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**TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
A Narrative Study from Early Childhood Education**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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ABSTRACT

The focus of this thesis is on the professional development of early childhood educators in New Zealand, and the influences that have contributed to their development. The purpose of the research was to gain an insight into professional development experiences from a teacher's perspective; hence a narrative research approach allowing the voices of early childhood educators to be clearly heard was adopted. Previous studies within New Zealand have investigated such structural aspects of professional development programmes, as accessibility, duration of sessions, and frequency of involvement. This study is unique in that it is concerned with the stories of early childhood educators and the experiences and events they believe have been influential in their own professional development.

During the last decade, professional development programmes in early childhood in New Zealand have focused on the introduction of an early childhood curriculum -Te Whaariki, management and accountability procedures, and other quality issues aimed at improving early childhood education. Few if any have focused on the people who are at the heart of the educational process, the educators, who every day have vital interactions with children, their parents and families. This study demonstrates the need to fill that gap.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Teachers' voices have been seldom heard in the literature on professional development despite a widening interest in the nature of on-going learning and professional development for teachers. Although narrative is becoming more widely recognised and accepted as a credible approach in educational research, most investigations of teacher professional development in early childhood in this country have used postal surveys, or structured and semi-structured interviews to gather information. A few years ago a narrative study of six early childhood teachers in the United States captured my interest (Ayers, 1989) and I planned, not to replicate Ayers' extensive study, but to begin an investigation, taking a narrative research approach involving early childhood educators in New Zealand. This thesis developed from the interest I had in Ayers' study, and my own involvement as a director of early childhood professional development programmes at Massey University.

The focus of this study is on the professional development of early childhood educators in New Zealand. The interest in this topic arose from my involvement as a professional development provider in the early childhood education field. Despite the many evaluations received from teachers confirming the effectiveness of current professional development provisions, teachers in this situation respond to the experiences they have been involved in. Teachers have not been given opportunities to have professional development experiences that arise from their own needs and perspectives.

The professional development experiences from the perspective of six early childhood educators currently involved in centres and services across the country are presented in this study. The broad question that has framed the thesis has been to identify

what are, or have been, influences in the professional development of these six early childhood educators. The desire to gain a deeper insight into teachers' experiences than is possible from postal surveys and questionnaires and to become aware of significant events and happenings that have contributed to their ongoing learning, shaped the study. A study such as this is significant in that it seeks to further an understanding of teacher perspectives on their own professional development. The nature of the study, which had the potential to take many twists and turns as it followed the perspectives of each individual, prompted the development of research objectives to guide its progress. These are outlined in Chapter Three.

The six early childhood educators who participated in the study live in Auckland, Central North Island, Manawatu, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago and were at various stages in their early childhood teaching careers. One was the owner/manager of a private childcare centre, two were supervisors in community childcare centres, two were head teachers in private kindergartens and one was a teacher in a free kindergarten. They all volunteered to be participants in the research study.

At the outset, it is important to explain the different terms used in the study for people who teach in early childhood. There is no nationally accepted word to describe those who work as teachers or caregivers in early childhood centres and services. The most widely recognised is educator, and that is the term I commonly use in conversation. However the term most widely used in the literature is teacher. As a lot of discussion in this study is centered on teacher professional development, I made a decision to use the words educator and teacher interchangeably.

It is also important to clarify the term professional development. Within the context of this study, professional development is used as a generic term to refer to an ongoing process in the lives of teachers. It is not intended to include a basic training qualification, although for many teachers a basic training programme has provided the opportunity to take the first steps along a pathway of professional development, nor does the term refer only to in-service courses, or programmes carried out within centres. Professional development for

the purpose of this study relates to all those experiences that contribute to the way teachers make meaning of their lives *as teachers*.

Outline of the study

Chapter Two provides the context for the research study. It reviews and connects relevant literature about the professional development of teachers. As well as examining the literature on professional development of teachers, recent pertinent research in early childhood professional development in New Zealand is examined. A sense of the complexity of ongoing development for teachers is apparent in the differing theories and research studies that are examined. The chapter ends with an introduction to the language of narrative, the voices of educators.

Chapter Three provides the methodology and design framework for the research study. It includes a discussion of how the participants who form the sample were contacted and selected, and of the narrative process that supplied the data. Techniques for collecting and analysing data are outlined and described. Issues in qualitative research of particular significance when a narrative approach is taken, such as triangulation, validity and reliability, are examined and discussed. Ethical principles governing research with people are presented and the ways in which they underpin this study are outlined.

In Chapter Four the participants are introduced. A short vignette of each person contains some of the main characteristics of their story. It is in this section of the study that my influence is most obvious. I was their storytelling audience, and in this chapter I also become the narrator, the teller of their stories. The stories are not interrupted with direct references to the transcripts as these are discussed in the section on results, however all the material comes directly from the transcripts. I have endeavoured to represent the narratives with respect and honesty, nonetheless my influence must be acknowledged and considered.

It is in Chapter Five that the voices of teachers are heard providing the data for the discussion of results. The first assumption in this chapter is that teachers are an ample and

worthy source of knowledge about their own professional development and the significant influences in it. The second assumption is that the experiences and events each person talks about have indeed influenced their professional development. Links and connections in each narrative may veer away from accepted notions of the constituents of professional development. However the voices of the teachers provide evidence that professional development is indeed influenced, not just by things such as professional development courses but by experiences and events. The uniqueness of each teacher produces a diversity of accounts as each person reflects on and talks about the journey that has brought them to the point where they participate in this study. These personal, professional odysseys reveal journeys that are shaped by culture, by choice and environment, as well as by individual viewpoints and ideals. Hence the generic use of the term professional development as previously discussed.

Each participant's voice contributes extensively to the argument in Chapter Six. It is expected that concepts and themes in teachers' lives, which give a sense of unity to their personal stories, will also guide their practice and influence their professional development. Excerpts from the transcripts provide an opportunity in this Chapter to examine whether or not this is so for the six educators who participated in this study. The significance of personal values and beliefs on stated practice and pedagogy will be examined.

Bringing together the main findings and the key points to emerge from the data analysis and discussion, provides the focus for the concluding Chapter. This original contribution to the literature on early childhood teacher professional development in New Zealand will be linked to other studies and suggestions for future directions will be made. Strengths and weaknesses of the study will be made visible and suggestions for further research studies will be highlighted. The main findings from this thesis provide key elements to incorporate in future models of early childhood teacher professional development and these will be presented.

This study makes an important contribution to the field of early childhood professional development in New Zealand by expanding the existing knowledge of the key

elements essential to professional development provision. As professional development is a statutory requirement for all early childhood centres and services and continues to be funded by the Ministry of Education, it is important to maximise its benefits. Increasing the knowledge and understandings of professional development and improving its delivery has the potential to impact on the practices of early childhood educators and improve the quality of educational provision for infants, toddlers and young children and their families.

Previous research on early childhood professional development within New Zealand has taken place without the voices of teachers at the forefront. Until now, methods used have included postal surveys and structured interviews; information has also been drawn from recommendations in reports. The strength of this study is in the original approach adopted, which makes teachers central to the process and takes an ecological perspective to their personal/professional development.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to bring together an integrative and theoretical review of literature that presents a variety of viewpoints about aspects of professional development for teachers. In a discussion of the “brief history” of teacher training and professional development Calderhead (1993, p.11) argues that in the absence of a coherent research based approach to the professional development of teachers, it is difficult to articulate and defend the basis of good practice. Nonetheless an expanding body of literature focusing on theoretical aspects of professional development, and an examination of relevant research studies, provide a cohort of opinion from which to consider and identify aspects of professional development and provide a critical voice to further the argument of this thesis.

Research on teacher professional development is mainly school based, nevertheless as the focus of this study is on teacher professional development in the early childhood sector, a significant section will synthesise growing research and theory from within this arena. A further section will examine recent research on early childhood professional development policies and initiatives within New Zealand.

Evidence of the usefulness of narrative in ongoing teacher education and development will be discussed. Teachers endeavor to make meaning of their professional lives in a variety of ways. Within a non-positivist paradigm the telling and re-telling of stories can bring together divergent features about influential professional development experiences and serve to clarify what it means to be a teacher. Research and theory based on

teacher narrative serves to delineate the voices of teachers and provides a backdrop from which to consider the perspectives of teachers.

Teacher Professional Development

The dilemma of ongoing professional development for those who are struggling to stay abreast of expanding information in all fields, and also for those who seek to support and stimulate the ongoing learning of professionals as they develop their careers is recognised as a global issue (Delors, 1996). The International Delors Commission (1996) constructed four pillars to provide the scaffolding for lifelong education that are relevant to this study: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. Such a model provides a context within which to consider the germane professional development issues for teachers generally, and early childhood teachers in particular. The critical factor at the heart of this model is to acknowledge the centrality of teachers in the educational process, and to adopt a theoretical approach that reinforces the priority of teachers in the educational process.

Teachers are at the heart of the educational process. The greater the importance attached to education as a whole – whether for cultural transmission, for social cohesion and justice, or for human resource development so critical in modern technology-based economies – the higher is the priority that must be accorded to the teachers responsible for that education (OECD, 1989).

In a time of educational change such as has occurred during the past decade in New Zealand, teachers have not in practice been accorded priority. Organisational and institutional changes in the education system as a result of the push for schools and early childhood centres to become self-managing, have driven changes in professional development provisions in order to upskill teachers to meet new structural and statutory

requirements. It has been said that increasing political intervention in education including an upsurge in requirements to introduce new material and promote new policies, has promoted the needs of schools and centres and the education system as a whole, as the paramount focus for professional development (Blandford, 2000; Gaunt, 1997). This focus has emerged in many countries. Sharon Burrow (1997) writing an introduction to a volume of articles on research and professional development in education undertaken by Charles Sturt University in Australia, affirms the claims of the Delors Commission (1996) that “formal education systems tend to emphasise the acquisition of knowledge to the detriment of other types of learning and argues that it is vital now to conceive education in a more encompassing fashion.” (Burrow, 1997, p.vi). Burrow’s claims can be applied to the education of both adults and children. The four pillars proposed by the Delors Commission would seem to provide a way of doing this.

A human development approach

Bell and Gilbert (1996) have conceived the education of teachers in a more encompassing way by describing teacher development as a form of human development. They believe that it involves social as well as personal and professional development, a process with learning as the central theme. This description, emerging from a research programme involving secondary school teachers of science in New Zealand, reflects the assumption of the Delors Commission (1996) that education is one of the principle means available to foster a deep and more harmonious form of human development. Bell and Gilbert (1996) describe the key to successful teaching as discovering ways of supporting children’s learning and recognising and developing better ways of teaching. They argue that teacher development must be regarded as a form of human development, involving social as well as personal and professional growth stressing the importance of the practical as well as the theoretical aspects of teaching. The significant findings that emerge from the Bell and Gilbert research prompt the authors to claim that the professional development of teachers can only be effective if several roles entailed in being a teacher are addressed. They view these roles as a facilitator of learning in the classroom, a member of school staff, a member of a professional community and an employee (p.14).

The personal-professional-social model of professional development resulting from Bell and Gilbert's (1996) three year research study of secondary school science teachers, while strengthening the centrality of the teacher in the development process, confines the teacher in a teaching role. When teachers are seen only as teachers within an educational environment, one of the pillars of the Delors (1996) construction - learning to be, is missing. People become teachers, and as teachers reflect all the influences and experiences that have shaped who they have come to be as a person. Understanding and respecting this wide range of experiences and influences both from within and outside the teaching environment is an essential element in the professional development of teachers in schools and early childhood centres. In other words, valuing the wide perspectives of teachers is of crucial importance in understanding how professional development occurs.

