS

Tena Koe, my name is Claire Wilson and I have been teaching in early childhood for the past ten years, predominantly in low socio-economic environments. As part of my MEd study I am currently investigating opportunities for promoting enhanced cultural and shared understandings between associate teachers and student teachers during their teaching practica. The aim of this project is to understand shared spaces in which associate teachers may collaborate and work on a deeper level with student teachers thereby enhancing success in early childhood education teaching practica.

I would like to invite you to be a participant in this research.

This research takes a case study approach and will be based within low socio-economic early educational settings. There will be eight participants in total - two pre-service teaching practicum co-ordinators and six early childhood teachers. The reason for this number is to ensure the data will be qualitatively based, rich, and in-depth.

The research findings will be shared in any resulting publications and presentations.

If you agree to be a participant you will be involved in a one hour (maximum) interview, arranged at a time that is mutually convenient. This interview will involve discussion and questions on teaching and the processes that are involved and used in placing students on their respective teaching practica. You will have the options of conducting the interview via telephone, skype or meeting face to face.

**Data Management**

If you agree to participate the interviews will be audio recorded then transcribed. All data will be kept in a secure location for a maximum of five years or until this research/thesis has been submitted and examined, after which transcribed data will be shredded and audio recordings deleted.

Every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of your identity. However, given the nature of the early childhood community is small, others may be aware of your participation. Therefore data from practicum co-ordinators will be combined to help protect identities, and information you provide will be used as background only.

Te Kōwhiri  
ki Pūrehuroa

Institute of Education  
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MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION  
TE KURA O TE MĀTAURANGA

**Participant's Rights**

**Participation is Voluntary**

*You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:*

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *withdraw from the study (at any time);*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded. If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings, please provide your contact information in the relevant place on the consent form.*
- *ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.*

**Research Contacts**

*If you wish to contact either myself or my supervisor/s at any time during this study please feel free to do so, our details are:*

*Researcher: Claire Wilson: e-mail: [beachcomacrew@hotmail.com](mailto:beachcomacrew@hotmail.com)*

*Chief Supervisor: Associate Professor Penny Haworth: e-mail: [p.a.haworth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:p.a.haworth@massey.ac.nz)*

*Co-Supervisor: Associate Professor Sally Hansen: e-mail: [s.e.hansen@massey.ac.nz](mailto:s.e.hansen@massey.ac.nz)*

**MUHEC APPLICATION**

**Committee Approval Statement**

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 15/14. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Prof Julie Boddy, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 86055, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz)*



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**Research Title: Creating Effective Invited Spaces:  
Putting the lens on low socio-economic early  
childhood education teaching practica.**

INFORMATION SHEET FOR: ASSOCIATE TEACHERS

Tena Koe, my name is Claire Wilson and I have been teaching in early childhood for the past ten years, predominantly in low socio-economic environments. As part of my MEd study I am currently investigating opportunities for promoting enhanced cultural and shared understandings between associate teachers and student teachers during their teaching practica. The aim of this project is to understand shared spaces in which associate teachers may collaborate and work on a deeper level with student teachers thereby enhancing success in early childhood education teaching practica.

I would like to invite you to be a participant in this research.

This research takes a case study approach that will be based within low socio-economic early educational settings. There will be six early childhood teachers, who are mentors to student teachers, included in this study. This ensures that the data will be rich, and in-depth.

The research findings will be shared in any resulting publications and presentations.

If you agree to participate you will be involved in two separate interviews, arranged at times that are mutually convenient. You will also be asked to record three short entries in a reflective journal during your time with a student on practicum. The first interview will involve discussion on your background in teaching and will be a maximum of one hour. I will also explain the reflective journal at this time. The second interview will be conducted soon after the practicum with your student. This will take a maximum of two hours. This interview will involve discussion and questions around the teaching practicum, the opportunities and the experiences shared while working with your student. You will have the options of having the interviews conducted via telephone, skype or meeting face to face.

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### Data Management

If you agree to participate the interviews will be audio recorded then transcribed. All data will be kept in a secure location for a maximum of five years or until this research/thesis has been submitted and examined, after which transcribed data will be shredded and audio recordings deleted.

Every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of your identity. However, given the nature of the early childhood community is small, it is possible that others may become aware of who is participating.

### Participant's Rights

#### Participation is Voluntary

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study (at any time up until two weeks after you verify the interview transcripts);
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Please indicate on the consent form if you wish to receive a summary of findings via your private e-mail. Once the thesis has been examined an e-link to the Massey library copy of my final thesis will also be distributed via the Ruahine Kindergarten Association newsletter.

### Research Contacts

If you wish to contact either myself or my supervisor/s at any time during this study please feel free to do so, our details are:

Researcher: Claire Wilson: e-mail: [psachcomacrew@hotmail.com](mailto:psachcomacrew@hotmail.com)

Chief Supervisor: Associate Professor Penny Haworth: e-mail: [p.a.haworth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:p.a.haworth@massey.ac.nz)

Co-Supervisor: Associate Professor Sally Hansen: e-mail: [s.e.hansen@massey.ac.nz](mailto:s.e.hansen@massey.ac.nz)

### MUHEC APPLICATION

#### Committee Approval Statement

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*Appendix F: Interview Schedule - Practicum coordinators*

Interview Schedule – Pre-service teaching practicum co-ordinators

- Explain the study and answer any questions/ethics
- Ask participant to tell me about their background; the joys, triumphs and challenges for them in regards to your role as practicum co-ordinator.
- Tell me about your work setting – and the things that are viewed as important in this locus.