A skills and knowledge approach

Recent trends that contribute to the debate on how to raise standards in schools and early childhood centres, and mounting evidence of the importance of teacher development for the raising of standards, is widely acknowledged. There is an increasing body of literature to inform and enlarge the debate (Blandford, 2000; Day, 1999; Bell & Gilbert, 1996; Smith, 1996; Fleer & Waniganayake, 1994; Kelchtermans, 1993; et al), one of the outcomes of the debate is a skills and knowledge approach to professional development which stresses the acquisition of skills in order to effectively transmit the desired knowledge. Identifying the four major functions of professional development within a school as - enhancing individual performance, rectifying ineffective practice, establishing the groundwork for the implementation of policy, and facilitating change, Blandford maintains that the ultimate goal of professional development is to improve practice in the classroom (Blandford 2000, p.4). Furthermore she suggests that,

Professional development is not to be seen as something tagged-on to the other day-to-day functions of teachers; rather it should be central to the process of strategic development planning which provides staff with in-house opportunities and guidance on new initiatives. Professional

development should be considered integral to the management of innovation, change and reform (p.5).

Increasing government intervention in the on-going professional development of teachers and the possible effects on the teaching profession must be considered together. Guidance on new initiatives that Blandford (2000) considers should be provided for teachers is likely to meet opposition if teachers believe that the new initiatives are not meeting any good purpose. There is an assumption in such a comment that innovation, change and reform are desirable and necessary to children's learning and development.

Hall & Oldroyd (1990), take a theoretical approach which suggests that the principle purposes of professional development both within and outside schools, are planned activities to develop the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and performance of professional staff in schools. However this approach where the emphasis is on performance falls short of acknowledging the teacher as a person.

Jeeawody (1997) critiqued models of professional development that emphasise improved performance and extol the development of specialist knowledge and skills. In his research, one professional practitioner voiced the problems with such an approach.

We tend to sort of feel that continuing professional education is topping-up the bucket of knowledge where we have got to give them a top-up course to bring them up to date with current thinking, but we don't do anything about the development of the individual and their practice; that hasn't seemed to be a domain that we get in terms of professional education, because we think that simply by adding to knowledge that will improve practice, but that's not necessarily proven (p.41).

Jeeawody (1997) believes that implicit in such a statement is the notion of technical rationalism where the primary interest is in the development of skills and the extension of knowledge. Jeeawody sounds a note of warning about adopting such a focus. He believes that taking such an approach,

may exclude other concerns such as philosophical, social and political consequences of one's act. It will equally reduce emancipatory practice giving

way to a model of professional practice constituting a process of technical rationalism. ... The technocratic model [based on the acquisition of skills and knowledge] becomes appealing to professionals keen to gain academic credibility and to establish a body of research knowledge related to practice. There are problems with this model. Not only does it fail to reflect the true nature of professional education, but also it can lead to fragmentation of learning and dysfunction between theory and practice, consequently resulting in de-skilling rather than effectively skilling the professional practitioners (Jeeawody, 1997, pp. 47-48).

There is no doubt that teachers must develop practical skills and increase their knowledge, however, what is crucial is how this is done. Schon's (1983) epistemology of practice provides one model, which has become widely known as reflective practice. To be a reflective practitioner has become synonymous with good practice and has been widely regarded as the basis for professional development programmes. Day (1999) describes Schon's views as legitimising "teaching as a knowledge-based, intellectual activity in which teachers are not only capable of deconstructing but also reconstructing experience" (Day, 1999 p.27).

An activity such as reflection, which separates knowledge and theories of teaching from practice, is regarded as a model of technical rationality and can be criticised on the grounds that while it concentrates on theories, it does not necessarily affect changes in teacher behaviour or practice. Day (1999) argues that drawing on experience may serve to reinforce inappropriate practice. The critical factor, is the theoretical and research base on which further knowledge and experiences are built. Another essential element to consider is the wider contextual framework, personal and professional that influences teachers' practice.

Fidler (1997) discusses a broader theoretical approach to the continuing development of teachers than those previously discussed, that recognises professional development as a long-term experience in which there are possible conflicting priorities,

such as the needs of the individual and the needs of the organisation. He differentiates terms used to describe the continuing professional development of teachers as:

- Professional development that increases the personal professional skills of a teacher;
- Staff development that involves the development of staff to meet the needs of the institution in which they work;
- Career development that involves the development of individuals so that their careers can progress.

Fidler's theory with its long-term view of the on-going learning of teachers, is useful for identifying conflicting priorities. It is also useful for setting teacher learning within a context of improved quality;

“Well-directed learning of teachers can lead to well-directed learning of children and young people. As the challenges of improving schools grow, so does the need for high quality and appropriate continuing professional development” (Fidler, 1997, p. 175).

However such theories still fall short of developing a model for teacher professional development that adopts a holistic or ecological approach to development because they do not consider the perspectives of the teacher.

A constructivist approach

The literature on constructivist theory, which is underpinned by the philosophy of John Dewey (1938), indicates that skilled educators view teaching as a continuing process of reconstruction of experience. Edith Guyton (1998) whose current research focus is on constructivist teacher education, provides an integrative review of research that outlines the development of programmes (both pre-service and in-service) designed to prepare teachers to base their teaching on constructivist principles and theories. Guyton's overview and framework for constructivist teaching goes beyond the technocratic approach discussed in the previous section. She believes that there must be ways of drawing meaning from experience and acknowledges the complexity of intellectual and emotional processes that influence the function of teacher performance. Guyton (1998) cites the following quote to support the constructivist theory;

Effective programmes [teacher professional development] are based on a conception of teacher growth and development; acknowledge the complexities of classroom, school, and community; are grounded in a substantial and verifiable knowledge base; and are sensitive to the ways teachers think, feel, and make meanings from their experiences (Griffin, 1986, p. 667).

Drawing on an extensive literature on constructivist theory, Guyton's (1998) integrative review summarises a body of literature pertinent to theories that emerge from her own research on constructivist teacher development. They are also pertinent to the conceptual framework for this thesis.

- Learning involves construction of concepts, ideas, and beliefs (Canella, 1992).
- Learning is interactive and social (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldenberger, & Tarule, 1994; Cobb, 1994; Cochran, DeRuiter, & King, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978).
- Learners play an active role in their own learning (Cobb, 1994; Condon, Clyde, Kyle, & Hovda, 1993; Grinberg, Goldfarb & Martusewicz, 1994; Mosenthal & Ball, 1992).

An ecological approach

Another approach takes a holistic, ecological view of the career-long learning of teachers, setting their ongoing professional development within the following dimensions: contexts, purposes of lives, capacities for inquiry, development of expertise and competencies. Other factors and the myriad influences on the personal and professional lives of teachers, including school policies and the settings within which they work, and personal experiences on which values and beliefs are founded, will influence how teachers teach. Day's work provides an example of such an ecological approach.

Day (1999) adopts a theoretical approach to the lifelong learning of teachers, based on and "grounded in the researched realities of teachers and teaching, professional learning and development, and the contexts in which they take place" (p.1). He conceives learning communities in which:

Teachers examine the consistencies and inconsistencies within and between their espoused theories of teaching and learning and their theories in action, and that they set these in the context of an appreciation of the challenges and constraints of the system as a whole; the demands of externally generated policies, expectations of the community, the school, parents and students, and the learning cultures of the classrooms and schools in which they teach (p.46).

It is possible to develop learning communities such as these, and models of professional development to encourage their formation have been suggested.

In an ecological system everything is connected to everything else. This does not apply only to the physical world. It is just as true for organisations and institutions such as schools and early childhood centres as for the physical environment. An extensive review of research on beginning teachers has prompted the reviewers (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998), to re-think the teaching process, incorporating a notion of 'systems thinking' which clearly illustrates that no separate parts exist in any system. Parts of a system are really patterns in "an inseparable web of relationships" (Capra, 1996). Studies reviewed provide examples of successful programmes for teachers that "typically build upon the beliefs of ... teachers and feature systematic and consistent long-term support in a collaborative setting" (Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998. p.130). Learning communities such as those suggested by Day (1999) that encourage talk as a means of probing meanings and uncovering diversity, provide time for discussion, reflection, and examination of the experienced worlds of teachers, including the inner worlds of values and beliefs. There are strong indications in the work of Widden, Mayer-Smith and Moon of the need for a wider ecological approach to research on teacher professional development that allows the voices of teachers to be heard.

Another variation of an ecological approach is illustrated by models of staff development with school improvement as the over-riding goal. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990), provide a theoretical framework in which school improvement is regarded as a systemic process. Changes in one part of a system will influence other parts. The models they suggest are not intended to stand alone, they are to be viewed ecologically with staff

development both influencing and being influenced by the organisational context in which it occurs. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley suggest that the impact of each model depends not only on their individual or blended use, but also on the features of the organisation in which they happen.

The five models outlined by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) are supported by relevant theory and research. The models are: 1). Individually guided staff development in which teachers plan and engage in activities they believe will further their own learning. 2). Observation and assessment, feedback on classroom performance is sought and given. 3). Involvement in a development and improvement process, in which teachers work towards the solution of a common problem. 4). Training, involving teachers individually or in a group in the acquisition of skills and knowledge. 5). Inquiry, involving teachers in an action research approach which engages teachers as inquirers rather than subjects. The blended use of these five models in teacher professional development is significant and provides a well-rounded approach especially when set within the context of an ecological framework that includes the school and the educational environment.

From an ecological perspective, the five models provide a framework consistent with the four pillars that provide the scaffolding for lifelong education constructed by the Delors Commission (1996), learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be, referred to earlier in the chapter. However, the definition of staff development provided by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) refers only to those processes that improve the job-related knowledge, skills or attitudes of school employees. Viewed from this definition, the ecological context narrows to include only the school context and environment. Taking a wider ecological view which includes the contexts within which teachers live their lives holistically, embraces the beliefs that frame teachers' attitudes and practice and acknowledges the individual differences in teachers. The models proposed by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990), re-introduce the centrality of the teacher in the educational process, but disregard the teacher as a person and overlook the many dimensions that contribute to the teacher in practice.

Betty Collis (1996) has also proposed a model that is aligned to the holistic ecological view of professional development. She delineates three overlapping ways that a professional learns: formal, informal, and professional learning. Her definition of formal learning is that it is organised by someone else and constitutes such events as a seminar, a course or a workshop. This definition applies to many of the professional development opportunities currently being funded by the Ministry of Education in New Zealand. Informal learning is depicted by Collis as relating to many areas, some directly related to work, others to such things as hobbies and everyday happenings, including such things as prior influences and experiences in families. What is synthesised and absorbed through these personal experiences and understandings of human nature and world issues, add to values and beliefs and contributes to learning. Professional learning on the other hand, is where explicit use is made of professional contacts, resources and activities with a specified goal of improving professional practice. Resources such as books, reports, journals and magazines, attendance at conferences and conventions, and collegial networking contribute to professional learning. To separate one from the other is to eliminate vital aspects that contribute to the holistic way professionals learn within an ecological context. The learning model conceptualised by Collis (1996) provides a framework from which to examine every approach previously discussed in this section.

A biographical, narrative approach

A research study (Kelchtermans, 1993) gains insight into the content as well as the form of professional development by adopting a biographical perspective on the developmental process. The central idea guiding his research came from a belief that “teachers’ professional behaviour and its development can only be understood properly when situated in the broader context of their career and personal life history” (Kelchtermans, 1993, p.198). Specifically the research question Kelchtermans asked was, can the study of the teachers’ life cycle provide insight into the factors and mechanisms that determine qualitative changes in teachers’ professional behaviour? The results of the study have led to “challenging, interesting and promising knowledge”(p.216) encouraging further development of theory, and research studies on

the professional development of teachers from the biographical perspective ... that assumes that the professional behaviour of a teacher is not only determined by the organisational context, but also by life history and related experiences. In other words, experiences from the past and expectations about the future influence the perception of the present situation. Since no two people have the same life experiences, we all learn to perceive the world and ourselves as part of it different ways (Kelchtermans, 1993, p.199).

Kelchtermans beliefs previously discussed, add a further dimension to the model outlined by Collis (1996) and suggest a tool that can be used to expand what Collis defined as informal learning. Kelchtermans observed that the teachers involved in his studies showed considerable motivation and willingness to tell their life stories when given the opportunity to tell their stories in their own words. He believes that the nature of the interviews that were semi-structured, in which the researcher was a dynamic and non-judgmental listener, contributed to how rapidly teachers were eager to talk about themselves very openly. Linking biographical accounts to a professional development model however is very complex and determining the extent to which a study of the teachers' life cycle can determine qualitative changes in teaching behaviour is problematical because of the many influences. Embracing informal learning as a significant component in the ongoing learning of teachers and recognising such learning as an essential component of what may in the past have been regarded as experience can help provide a critical link in the chain.

A biographical study which included observing teachers in practice, indicated strong links between life stories and practice (Ayers 1989). Ayers' narrative research study involved teachers in in-depth conversations with the researcher, accompanied by observational visits in the teaching context.

The process of being involved in something like this has, in itself, the power to elevate one's teaching and call forth the best one has to offer. It is possible that a kind of steady empathetic scrutiny improves teaching. There is no reason whatsoever that this kind of work needs to be the

exclusive province of university-based researchers. This method, it seems to me could easily be adapted to action-research projects, peer review, and teacher-run development projects (Ayers, 1989, p. 152).

Linking teacher beliefs to teaching practice in this way reinforces the theoretical paradigms of Wideeen, Mayer-Smith and Moon (1998), and Day (1999) discussed earlier.

Stemming from research approaches such as those taken by Ayers (1989) and Kelchtermans (1993), comes the theory that individuals may be empowered to make changes as they become more aware of the ecological contexts within which they learn and function (Jeeawody, 1997). Lather (1986, p.263) argues that in order to encourage the empowerment of teachers in this way we must consciously use our research to help participants understand and change their situations. She along with others (Zuber-Skerrit, 1993, et al.) who have used research methodologies that encourage such reciprocity, regard this methodology as emancipatory research with the goal of encouraging self-reflection and deeper understanding on the part of the persons being researched. Adopting a biographical approach to teacher professional development with a focus on affecting teacher change provides a context to encourage emancipatory practice.

Summary

Fidler's theoretical approach to the continuing development of teachers discussed earlier, presents a summative argument that, for the educational system to succeed, professionals need to develop, schools need to develop and careers of teachers need to develop (Fidler,1997, p.163). It appears that the person who is the teacher is overlooked in Fidler's theory. It must be further argued that for the teacher to succeed, the person who is the teacher must grow and develop.

Each of the identified approaches to professional development in this section; the human development approach, the skills and knowledge approach, the constructivist approach, the ecological approach and the biographical approach, add to the body of

knowledge about the ongoing learning and development of teachers and contribute significantly to the pedagogical discourse on the topic. It is the biographical, ecological paradigms that define the context for this study, while at the same time accepting the argument that teacher professional development must of necessity be deeply embedded in the context of teachers and teaching. Hence this study is original in its combination of approaches and recognition of the vital contribution of the voice of the teacher.

Professional Development in Early Childhood

The research reviewed so far has been mainly school based, therefore it is important to view professional development in early childhood within the context of its own history. A discussion of professional development in early childhood needs to take account of significant historical influences in the development of a philosophy of early childhood education. Pioneers such as those of Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), Susan Isaacs (1885-1948), and Maria Montessori (1870-1952), emphasised the need for harmonious and intense interactions with children with the focus always on the child. These beliefs which have emphasised the personal qualities necessary for those who work in early childhood, have continued to permeate the field. The interaction of many factors, such as the physical and social environment and including teacher and child characteristics and interactions, contribute to the reasons why teaching infants, toddlers and young children is incredibly complex and multi-faceted.

Early childhood education then, is deeply embedded in a tradition that places great emphasis on the relationships that exist between people. This may be explained in part by the predominance of women who teach in early childhood. Gilligan (1982) and others who have studied the psychosocial development of women, imply that women's ways of functioning are fundamentally unique and the importance of relationships and connections in women's behaviors need to be seen as central influences and critical factors in women's actions (Cafarella & Olson, 1993). The way in which these influences impinge on early childhood teaching contexts has not been closely studied, however the likelihood that it has

a bearing on practice and therefore on professional development opportunities, should not be discounted.

Despite the strong influences and philosophies shaping early childhood education, teacher professional development in early childhood may have more similarities than differences from other sectors in education, as all teachers are unique individuals who bring who they are into their teaching role. Carr (1998, pp.14-15) refers to a review of literature on professional development by Gould (1997), that provided a guiding document for professional development material to implement the findings of her research study on assessing children's experiences in early childhood. Carr acknowledges that most of the research reviewed is school based, and that early childhood may be different. However she believes that professional development models developed for schools may be adapted for early childhood centres and services because of the similarity of context between schools and early childhood centres. If this is so, then all of the approaches discussed in the earlier section of this chapter, are relevant theoretical and research-based approaches to inform professional development in early childhood.

Essentially the common factor in both schools and early childhood centres and services is the teacher as a person, and the critical factor is the centrality of the teacher in the educational process, in any sector of education. The four pillars that form the Delors construction (Delors 1996) mentioned earlier as being necessary for lifelong education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be, are influential considerations in the development of professional development models for early childhood educators, just as they are for all other adult learners.

Many of the approaches referred to in the previous section have arisen from school based models of professional development. Within early childhood, professional development has been viewed through a different lens and from a specific focus shaped by the historical influences previously discussed. For this reason they are being discussed as paradigms in this section.

A personalistic paradigm

An emphasis on the personal qualities of early childhood teachers has been widely acknowledged by writers in early childhood education. In the absence of empirical examination, McLean (1991) identifies these qualities distilled from the experiential knowledge base of several generations, as warm and affectionate, patient, friendly, flexible, self-confident, compassionate and empathetic, sensitive and responsive, nurturant, optimistic about children's potential, in good physical and mental health, and highly aware of self. She refers to other qualities identified in the literature as, being happy, having a sense of humour, being alert, resourceful and imaginative, being dedicated, genuinely liking children, having a sense of order, an appreciation of beauty, and being interested in children, families and the world at large (McLean, 1991, p.8). Such perspectives are likely to be influential predictors of beliefs and attitudes in early childhood teachers, contributing significant signposts for those who develop models of professional development.

Setting the scene for a research study *about* early childhood teachers, McLean refers to beliefs "that the teacher as a person is the most important aspect of the child's preschool experience" (McLean, 1991, p.7). She quotes Lindberg and Swedlow as telling beginning early childhood teachers, "You are a unique individual and the way you teach will reflect your own personality, attitudes and values. The most important contribution you have to make is your own uniqueness" (Lindberg & Swedlow, 1985, p.7). While enhancing the importance of the individual and the centrality of the teacher there is a danger that such beliefs, while concentrating on the uniqueness of the individual may allow habitual and traditional ways of being and practicing to go unchallenged.

It has been argued that "The expectations that society holds for those undertaking the care, nurturance and education of young children are ... identified by a predictability which is comforting in its conformity but stifling of reflective change (Coombe, 1990, p. 56). Acknowledging and exploring beliefs and attitudes, and the likely influence societal expectations such as those suggested by Coombe have on professional practice, is not easy,

but McLean (1991) argues that the researcher must find ways to help early childhood educators bring this often-tacit knowledge to the surface, making it explicit.

In creating meanings for behavior in educational contexts, teachers are believed to draw not only on their content-specific knowledge about teaching and learning, but also on their understandings of the broader personal, social and cultural context in which they are embedded as persons (McLean, 1991, p.6).

Research indicates that there are strong links between early childhood teachers' personal beliefs, and decision-making relating to their practice (Stipek and Byler, 1997; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, and Hernandez, 1991; Kagan, 1992). Significant associations among beliefs, goals and practices are important considerations in the context of teacher development. A personalistic paradigm that values individual uniqueness and elevates personal characteristics is likely to strongly influence practice and personal goal setting.

Efforts to influence practices, whether as part of pre-service or in-service programmes need to consider teachers' goals ... Professional development programmes can address teachers' goals and beliefs using a variety of methods, such as by requiring teachers to reflect upon and make explicit their own beliefs about the purposes of early childhood education and their goals for the [children they teach]. It may also be useful to inform teachers of social and cultural class differences in goals and values and engage them in discussions of alternative perspectives that they may not have considered (Stipek & Byler, pp.320-322).

Earlier research evidence (Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988) indicating that teachers' beliefs tend to be resistant to change renders careful consideration of teachers' beliefs all the more important. Information about early childhood educators' beliefs relating to appropriate practices and policies is necessary before changes to practices can occur.

A constructivist paradigm

A constructivist approach to the professional development of early childhood teachers confirms that early childhood teachers are on a journey that only begins with an initial qualification (Abbott-Shim, 1990; Jones, 1993; Fler & Waniganayake, 1994; Hawthorne, 1994; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995). The process of professional development allows skills, knowledge and practice to be constructed and re-constructed throughout a teacher's lifetime. Theory and practice confirm that meeting the personal and professional needs of individual teachers is a complex process that requires teachers to regard themselves as on-going learners.

Outlining the education and development of early childhood professionals in Australia, Fler and Waniganayake (1994, p.9), refer to early childhood professional development as "a process which is constructed and reconstructed in different ways throughout a person's life time." Such beliefs emphasise views discussed earlier in the chapter, on constructivist theory, (Dewey 1938, Guyton, 1998, Canella, 1992) in which teachers reconstruct experiences to influence their practice. Spodek argues strongly that in early childhood education, the sources used to construct such knowledge should:

Ensure an adequate knowledge base for early childhood practice that can serve as a foundation for professional practice. Such a base must be grounded in research, must use the practical knowledge gathered by teachers and must reflect the theoretical knowledge from both child development and education studies" (Spodek, 1994, p.75).

Research-based practice promoted by Spodek as an essential ingredient in a constructivist approach to early childhood professional development is also emphasised by Jalongo and Isenberg (1995). Stemming from their research on professional development in early childhood they confirm that, "what we know, how we come to know it, and the sources that we use to construct educational knowledge are important" (p.15).

Research that has established the positive effect that professional development experiences of staff have on the quality of early childhood provision for children and their

families, stresses the need for such experiences to be grounded in a wide knowledge base of relevant early childhood theory and research (Whitebrook, Howes & Phillips, 1987); Stremmell, Benson & Powell, 1993; Weikart, 1994; Houston, 1994; Smith, 1996). Evidence that links trained, qualified staff to quality early childhood provision, indicates that experience and knowledge gained from practical know-how does not ensure quality. The constructivist paradigm in early childhood has a critical element to consider that is not present in school-based professional development. Many early childhood personnel are untrained, or in the process of becoming trained. Ensuring an adequate knowledge base on which to construct practice, establish goals and develop policies is essential.

An apprenticeship paradigm

A different paradigm of professional development adopts a more practical, semi-constructivist approach to staff development and does not acknowledge the essential partnership between research-based theory and practice that Spodek (1994) believes to be critical. This model referred to as an apprenticeship paradigm is grounded in an assumption that early childhood teachers can and will learn by doing.