Guiding Ideas for Questions and Discussion:

- What do you do in your role as practicum co-ordinator?
  - What are the most exciting aspects about your job and why?
  - Tell me about the process that you use to place student teachers on their teaching practica.
  - Who makes the decisions regarding student placements, and how much is determined by you and/or the student teacher?
  - How well do you know the students or have contact with them before their teaching practica?
  - Do you have any contact with students during their practica? If so, please explain.
1. Do you have a good knowledge base of associate/mentor teachers within the community? If so, how do you develop and maintain this knowledge base and relationships? If not, why?

2. Do you have any processes that you actively use, or know of, that helps/assists student teachers to transition in and out of their practicum placements that are culturally appropriate?
3. Tell me about a time where a teaching practicum has gone **well** for a student teacher. What were the things that you think made this a successful placement?
4. Tell me about an experience where a teaching practicum has **not gone** well for a student teacher. In your opinion, can you tell me what the barriers or challenges were during the placement?
5. In your view how important do you think the following skills are for student teachers to possess or have extensive knowledge of?

**(Discuss and rate each attribute from 1 – 5; 1 being low)**

1. Teaching Theories/Practices
  2. Being flexible and having an open mind
  3. Being a team player and contributor
  4. The desire/ability to advocate for themselves
  5. Cultural Understandings
  6. Communication
  7. Relationships
  8. Sharing Knowledge
  9. Awareness of their own beliefs and values
6. Thinking now specifically for low socio-economic teaching environments, would you change the importance of any of these skills/answers? Discuss.

Ask if they have any further questions. Thank the participant for their time.

**Semi-structured interview schedule – Associate Teachers**

Guiding Ideas for Questions and Discussion:

- Explain the study and answer any initial questions
- Tell participants a bit about myself/background
- Discussion on the participants teaching background thus far, the vision they have for their teaching, the children and the community, the challenges encountered along the way, the joys, the triumphs, and the heartaches.
- Discuss how the associate found the last practicum
- How do you view your role as an associate teacher and passing on your experience and knowledge to others? Do you do the same thing every time with every student? Can you tell me what processes you use? Please share some examples.
- What do you view as important knowledge to pass on to others/student teachers in this context? Can you tell me the reasons why you think this?
- Tell me about the teaching practices you purposefully model for student teachers.
- How does the link work between being a mentor and the institutions that the student teacher comes from? Does this affect your role as a mentor? Discuss/explain.
- Do you consider yourself to be a reflective practitioner/teacher? If so, how do you know? How important do you think this is?

- Think back and tell me about your first experience as being a student teacher yourself. What was helpful, inspiring, challenging for you as a student?
- What was it that made you continue to train and pursue a career in teaching?
- What is it that you love most about teaching? Why?
- What do you find challenging about teaching? Why?
- What things make you want to get out of bed every day and continue to teach?
- Name one or two things that are your 'non-negotiables' or things you couldn't live without daily in your teaching. Why?
- Tell me about your setting and the particular challenges of teaching in this context.
- How long have you worked in this community? Why and what makes you stay?
- What do you love most about teaching in this particular community? Why?
- What things lurk in the back of your mind when you are teaching in this community and having student teachers in this setting?

- Tell me about some of the things that you find are helpful in making connections with student teachers. Discuss/explain.
- Think back and tell me about your first time taking on a student teacher. What things worked well? What things were challenging?
- What do you emphasise with student teachers when you are working with them?
- What key things do you think the student teacher needs to know about teaching in this context?
- What would help your job as an associate teacher?

1. In your view how important do you think the following skills are for student teachers to possess or have extensive knowledge of?

**(Discuss and rate each attribute from 1 – 5; 1 being low)**

1. Teaching Theories/Practices
2. Being flexible and having an open mind
3. Being a team player and contributor
4. The desire/ability to advocate for themselves
5. Cultural Understandings
6. Communication
7. Relationships
8. Sharing Knowledge
9. Awareness of their own beliefs and values

2. Thinking now specifically for low socio-economic teaching environments, would you change the importance of any of these skills/answers? Discuss.

Ask if they have any further questions. Thank the participant for their time.

*Appendix H: Authority for the Release of Transcripts*



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**AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS**

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name - printed \_\_\_\_\_

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Appendix I: Transcriber's Confidentiality Agreement



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**Research Title: *Creating Effective Invited Spaces:  
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**TRANSCRIBER'S CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

I ..... (Full Name - printed) agree to transcribe the recordings provided to me.

I agree to keep confidential all the information provided to me.

I will not make any copies of the transcripts or keep any record of them, other than those required for the project.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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