“Just as young children learn about their world by playing its scripts, teachers learn about teaching and learning by playing the teaching script, observing what happens and discussing all the possibilities with other teachers. In this process they come to see themselves as people *who know* – thereby people capable of making appropriate choices for themselves and for children” (Jones, 1993, p. xiii).

Expanding on the dichotomy between practical experience and theoretical knowledge, Clandinin (1986) suggests that:

Teachers are commonly acknowledged as having had experience but they are credited with little knowledge from that experience. The omission is due in part to the fact that we have not had ways of thinking about this practical knowledge and in part because we fail to recognise more practically oriented knowledge (p.177).

McNaughton (1996) describes research approaches within the positivist paradigm as perceiving researchers with expert knowledge, and early childhood practitioners with local context specific knowledge. Although practitioners' knowledge has been necessary to research, it has been viewed as having less value than the knowledge of the 'expert' researcher. McNaughton argues that increasingly, new types of research blur the boundaries between research and practice and change the roles of participants. It is in this gap that the voices of teachers belong.

A critical collaborative approach to research, leading to greater understanding and respect for teacher's practical knowledge and to meaningful reflection on practice, gives participants a voice. The action research model (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982) which has been widely used and adapted for early childhood professional development programmes in New Zealand, involves teachers in research, recognising their knowledge. Earlier references to learning communities (Day, 1999) and professional support in a collaborative setting (Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Woon, 1998), expand on the need to respect and value the knowledge that teacher's bring to their practice, and serve to endorse the notion of apprenticeship which emphasises the accrued knowledge of skilled practitioners. As with the constructivist paradigm, the effectiveness of professional development within an apprenticeship paradigm depends on the knowledge base and the knowledge source of the practitioners involved.

A knowledge building paradigm

A paradigm of professional development which has not previously been referred to in this chapter but which has considerable value for early childhood professional development, has been developed by Garry Hoban (1997). Hoban's work embodies both where knowledge about teaching practice comes from, and how teachers acquire and extend their knowledge. Hoban argues "that knowledge can be categorised into two types – formal knowledge or practical knowledge, based on who generates it" (p.1). His three models outlined below were developed for schools, however they are also of significance

for early childhood teachers as they portray many elements of professional development programmes currently being used.

The **Outside-in-model** draws mainly on knowledge that has been generated by others for teachers to use in their practice. A basis for this approach is that teachers tend to reproduce existing practice if they cannot access educational theory to challenge the status quo, and provide alternative perspectives on teaching and learning. **The Inside-in-model** draws on teachers' existing knowledge, generated from their own experiences in schools and centres and encourages them to reflect on and explore their own ideas based on these experiences and understandings. The **Inside-Outside model** draws both on knowledge that teachers have generated from within their own educational context and from the knowledge of others to promote what Cochrane-Smith and Lytle, (1990) refer to as a community of discourse.

Approaches suggested by Hoban (1997) have strengths and weaknesses, (p.17) but combining and integrating the three suggested models is extremely useful in early childhood professional development, as it addresses Spodek's (1994) argument for ensuring a strong theoretical base for the ongoing construction of teacher knowledge. On the basis of her research findings (Hampton, 2000) has argued for the need to find a balance between the needs of individuals and the needs of a teaching team of collaborative learners. A consideration of the career development of teachers within a group may not be well addressed in Hoban's models. The Inside-in model does however provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own ideas and beliefs, based on their experiences.

A biographical, narrative paradigm

Middleton and May (1997) provide an illustration of the value of the biographical narrative paradigm in an early childhood context. They revealed that when teachers talk teaching, they talk not only about the classroom and the school or centre context in which they live as teachers, but also about the wider context in which they live and have lived

their lives as people who became teachers. The strength of allowing teachers to talk teaching in this way affirms Kelchtermans (1993) previously stated argument that teachers' practice and professional behaviour can only be understood properly when located in the broader milieu of their career and personal life history. As Middleton and May discovered, narrated accounts of teachers and teaching are likely to include all aspects of a person's life, past, present and future. In the Middleton and May investigation all interviewees were asked to reflect on such things as why they taught and worked with children as they did.

How they developed their teaching styles, resources and ideas over time. Were there key people, books and events which influenced them? Why and how had these been influential? How did their thinking and practices change over time and why? What were their experiences of, attitudes towards and strategies for dealing with innovations ... imposed from above? And for those sectors of the education system that were marginalised ... like some early childhood services ... our interviewees talked about both the political and pedagogical process of gaining acceptance and funding from the public and politicians (Middleton and May, 1997, p. 12).

The Middleton and May approach focused on teachers' experiences, and points of view of education throughout their lifetime, encompassing their own educational experiences. Early childhood educators who participated in the investigation were also asked about the way they had become involved in early childhood education, their training background and the philosophies of the centres and services they had worked in. The book that emerged from the stories of 'teachers who talked teaching', contained the voices and emotions of teachers, spoken with frankness, honesty, anger, tears and humour and provided a richer texture to what had previously been known of the history of New Zealand education. It wove an inclusive story across sector groups in education in order to identify common themes and debates in a range of contexts (Middleton & May, 1997, pp. 340-341).

An approach such as that adopted by Middleton and May, sited within the context of professional development programmes, incorporating the use of narrative, listening to

teachers' voices, accepting their feelings and respecting their ideas, provides an opportunity for teachers to examine their assumptions and their practice, to experiment with and maybe eventually consolidate change (Tertell, Klein and Jewett, 1998).

Professional growth and development is more like finding the way through a stand of native bush than driving down a motorway. Each teacher must find his or her own way to professional accomplishment. Nevertheless teacher growth and development programmes in early childhood which encourage teachers to seek out influences that nurture their professionalism, and to consider ways in which their private and professional lives interact can provide markers on the way.

“ The good teacher's life is not an orderly professional pathway; rather, it is a personal journey shaped by context and choice, perspectives and values ... it is primarily through story ... that teachers organise their thinking and tap into the collective, accumulated wisdom of their profession” (Jalongo and Isenberg 1995, p. xvii).

McLean (1991) adopted a narrative methodology in a research study to investigate the human encounter that occurs when teachers and children live together in preschools. Her discussion includes an argument for more emphasis on the links that occur at an observable behavioral level involving the teacher's practical knowledge and understanding of children, to the meanings that lie beneath what can be seen.

“The deeply rooted human dimension has not figured prominently in educational research during the last few decades. ... Only recently has educational research begun to systematically explore some of the deeper links, with phenomenologists arguing that without consideration of the meanings behavior holds for the participants, behavior itself has no meaning” (McLean 1991, p.2).

A desire to examine the “deeply rooted human dimension” referred to by McLean has influenced this study.

Summary

Professional development in early childhood has its own unique features. These have been discussed as emphasising the personal qualities of teachers themselves and the influence these will have on professional development. The ways in which knowledge is constructed is also of vital importance because of the different experiences of early childhood teachers.

Research on Early Childhood Professional Development in New Zealand

To provide a backdrop for the current study and to take an ecological approach to the social and cultural conditions within which the study is carried out, recent research into the provision of early childhood professional development in New Zealand, provides up to date, relevant information. The New Zealand Ministry of Education commissioned four studies of early childhood professional development programmes during the 1990s. These studies identified by authors are: Allan, 1993; Allan and Gibson, 1994; Duthie Educational Consultancy, 1997; and Gaffney and Smith, 1997. A further Position Paper (Gould 1997) which provided a guiding document for professional development to accompany a Report to the Ministry of Education provides further insights (Carr, 1998).

In New Zealand in the late 1980s and early 1990s a major re-structuring of education took place within central government. This included an extended period of review of early childhood services. The consultation that took place throughout the review, and consequent restructuring processes, strongly identified the demand and need for ongoing professional development programmes and advisory support services for those within the early childhood sector. This was partly due to the introduction of the first early childhood curriculum document, Te Whaariki, and partly due to the perceived need to up-skill educators in early childhood centres and services, and to improve the quality of early childhood services throughout the country. "The needs were extremely varied and could not be met by a standard [professional development] package, rather they could be met by

detailed and careful interface between those in need of the service and those delivering them” (Allan, 1993, pp.1-2).

In the 1991 budget, an allocation from Vote Education was made for the provision of early childhood professional development and support services on a contestable basis. As Government became more closely linked to the sector through funding and subsequent regulatory requirements, such as contractual charter statements to achieve Desirable Objectives and Practices (Ministry of Education, 1996), provision of quality early childhood care and education has been examined and debated widely (Nally, 1995). Professional development for staff in centres and services has become part of this wider debate.

Studies within New Zealand have focused mainly on the provision of services, seeking answers to such questions as:

- Who is receiving the services?
- How are they receiving them?
- What are their expectations?
- Were those expectations met? If not, why/how?
- What problems were experienced?
- What improvements could be made? (Allan, 1993, p.5)

Information was also obtained, allowing evaluation of the professional development provision in terms of the characteristics of the centre and the individuals. The studies also sought to identify any specific problems in the receipt of services (Allan, 1993; Allan and Gibson, 1994). Extensive postal surveys were undertaken for both studies. The difference between the two surveys was that whereas the 1993 study included only those early childhood centres and services known to be participating in professional development programmes, the 1994 study included a random sample of centres and services whether or not they were involved in the professional development programmes. The stated intention of the 1994 study was:

To gain a snapshot in time as to the services being received in the range of centres and services, and as far as possible to evaluate satisfaction and identify problems in the provision of services (Allan & Gibson, 1994, p. 2).

In both the 1993, and 1994 studies an endeavour was made to keep the questionnaires as simple and short as possible. This aim was not achieved in either study because of the diversity of centres and groups, and the need to develop relevant questions to address this diversity, the variety of service provision, and an inevitable level of 'jargon'. Recognition of the importance of building in opportunities for people to speak openly about specific aspects of the survey and about anything else that came to mind, resulted in each questionnaire including a number of 'open questions'. Postal survey methods, which resulted in a consistently high response rate, were used successfully in each survey with a selected sample of early childhood centres. The surveys yielded considerable useful material, relevant to future service provision. It provided an insight into the provision of professional development and advisory support being received from centres.

Although the researchers provided the opportunity to speak openly and make general comments (Allan and Gibson, 1994, p.6), only about one quarter of respondents chose to make a comment. Speaking openly resulted in

A number of criticisms of the survey itself, but the majority ranged around the provision of services. Notable were a large number of comments expressing concern about recent or potential cut-backs in services, and emphasising the importance of the availability of such services. There were also many comments critical of the services received. (Allan & Gibson, 1994, p.46).

When asked to speak openly, participants in the studies were more likely to comment on the provision of services than to reveal personal reflections on the nature of their own professional development. The opportunities given to speak openly did not result in comments about what it means to be a person teaching in an early childhood setting, nor did it generate information about increased personal effectiveness as an educator. The focus for each study, as evidenced by the questions that were asked, was on the structural aspects

of professional development. The style of questionnaires and the complexity of the survey, probably contributed to the responses (or lack of, as there was only a 25% response) that were received to the open questions. The closed questions could be readily analysed on a numerical basis. The open question responses were grouped for analysis. The nature of the responses made this problematical, and so not all were recorded.

The Ministry of Education commissioned both research surveys discussed so far. The purpose was quite clear. The Ministry needed information about whether or not centres (and indirectly the Ministry) were receiving value for money. It is not possible to draw comparisons between quantitative studies such as these and narrative biographical studies such as those referred to in the previous section. A brief analysis of the Allan report (1993) and the Allan & Gibson report (1994), serves to reveal a gap where the voices of teachers fit. Teachers' voices are not easily heard when the emphasis is on quantitative research. Narrative research in the field suggests they are more likely to be heard when educators are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and tell their stories (Ayers, 1989; McLean, 1991; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Stipek & Byler, 1997; Tertell, Klein & Jewett, 1998). This implies that in order to gauge the usefulness of professional development experiences and programmes for individual teachers, and to answer the questions at the heart of this thesis, educators need time and opportunity to tell it their own way.

A research study (Gaffney & Smith, 1997) identified specific factors in the provision of effective professional development to support the introduction of the early childhood curriculum document, *Te Whaariki* (Ministry of Education, 1993, 1996), called for more reflective responses. One question asked respondents to consider the professional development they felt they needed next in order to implement the early childhood curriculum. Such questions were intended to prompt educators to personally evaluate their professional performance taking regard of their own feelings. One of the broader contextual features identified by Gaffney and Smith was the social nature of early childhood professional development. "...there was plenty of evidence that success comes from developing relationships based on trust and mutual sharing" (Gaffney & Smith, 1997, p.86). This evidence should not surprise us. The emphasis in early childhood education is

on the need to nurture sharing, collaboration and collegiality. As argued before, considering the predominance of women educators in early childhood for whom relationships and connections are critically influential (Gilligan 1982), such findings are not unexpected.

In contrast, a report on identified issues in an early childhood professional support project which compiled evidence from milestone reports submitted to the Ministry of Education (Duthie Educational Consultancy, 1997) by professional development providers, does not identify social aspects as greatly influential. Structural influences such as the programme time frame, programme flexibility and the knowledge and experience base of programme organisers were the three most often identified issues. Evidence collected for this report came from written material compiled by professional development providers. The voices of early childhood educators who were the participants in the programmes are only heard second hand and interpreted by programme facilitators.

Carr's discussion of the main points from Gould's (1997) professional development research, moves towards a model that takes account of the powerful impact teachers have on the success of a programme. Carr refers to deeply ingrained teacher beliefs being hard to change and the influence of personal histories, values, concerns and knowledge. She suggests that future models of professional development need to be aware of and reflect on individuals' deeply held personal and implicit theories. Carr also argues strongly that putting learning opportunities at learners' fingertips is not enough (Carr 1998, p.14).

Recommendations from Hampton's research project into the professional development experiences of kindergarten teachers in New Zealand which aimed to "discover, explore and describe the views and experiences of teachers in relation to professional development" (Hampton, 2000, p.194), identified the centrality of teachers in the process of professional development. She emphasised the need for kindergarten teachers to take some responsibility for their own professional development which suggests that kindergarten teachers have the ability to ascertain their own professional development needs. A further recommendation from Hampton (2000) suggested that the content and style of professional development programmes need to be pitched to the audience,

balancing the content between the personal and the professional needs of teachers and acknowledging the very different development stages of teachers described by Katz (1995).

In the research studies discussed in this section (Allan, 1993; Allan & Gibson, 1994; Gaffney & Smith, 1997, et al), the structures of professional development programmes have been examined, teachers have been asked where they feel they need to go next in their professional development in the context of learning curriculum content, and their views and experiences of professional development have been canvassed. McLean's (1991) assertion, that in order to understand anything of an individual's framework for making sense of the context within which they are embedded as people, personally and professionally, we need to know something of the person's life, lies at the heart of this research. The gap identified by McLean's assertion is where this study fits.

Listening to the Voices of Educators: Narrative research in education

Wendy Hawthorne (1994) argues that the key element in educational change and improvement is the teacher. She places emphasis on understanding the teacher as a person and argues that teachers teach in the way they do because of who they are as people and not only because of the skills they have or the knowledge they have acquired. Such a position highlights the need to take into account the personal dimensions of teachers' lives when planning for professional development experiences. Narrative research is one way of capturing the personal dimension of teachers' lives.

Current examples of narrative research are at present distinctly interdisciplinary, linked together by an interest in the ways that people make meaning through language (Casey, 1995). Narrative can be a vital tool for indicating how people think and feel, what they say and do, the subjective meaning of significant events and the explanation of situations in their lives (Runyan, 1984). Loveridge (2000, p.70), referencing the work of Somers and Gibson (1994, p.61) refers to four different kinds of narrative. Ontological narratives are the stories individuals use to make sense of their lives and explain who they are. Public narratives exist in frameworks that are larger than the individual, such as one's

family, organisations such as churches, and governments. Conceptual narratives are those in which concepts and explanations are constructed by researchers often without recognising that they are narratives. Metanarratives are the epic dramas such as Progress, and Enlightenment by which we are all surrounded, that are paradoxically built upon abstractions. Loveridge (2000) argues that drawing distinctions in this way delineates the different dimensions of narrative “whilst underscoring the social nature of the construction of narrative”(p.71).

In the literature on teacher professional development, narrative method is increasingly acknowledged as a significant component of educational ethnography (Beattie, 1995). It allows for descriptions of participants’ viewpoints rather than relying on the perceptions researchers bring to the personal constructs of teachers.

Research in teacher development using narrative inquiry (McLean, 1991; Goodson, 1992; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Josselson & Lieblich, 1995; Katz, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; & Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) emphasises the potential of storytelling as an instrument for increasing personal and professional understandings through reflection on the meaning of experiences. Ayers (1989) describes narrative as seeking meaning in thought and allegory in the same way that observation seeks meaning in action and behaviour.

The nature of the question being considered, the specific objectives that have been set for this particular study, and the gaps in previous studies that have been discussed, indicate that narrative is a particularly useful method to use. Schon (1983) believes that “storytelling is the mode of description best suited to transformation in new situations and action (p.26). Not only will narrative provide insights into the storytellers as early childhood professionals, it will also allow opportunities to engage in a learning dialogue which may serve to clarify meanings and encourage personal reflections. The deliberate storying and re-storying of a life is a basic way to stimulate personal, professional and social growth.

In our decisions to live out our lives as professional teachers, we have created situations where the necessity for continuous learning and professional growth and the telling and re-telling of our stories is a fundamental aspect of that professionalism, and which grows out of positions within the cultural/socio-political environment within which we live. The stories we live out in our classrooms, [early childhood centres] are intertwined with the stories of our personal lives, the stories of our students [children], our colleagues, administrators, parents and policy makers. Our professionalism calls for us to be authentic and accountable not only to ourselves, but also to those others whose narratives are linked to ours within our professional environments (Beattie, 1995, p. 66).

Beattie suggests that narrative studies such as those undertaken by Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly over the last three decades have the potential to bring new meanings to the continuous experience of change and growth in teachers' lives. Beattie maintains that such studies will identify different kinds of knowledge and various ways of representing it. Ball and Goodson (1985) cited in McLean (1991, p.6) propose three investigative assumptions:

First, that teachers' previous career and life experiences shape their view of teaching and the way he or she sets about it. Secondly, that teachers' lives outside school, their latent identities and cultures have an important impact on their work as teachers. And thirdly, that we must ... seek to locate the life history of the individual within the history of his (sic) time.

In their most recent work, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) continue to explore the field of education through narrative.

We might say that if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively. For us, life – as we come to it and as it comes to others – is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities. ... We saw our research

problem as trying to think of the continuity and wholeness of an individual's life experience. This research problem in our educational studies eventually brought us to narrative (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 17).

The same reasons as those given poetically by Clandinin and Connelly have brought me to narrative as a form of inquiry. For many years I have been involved in the on-going growth and development of early childhood educators. Emerging from my experiences is a deep respect for the individuals I have encountered and the commitment and enthusiasm they bring to their work with children and families. It is also clear that professional development can occur in many places and at many different levels when teachers get together to talk. Pedagogical discourse and narrative inquiry provide avenues for professional growth and increased personal and professional understandings that may not happen in more structured formal professional development models.

Studies where the voices of educators are not prominent, provide important and relevant information about the structures of provision. They do not reflect the feelings and emotions, the disappointments and frustrations or the satisfactions and personal triumphs of individuals. The central research question of this study is best answered by the participants in this study as they narrate their experiences. The research question is: What influences the professional development of early childhood educators in New Zealand?

Narrating is a complex work that brings together often disparate aspects of being alive: the affective work of realising what we feel, the cognitive work of making sense, the social work of sharing experience, and the cultural work of taking up the tools and forms we inherit for composing personal, familial, or community histories (White, H. 1980).

Summary

An overview of relevant literature in teacher professional development, early childhood professional development, and a relatively brief discussion of New Zealand research studies in early childhood professional development, reveals a wide divergence of theories and research that frame this study. Such discussion moves into a consideration of where this study fits within the established traditions of research. Calderhead (1993) posits three traditions of research and practice, the positivist, the phenomenological and the critical. Positivism seeks to establish a rigorous framework within which it is possible to predict and control cause and effect. Phenomenology aims to comprehend the individual's viewpoint through case studies or ethnographies, and critical science has an interest in emancipation, making people aware, through critical analysis, of the contexts within which they operate and the consequences of their actions within their own contexts. It is a phenomenological approach that has been adopted for this study.

The large body of literature about the development of teachers both at pre-service and practitioner level and beyond, from which a small sample has been reviewed, presents many paradigms to consider. Terms in common usage such as teacher training, teacher professional development, teacher continuing education, or in-service for teachers indicate the complexity of issues surrounding this aspect of adult education.

As outlined at the beginning, this chapter provides the context for the research study. It has brought together and connected relevant literature about the professional development of teachers. A sense of the complexity of ongoing development for teachers in every sector of education is apparent in the differing theoretical and research based studies that have been examined. All contribute to the 'community of discourse' that exists on the topic. Increasingly, narrative methods in professional development education are uncovering the significant personal dimensions in teachers' lives that contribute to their professional practice. The significance of the linkages between the two encompassing many facets of living, warrants on-going research study. It is intended that this thesis will contribute further understandings of the teacher as a whole person.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology and Design

The focus of this study as outlined in the previous chapter is on the professional development of early childhood educators within New Zealand, and the significant influences in this process. The purpose of the research is to gain a deeper insight into the professional development experiences of early childhood educators, through an increased understanding of what is significant for them. So that meanings can be explored and understandings of the topic increased, an overall qualitative paradigm has been chosen. A naturalistic, constructivist approach has been adopted in which, as Cresswell suggests, the individuals involved in the research situation will construct the reality. "Thus multiple realities exist in any given situation: the researcher, those individuals being investigated and the reader or the audiences interpreting the study" (Cresswell, 1994, p.6).

Research Question

In order to achieve the desired outcome for the study, the central research question to arise from the identified purpose is:

- What are the influences on the professional development of early childhood educators in New Zealand?

Research Objectives

Research in the field of teacher development discussed in the previous chapter and particularly that on the professional development of early childhood educators in New Zealand, indicate that there will be no simple answer to the research question. To the contrary it seems likely that the answers will be as varied as the participants' beliefs and experiences. As previously discussed, studies commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (Allan, 1993; Allan & Gibson, 1994; Gaffney & Smith, 1997, and Duthie Educational Consultancy 1997) focused mainly on the provision of services and the structures of programmes. The narrative approach taken in this study increases the likelihood of an even wider range of responses than those referred to. Consequently a set of specific objectives have been developed to guide this research study. They are:

- To listen to early childhood educators.
- To discover from analysing the collected data, the experiences and events in the lives of the participants, which they believe, have been significant influences in their professional development.
- To consider the relevance of data in the scripted conversations of the participants, alongside professional development programmes currently being provided by the Ministry of Education.
- To discuss the implications of these findings for future professional development provisions.

Case Study Method

A case study method has been chosen for this research. Bouma (1997) describes the key element in a case study as being when only one group is focused on and there is no attempt to make comparisons with any other group. In this case the study included only early childhood educators currently teaching in early childhood centres in New Zealand. Because there is no hypothesis to be tested, the method chosen is best described as an

exploratory case study. Yin (1989, p. 14) postulates that “the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events - such as individual life cycles,” however the study being undertaken is not purely exploratory. Descriptive strategies are employed to trace sequences of events in the lives of participants as they choose to reveal them. As the data is analysed and discussed, explanatory strategies are also employed in an attempt to posit theories about the influences of individual professional development experiences for this group of people.

Walker (1993) provides a more detailed definition of Case Study which is particularly relevant to the work undertaken in this research: “ The study of particular incidents and events, and the selective collection of information on biography, personality, intentions and values, allows the case study worker to capture and portray those elements of a situation that give it meaning” (Walker, R. 1993, p.165). Both the framework chosen for the study and the data analysis procedures put in place, allow for an examination of such elements.

The main reason for using case study as a strategy to achieve the stated research objectives is that it can provide insights into what is actually happening. It can help answer the question ‘what is going on here?’ The difficulty in adopting such a method is that it raises the problem of generalisation. Walker argues that generalisation is not a problem for the case study writer. “It is the reader who has to ask, what is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation and what clearly does not apply?” (Walker, R. 1993, p.167). Although this response may not satisfy those who take a more positivist stance, it does serve to clarify that while this study does not attempt to generalise from the sample data, it does provide clear evidence that justifies the conclusions reached. It also uncovers idiosyncratic and particular influences in the lives of those who participated, offering insights about the mesh between influences identified by the participants and early childhood professional development programmes currently being offered (see last two research objectives). It may also serve to strike a chord for other early childhood educators as they identify comments that resonate with their journeys of professional development.

Two other factors, the small number of participants and the specificity of the sample also mean that any attempt to generalise must take these factors into account. Early childhood educators presently teaching in an early childhood centre in New Zealand, and currently involved in a professional development programme funded by the Ministry of Education were chosen to participate in the study. Much of the available New Zealand literature is based on such programmes and contributes to the context for the study. While it is accepted that a single study will not be a strong base for generalising, Stake (1995, p.86) argues that “an emphasis on time place and person, provides rich ingredients for vicarious experiences.”

A Narrative Approach

Qualitative case study is highly personal research. The narrative approach adopted in this study adds a further personal dimension. Current discourse about narrative and/or life histories serves as a reminder that within the genre known as narrative there are blurring distinctions (Goodson, 1995, Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Goodson (1995) raises a point of view which is significant to the purpose for listening to teacher’s stories,

only if we deal with stories as the starting point for collaboration, as the beginning of a process of coming to know, will we understand their meaning: to see them as social constructions which allow us to locate and interrogate the social world in which they are embedded.

(p.98)

In other words listening to teacher’s stories is of little value if they are not heard within the wider milieu of the social/educational context in which their stories are constructed. By asking the participants in this study to consider the happenings in their lives that have been influences in their professional development, the milieu has been extended to include events in the context within which they function as both educators and people. An unstructured interview has provided the data. Theobald (1999, p.15) however rightly points out that whatever the shape of an interview, “the ... interviewer, is actually present to witness and procreate the narrative, and hence is always implicated, always an accomplice.” I clearly recognise that because of my own sometimes parallel experiences

within the early childhood sector over many years, my presence as an interviewer has helped create the stories that have been transcribed to form the data for this study.

Attempting to answer the question of what makes good narrative research, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that like other qualitative research methods narrative does not rely on validity, reliability and generalisability to guarantee a good research inquiry. They further emphasise that “It is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p.7). However in later writings they suggest that good narrative research has an “explanatory, invitational quality (which contains) ... authenticity ... adequacy, and plausibility” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.184). Every attempt has been made to meet all these criteria through the purposeful selection of participants, and the design of focus statements and key questions that will best answer the research question and achieve the research objectives. The issues of validity and reliability in a narrative study such as this will be discussed later in the chapter.

It needs to be said that narrative is not objective. It may or may not be truth. “I told ... about my lifelong tendency to escape from reality into the realm of fantasy and storytelling - do you think this is how storytelling came into being? That the story is only the mask for the truth?” (Walker, A. 1993, p. 124). In an attempt to discover the truth within the story, Yin (1989) urges that “the likelihood of falsely reporting an event should be reduced, and sharing drafts increases construct validity” (p.145). To address the issue of falsely reporting material, participants in this study were sent transcripts of their stories and asked to remove any material they did not wish to have included. No material was withdrawn. We can assume that, at the time of telling, the truth as they saw it was being spoken.

The Sample

Knowing the large amount of data that can be generated in a qualitative study, especially when a narrative approach is taken, and because data was to be collected from different

areas through face to face interviewing, a restricted sample size was decided on. A sample representation from each of the six major regions involved in professional development programmes funded by the Ministry of Education was selected. One participant was chosen from each of the following regions: Auckland, Central North Island, Manawatu, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

The sample cannot be described as a random sample, participants were purposefully chosen. An approach was made in June 1999, initially by letter (see appendix one) to Directors of Ministry of Education professional development contract programmes in each of the selected regions. They contacted likely participants and sought permission to forward their name and address to me. In each case a choice was made from several people willing to be involved. Selection was based on the convenience of travel arrangements for interviews and the eligibility of participants, that is that they were currently employed as educators in an early childhood centre, and that they were, or had recently been involved in a professional development programme funded by the Ministry of Education.

The participant group that was eventually formed consisted of five females and one male. No attempt at a comparative study between male and female has been made, each participant is seen as a unique individual within a unique context. The age and experience of the participants was widely varied. In this respect the sample was random, as no information except names and addresses was known about the participants prior to the first interview, with the exception of the Manawatu participant who was already known. Participants were not asked for details such as age, position, or length of teaching experience. Such facts (if they emerge in the transcripts) become part of the data incorporated in the vignettes in chapter four and the discussions in chapter five.

After selection, each participant was contacted by phone to ensure that they were definitely available and interested. An Information Sheet (see appendix two) containing specific details outlining the scope of the study was then sent. Further contact was made by phone after they had read the information, and dates and venues for meetings were arranged. A Consent Form (see appendix three) was signed at the beginning of the first

interview. Venues were either in the participants' homes or early childhood centres and dates were chosen at mutually convenient times.

Data Collection Procedures

Three methods of collecting data were chosen in an attempt to establish a triangulation process. The term triangulation is used here in the classic sense of seeking convergence of results. Another purpose of triangulation in this sense is to obtain complimentary data, in that overlapping and different facets of professional development may emerge (Cresswell, 1994). The three methods used were; conversational interviews, written accounts, and a focus group. It could be said that obtaining data from such methods is not triangulation, that the only way of knowing whether the stories told and the lives lived are congruent, would be to observe teachers in practice. This is a valid criticism and a limiting factor in this study. Such a research framework was not possible for this thesis but provides a direction for further studies of this kind. Ayers (1989) narrative study of six early childhood teachers, included the three methods that have been integrated in this study, it also incorporated observing teachers in practice on several occasions throughout the course of the study. He concluded that for the six teachers who participated in his study;

We see here people whose work is morally inseparable from their lives, and whose social commitments are coherent with their private pursuits. ... teaching is not simply what one does, it is who one is (p.130).

While it is not possible to predict that the same could be said for the teachers in this study, it is possible that the story lines may not be at odds with real motivations or practice.

The interview process

Two in-depth, non-structured interviews were arranged with each participant, about two months apart. The time between interviews meant that in the intervening weeks, participants had time to read the transcript from the first interview, reflect on what they had said, re-capture the context of their stories and make changes if they wanted to. In one case it was not possible to separate the interviews by more than two days. In another case a

second interview was impossible because of travel difficulties, so the time allowed for the interview was extended.

Each interview lasted approximately one hour (in most cases a little longer). A tape recorder was used to electronically record the story from each person. The tapes were then transcribed and the transcripts sent to every participant for comment before the second interview. A 'thank you' acknowledgement was sent with the transcript of the second interview.

Although the interviews were non-structured, each session began with what I have called a focus statement. It 'set the scene' for each person in a similar way, and attempted to address the issue of internal validity. A series of key questions were also developed to stimulate thought and discussion during the interview, if the story 'dried up.' When prompts were required, the same questions were asked of each person. This was an attempt to remain focused on the research objectives, and also to address issues of reliability. The participants did not know the focus statement before the interview, however the information sheet did contain an outline of the study from which the focus statement was drawn. To encourage a free-flowing story, interviews were regarded as conversations between researcher and participant, and key questions became part of the conversation as necessary.

Both the focus statements and the key questions are included in this part of the research report. As they are central to the discussion of the interview process they belong here rather than in the Appendices (they have also been included as appendix four).

Interview one: focus statement

I would like to know the things that have influenced you as an early childhood educator. As it's not possible to live your life in separate boxes, please feel free to consider all the experiences in your life that have influenced your professional development. It is possible that these may not

only be the courses and programmes you have attended or been involved in, but also other things that have happened which you feel have influenced the person and the educator you are at this time.

Interview one; key questions

- Can you think of an experience that has changed your attitude towards your educator role or in some way changed your practice?
- Have there been incidents or events that you can recall with clarity?
- Are there personally significant incidents, which have had an influence on your professional development?
- Is it possible for you to decide which have been the most significant? For example has it been courses you have attended or other things, can you explain why you think this might be?

Interview two; focus statement

At our first session you were able to talk about some of the things that had been an influence in your professional development. This time I am hoping you will talk about things which contribute to your 'self' as an early childhood educator. Now that you have read the transcripts from the first interview you may also want to make changes to what you said last time.

Interview two; key questions

- How do you describe yourself?
- How do you describe yourself as an early childhood educator?
- What kind of learning environment do you think it is important to create for children? Can you say why you think this is important?

- What are some of the influential principles underlying your practice? Can you link these to professional development experiences you choose?
- Tell me about some of your memorable moments in early childhood.
- Do you set professional development goals for yourself as person, as an educator?

The focus statements were used at the beginning of each session. The key questions were not used with all participants or in all sessions. They were constructed to explore the deeper links that McLean (1991) suggests have been missing from educational research and were used when such links were absent from the narrative.

Written accounts

Between interview one and two, participants were asked to write a brief account of professional development experiences they had been involved in during the previous 12 months and to discuss how influential these had been. These written accounts supplied by five of the six participants were collected at the second interview.

Focus group

It was intended that a focus group would be formed in each of the regions where interviews were conducted, to discuss issues of professional development and practice and to add a community voice to the voices of individuals. It was not possible to achieve this. Instead, a representative group of 14 people involved in early childhood came together in September 1999 and agreed to be regarded as a focus group for the purpose of this study. The group comprised: Five people from Auckland, four from Wellington, three from Christchurch, one from Wanganui and one from Hawera.

Bouma (1997) regards focus groups as a way of learning about public opinion on a variety of issues. He suggests that the researcher take a facilitation role in discussions to

ensure that the group stays focused on the topic. "When a focus group is well run, it will provide a window on a community in interaction" (p. 179). The focus group discussions concentrated on issues that influence and impinge on professional development, triggers for change resulting from professional development experiences, and a discussion of preferred options. The main points were recorded on tape and contribute to the data gathered from the interview tapes of individual participants.

Data Analysis Procedures

The dilemma of analysing narrative is tension-filled in a qualitative study involving narrative as the data material (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The dilemma may not be perceived at the beginning of a study, but becomes significant at this point in the process where it is necessary to "relate events and actions to one another by configuring them as contributors to the advancement of a plot" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 16). Polkinghorne suggests furthermore that narrative analysis primarily requires diachronic data. That is, data that contains information about sequential relationships between events, and may describe when a particular episode happened and the effects or consequences these events had on subsequent happenings.

A storied narrative involves a context for an event or experience, in which previous happenings and those that follow are recounted. An analysis of such information is an attempt to synthesise the data rather than separate it into parts. Nevertheless it is possible to move to and fro within the data to configure a story which will bring an order and meaningfulness not apparent in the raw data.

At no point in naturalistic case research are the qualitative and quantitative techniques less alike than during analysis. The qualitative researcher concentrates on the instance, trying to pull it apart and put it back together again more meaningfully – analysis and synthesis in direct interpretation. The quantitative researcher seeks a collection of instances, expecting that from the aggregate issue – relevant meanings will emerge (Stake, 1995, p. 75).

Tesch (1990) calls this process of pulling apart and putting back together again more meaningfully, de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation. “While much work in the analysis process consists of ‘taking apart’ (for instance into smaller pieces) the final goal is the emergence of a larger, consolidated picture” (Tesch, 1990, p. 97).

A data analysis matrix

Computer software was not used as an analysis tool. Reading the transcripts, listening to the tapes and checking with the participants to clarify meanings contributed to data analysis. In order to answer the research question and meet the objectives of the research, the data was categorised under three main headings: experiences, concepts and themes. Jalongo and Isenberg (1995) suggest that personal stories contain these three components. Experiences can be described as the things that happen in our lives and contribute to our stories. Concepts are the beliefs and values we have about others and ourselves which guide our behaviour and through which we sieve experiences. Themes are the threads or principles that we use to draw together both experiences and concepts into a congruent meaningful whole (Jalongo & Isenberg, p.9). These three categories provided the matrix for segmenting collected information. However as data collection proceeded it became clear that each category needed to be broken down into more specific sections so I added to their model. The following useful subcategories emerged from the data:

Experiences:	events	people	places
Concepts:	ourselves	others	
Themes:	principles	summaries	making meaning

Validity and Reliability

As has previously been discussed, issues of validity, and reliability take on different meanings when a narrative method is chosen. It is however useful to examine these issues, as omitting references to the attempts that have been made to present an authentic account, could nullify the dependability of the study.

To re-frame theories of reliability and validity and to explain how such constructs are enmeshed in the design and method of this study, it is necessary to reflect on the essential elements contained in such concepts. Validity is essentially about truth conditions, and reliability is about the trustworthiness of the data and the way it is gathered. The individual interviews, the brief written accounts of professional development experiences during the previous year, and the recorded discussions of the focus group provide a chain of evidence to enhance accuracy and capture the realities perceived by those involved, at the time.

Qualitative research is designed to give an impression, not numerical results. In a discussion of the concepts and methods of phenomenographic research, John Richardson highlights the dilemma of qualitative method “to reconcile the search for authentic understanding with the need for scientific rigour” (Richardson, 1999, p. 53). Hatch and Wisniewski (1995, p. 129) include among their criteria for quality narrative and life history work, such terms as adequacy, accessibility, believability, credibility, plausibility, resonance. Such criteria underpin the design and methods adopted for this study to adequately address the research question, and present an authentic, plausible report. It is teacher narratives that are central to this study. Teachers’ experiences and the concepts and themes that provide a framework for their lives, supply the material for this study as they talk about influences in their professional development.

Ethical Considerations

Principles contained in the *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research and Teaching Involving Human Subjects* (Massey University, 1999) have guided the study at all times.

The five principles are:

Informed consent of the participants.

Confidentiality of the data and the individuals providing it.

Minimising of harm to all involved.

Truthfulness, avoidance of unnecessary deception.

Social sensitivity to age, gender, culture, religion, social class.

Participants were made aware of their rights and of the ethics that would guide the study in the Information Sheet they received before agreeing to participate. The Consent Form (appendix three) contained the Clause "I agree to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet"(appendix two). The tapes are held by the researcher, if they are to be used for any purpose other than this study, the participants' consent will be sought. Information about access to the completed study was contained in the Information Sheet. Attending a Massey University seminar for staff involved in research involving human subjects reinforced for me an awareness of ethical considerations as the study progressed.

Summary

The research design and methodology described in this chapter has developed from a desire to contribute to the understandings of early childhood teacher development. A decade ago it was suggested that

"What is missing from the knowledge base of teaching therefore are the voices of teachers themselves, the particular contexts in which teachers work, the questions teachers ask of themselves and others, the ways teachers use writing and intentional talk in their work lives and the ways that teachers interpret experience as they strive to improve their own practice" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p.2).

While the literature review indicates that teachers' voices are being increasingly heard in studies of teacher professional development (Bell & Gilbert, 1996; Goodson, 1992; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000. et al), the voices of early childhood teachers are not so clearly heard. This chapter has described the framework for a study that will allow this to happen. Its key features are: A case study approach within a qualitative paradigm; narrative methodology that includes two non-structured interviews and a written account of professional development experiences from the six individuals in the sample. A focus group will provide another view. Because the framework allows teachers' voices to be clearly

heard, this study will make a valuable contribution to the existing literature on early childhood professional development in New Zealand.

CHAPTER FOUR

Meet the Participants

It is in the next chapters that the stories of the six early childhood educators who are central to this research study emerge, their own words have been used to describe their experiences. However what people say in an interview is situational and although there is a real sense of lived experiences in the collected narratives, there is no way (or indeed any reason from a post-positivist stance) to ascertain non-accessible facts. When asked to talk about themselves and their development as teachers, their stories emerged.

All of the information included in these vignettes has been taken from the transcripts of the two unstructured interviews that were held with each person who participated and from their written accounts of professional development experiences within the previous 12 months. Each person has been given a different name for reasons of confidentiality and to protect their anonymity. The experiences and events portrayed in this chapter as short character sketches will be analysed and discussed more formally in following chapters.

As the researcher I have become the interpreter of these stories. From the data, I have chosen the material to present a point of view or enlarge a discussion. I am in partnership with the narrators, in this respect I become part of their narrative. I have made an active attempt to avoid distortion of their stories but because I am going backwards and forwards within the data it is possible that comments may have been taken out of the

original context within which they were made. I have in some cases slightly altered the word sequences where pauses or repetition disturb the flow of the narrative.

Taryn

Taryn is a private childcare owner in a large city. She has been working in early childhood for ten years in a variety of settings. Owning her own early childhood centre has been a significant experience in her life, dramatically influencing her developing professional role. Issues arising from being an employer responsible for the well being of staff, to wider concerns surrounding the provision of a quality centre have been influential. The perspectives of early childhood education have changed for her as she has moved from being an employee to becoming the employer.

After completing a Bachelor of Arts degree at the age of 20, Taryn was ready for wider experiences and travelled overseas to the country of her birth, eventually arriving in London where a New Zealand friend inspired her to do Montessori training. Her intention had never been to work in the early childhood field. Her experiences while at secondary school had been with children who had special needs and she was expecting to continue that interest in a career. However a return to New Zealand, marriage and the need to have an income, resulted in a decision to further her early childhood qualifications while employed in an early childhood centre. Her Montessori training became the basis for an equivalent Diploma in Early Childhood Education, gained through part-time study.

Taryn describes herself as an ambitious person with a strong personal drive. From childhood she has always wanted to excel and the nature of the job hasn't mattered. It is her opinion that even the most menial task has to be completed well. She enjoys working with people; she cares about them, particularly children and over the years has grown to value the very diverse needs and expectations of everyone. There is an underlying practicality in her approach to many things that help her run a successful business. Taryn's story contains elements that depict a resilient, energetic woman who cares about herself, the people she relates to and the status of the early childhood profession.

As an educator Taryn regards herself as having lots left to learn. She thinks she is reasonably broadminded in that over the years she has become less and less judgmental of both children and their parents. Because of her experiences, she recognises that there is never only one way to deal with a situation. A quality, which is apparent both personally and professionally in Taryn's narrative, is one of acceptance both of people and circumstances. Acceptance does not however suggest a lack of challenges. She wants to see children become confident and assertive, believing that things are possible and this is the learning environment she creates in her centre. She believes that all children need to be extended in their learning experiences and that this needs to happen quite consciously. Knowing children and planning a learning environment based on that knowledge, provides opportunities for children to acquire skills for living that they can carry with them.

Taryn has non-negotiables in her early childhood philosophy. At the time she engaged in this conversation they were, that all children and their families and all staff members have a right to be fully included in the early childhood community. She believes that safety and well being are children's basic rights. She also believes that educators in early childhood should be well trained and should have opportunities for and commitment to on-going professional development.

It is not planned professional development events which have the most influence on Taryn, although these have been helpful at times, when ideas have been put into practice in her centre. She prefers her own private study as it broadens her horizons even if it is not related to her work in a practical sense. Her interests in educational philosophy and the political climate are absorbing and although not directly work related, provide good linkages. Such study has not always been so influential. She believes that beginning teachers sometimes need 'recipes' to survive. Taryn believes they tend to need really practical assistance to establish themselves as teachers before they can branch out and consider other aspects of what it means to be a teacher.

For Taryn professional development means personal development, and is influenced strongly by her ability to reflect widely on issues which interest or concern her and then take a considered path.

Betsy

Betsy graduated with a Diploma of Teaching Early Childhood, and a Bachelor of Education, about five years ago. She began her early childhood career in a childcare centre as the Supervisor. Working with four other staff members who had no formal training was a very difficult experience for a first year teacher. Fresh out of university with new ideas that she wanted to put into practice and nobody on the staff to share her vision was disillusioning. She needed the stimulation and support of professional colleagues who shared and understood her enthusiasm. Feeling she was not valued and her ideas and vision were not being recognised, she resigned and won a position in a centre that employed only trained staff members. She is currently still in this position as a teacher in a sessional kindergarten. The team she now works in has shared philosophies about early childhood education. She feels valued and respected.

The reason Betsy chose early childhood as a career came from her experiences as the eldest daughter in a family of five children. One of her sisters was terminally ill and Betsy accepted a lot of responsibility for the care and upbringing of the younger members of her family. She wanted to be a teacher because she enjoyed young children and felt already very experienced.

Her own education in a Rudolf Steiner school has greatly influenced both the teacher and the person that Betsy has become. The holistic approach to education, resulting in developmental balance is central to her teaching practices. Building on children's existing knowledge and stimulating their interests contributes to her enjoyment of teaching, which she regards as a very positive activity, one which empowers children and guides them to have confidence in themselves, building their self esteem. She describes her teaching practice as child-centered, words that stem from the Steiner tradition.

In her portrayal of herself Betsy describes a confident, positive person with a weird sense of humour. She considers herself to be loyal, honest and very protective of those she cares about. Maintaining close ties with her family is significant. Laughter and tears are considered important to Betsy as she thinks she is quite emotional about life generally.

As a teacher Betsy considers herself to be energetic, bubbly, positive, and very professional. She likes to do things the right way, the proper way. She sees herself as a skilled, competent teacher, who sets goals for herself as well as for the children she works with. Betsy considers that a positive, warm learning environment, with staff who care for children's physical and emotional needs as well as their learning and development, is important in the early years. She believes that children's curiosity is a big thing and to explore is wonderful. An environment that is inviting and inspiring, providing challenges is central to children's learning.

The enthusiasm and energy that Betsy brings to her teaching role is echoed in her story. There is a sense that Betsy is in a hurry to get where she is going with her teaching. Where she is going at the moment is to encourage children to be good thinkers and good learners who believe in themselves enough to accept challenges. She describes laying foundations for school experiences, preparing children to move on to new things, embracing new understandings and becoming confident in themselves, as her motivation for teaching.

Reflection on her professional performance is difficult for Betsy at this stage; she finds other people's opinions of her practice more valuable. Her most significant professional development experiences have been the courses that she attends. She is able to take from in-service courses what she needs at the time. She likes going to courses that she knows nothing about in order to gain something new. She chooses topics that extend her and provide her with more information, and more teaching tools to add to her kit.

For Betsy, at this stage in her career as a teacher, professional development involves building on and extending her knowledge and skills. Feedback from others on her teaching performance, is at this stage of more value for her than self-reflection.

Ashleigh

Ashleigh completed his early childhood training six years ago and since then has been working in both kindergarten and childcare centres. After leaving school Ashleigh went straight to University and completed a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Zoology. He was unable to get work in his chosen field; it was a time of major cut backs and restructuring in both the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) and the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR). A friend suggested teaching, so Ashleigh went to visit his former biology teacher who encouraged him to take a class for a few days. Ashleigh subsequently visited more schools, primary, secondary and an early childhood centre and applied for a shortened training course in all three. By the time he had to make up his mind where he wanted to teach, he had decided on early childhood because he believed he would find it the most enjoyable.

Ashleigh is the youngest member of his family and has many nieces and nephews. He believes that because he has been so involved with children all his life, this has had a major influence on his desire to be a teacher. Unfortunately (his word) his appointments to an Assistant Supervisor's position early in his teaching career and shortly after to a Supervisor/Managers role, have taken him almost entirely away from children into administration.

Being an early childhood educator has not been easy for Ashleigh. When he first began teaching he discovered he did not have the skills to control a large group of children. He needed to do a lot of work on understanding children's behaviour and managing their behaviour. This became a focus for all his professional development in the early part of his career. It appears he was trying to control children but now he has found ways to guide them in the right direction.

Joining the storytellers' guild has given him the skills he needs to work with children. These skills have grown from watching others. Watching storytellers playing the audience, and watching other teachers manage children highlighted the skills he needed and from this his skills have grown. Having skills that work has encouraged him to keep using them.

Ashleigh describes his life as a journey of self-discovery in which he experiences swings and roundabouts. Sometimes he feels very organised and at other times things just seem to collapse around him. He knows that when he is feeling positive and interested he can affect those around him to be the same. He thinks of himself as an actor and a philosopher, a deep thinker who has a great deal of empathy with others.

When asked to describe himself as an educator Ashleigh experienced great difficulty. He feels he is not as good a teacher as he used to be. He feels stressed a lot of the time because of the financial pressures in the centre where he works. There are basic equipment and material needs not being met and he is disillusioned with the amount of time and energy he is putting into his job without achieving satisfying results. He says his disposition for teaching is going as his skills in teaching are increasing.

Ashleigh has many interests outside his work in early childhood. At the time he told this story he was experiencing conflict between his desire to be a very good early childhood educator and the resentment he was experiencing about all the effort he was expending for few tangible rewards. There was a sense of confusion about his life in general - a feeling that a chapter was about to end with no clarity about how the next one would begin.

Many people have influenced Ashleigh's decisions in the past. His most significant professional development experiences have taken place from being with, talking with, and watching others. A recent meeting with a respected colleague and the discussions we have had as part of this study, have convinced Ashleigh that it is time for a change and a re-

appraisal of his life personally and professionally. Hopefully he will find the people that he needs to be with as he begins the next chapter of his story.

For Ashleigh, professional development is closely linked to practical skills that have helped him either in his job or in his life generally. He also recognises that the times he has spent away from the early childhood centre at courses have been times to re-charge and put things into perspective.

Jade

Jade graduated with a Diploma of Teaching: Early Childhood, five years ago. When she first left school she wanted to train as a nurse. Her mother steered her towards an office job, as she did not approve of nursing as a career. In her opinion it was an occupation for “common girls” and she did not want her daughter to be considered common. Jade worked for nearly ten years in an accountant’s office before her first child was born. She enjoyed it and said that she was good at what she did, but she was being prepared for a role as Mother and Wife. At the age of fourteen years Jade was given a ‘glory box’ in which to keep linen and other treasures perceived as being necessary for setting up a home. White linen pillowcases appeared for birthday and Christmas presents each year and nothing was further from her mind than pursuing a teaching career or completing a degree. However after her marriage and as her children grew up and became less dependent, the job in the accountant's office beckoned her back.

University education had never been considered as an option for Jade, however she became interested in a local private kindergarten and needed to be qualified to teach there. Her academic career began when she enrolled for a teaching diploma. In 2000 she also completed her first degree and there is a distinct probability that post-graduate study will follow. The most satisfying aspect of her study is when she is able to put the professional development she experiences into practice in the centre where she teaches. She has tried to choose papers that both interest her, and extend her skills as an educator as well.

Alongside continuing academic study, Jade enjoys and is stimulated by attending seminars, workshops, conferences and conventions. She is currently learning to play the guitar and shares this skill with the children and parents in her early childhood centre. There is an air of eager interest and anticipation about the future of early childhood education and her place in it when Jade is talking. She found her early Diploma papers were like an awakening for her, and she was excited by the possibilities that presented themselves. She had never considered herself competent enough to study at University, although her brother was encouraged to do so. It was not the thing for girls in her family to do and her parents have been very critical of the paths she has taken since graduating. They did however attend the graduation ceremony when she received her degree, with pride in her achievement. In the end she felt she was doing it for them as well as herself.

There is no doubt that exposure to feminist issues and female role models in the last few years is having an influence on the person Jade is becoming. On graduating with a teaching diploma she quickly assumed a position of responsibility in the private kindergarten that had first aroused her interest in early childhood education, and works effectively with a management committee and other staff members to provide unique learning and development programmes.

Jade understands that it is people that influence much of what she does. She believes this is why the Human Development papers she has studied have been so interesting and useful for her. She describes herself as being fussy, and very motivated, and is aware that the structures that she sets up for herself could get in the way of helpful interactions with others, particularly in her family. At the centre she regards these structures as part of the time management skills necessary to manage a busy early childhood programme. She was not able to find a phrase to adequately describe herself as a person and said she had never really given it much thought.

Describing herself as a teacher was much easier, because she has a clearly articulated philosophy. She aims to always make the kindergarten a peaceful, happy, relaxed environment for the children, with clear expectations such as respect for each other,

respect for adults and respect for the environment guiding everything that is done. The private kindergarten where she works has a clearly stated Christian philosophy and this is underpinned with a strong foundation of prayer. Jade is passionate about providing a caring, nurturing environment for children where they are challenged to be creative, and to find answers to problems. Children must also feel they are in a haven where they will not be hurried or stressed and where they can respond to their own rhythms. Planning for each child within the group is a priority, but one which is not always realised due to many factors.

Jade sets clear goals for herself and for the kindergarten where she works. She regards herself as a professional doing a professional job. She perceives the low status of those who work in early childhood and has begun to understand this as a feminist issue.

For Jade there is an impression that professional development comes from experiences that interest her both personally and professionally. She chooses opportunities that extend her emerging interests in many areas.

Katrina

As a very young parent living in an isolated community and due to the encouragement of her husband and sister-in-law, Katrina became involved in the local Playcentre. She regards the influence this had on her as a parent and as a person, the most significant event influencing the early childhood professional she has now become. Katrina is at present the Head Teacher in a private community kindergarten in a pleasant suburb of a large city. Although recognised as a childcare centre, the kindergarten is sessional, not full day care.

During her involvement in the Playcentre movement she completed her National Playcentre Certificate and this provided the basis for further study and training. Her ongoing study encouraged her husband and her children to become students also and they share an interest in continued learning. The encouragement she received from those around

her at the time she was involved with Playcentre stimulated Katrina's desire to know more, primarily in her parenting role with her own children. This grew to a desire to understand more about how people grow and develop and to search for theories to support and challenge her own emerging philosophy.

The over-riding belief in all of Katrina's work with children and families is that parenting is the most important job in the world. She believes that it is the most unrecognised and unsupported role in society and that the route to a better society is to support families and children, empowering them to work together within a family unit towards a peaceful and just society.

It was a negative experience early in her teaching years that Katrina recalls acts as a continuing guardian in her practice. She witnessed an event in which she perceived a child being treated unjustly. In her mind there was a great deal of inequity in the comments the educator made to the child. She inwardly vowed that she would always treat children justly and with respect. She regards the early years as a time when children are at a very sensitive stage when they are learning so much. She does not think only of academic learning but also how they are learning to be responsible for themselves, and how to treat each other fairly, kindly and respectfully.

The theories of Maria Montessori have significantly influenced Katrina's practice. She identifies strongly with the peaceful, caring approach that is central to Montessori's philosophy. Because Montessori believed strongly in world peace and believed it would be achieved through children, Katrina believes that children need to develop the skills of caring for each other at a young age. She strongly believes that children learn from each other as well as from adults and that they need to learn skills to accept responsibility for the well-being of others very early in their lives. The philosophy of Katrina's centre reflects her own values and beliefs as well as those of the community in which it is based, because of the need to incorporate the specific requirements families have of their local early childhood centre.

Katrina describes herself as a person with a positive outlook one who has a deep passion for her family and her work. She has high expectations and because of these regards herself as a very hard worker. Some of her characteristics such as honesty carry with them a degree of tactlessness. She tries to be flexible but holds strongly to her own beliefs and values. Her fervent belief in fairness and justice influences her decisions and guides her practice. Katrina does not regard herself as an extrovert; she tends to think about things before acting, however she does respond impetuously when her non-negotiable values and beliefs are threatened.

As an educator Katrina does not see herself very differently from how she is as a person. She does have a lot of tolerance with children, though she still has high expectations for them. She believes she has very positive relationships with children because she spends so much time getting to know them. When she knows them well as individuals she is able to set boundaries and let them know what is expected from them. Providing challenges for children is important and more easily achieved within a climate of trust and mutual respect. Katrina believes that children are capable of great things if they are provided with opportunities, and that interactions that occur between adults and children and between children are the cornerstones of a quality programme.

Being involved in professional development that affirms her practice and confirms the importance of her role as an early childhood educator is essential for Katrina. Because she regards herself as a professional person she considers that she is very accountable to the families that she works with. She herself is a member of a large family of eight, constantly surrounded by a big extended family and she believes this has definitely influenced her and the value she places on family life. She acknowledges the influence her sons have had on her professional practice and believes that the parent role is not one that is easily shed. It has influenced her as a person and has also been significant in her professional development.

For Katrina, professional development experiences that affirm her values and beliefs are important. She says that on-going learning is an imperative for her.

Emily

Emily completed her training as a kindergarten teacher in 1973. She taught for a year and was then promoted to a Head Teacher's position. She now knows she was not ready for such a responsible position but at the time it just all felt too difficult and she resigned from the position after only three years teaching. Following this decision her life took many different directions and she worked on farms and in other labouring positions before marrying.

Her marriage was short-lived and she returned to a large city, pregnant and without a job. The years that followed the birth of her child were difficult as she struggled to survive on the Domestic Purposes Benefit. She and her baby daughter learned how to live on very little. Because she needed a project to capture her interest and give her a focus, she bought an old house truck that she re-built over a three-year period. Although she acknowledges she made some fundamental errors due to lack of building experience, she and her daughter were eventually able to live comfortably in it.

While her daughter was small, Emily took a nannying position so that she could have her own child with her, but when school years approached Emily realised she needed to settle down and provide a secure home environment. She obtained a position in an Intellectually Handicapped Children's (IHC) pre-school for two years. The pay was low, the work was hard, but the learning was very significant. Emily strongly believes that children who are differently able must be educated alongside their peers within their own community. The lack of role models and the sense of isolation in a segregated setting convinced her that there are better ways of including children in an early childhood setting.

Emily's next position took her back into a kindergarten where she remained for many years. The interest generated by the house truck re-building, spurred her on to another large project, the renovation of 'an old dump' of a house that took ten years to

complete. A long journey and many intervening influential experiences shaped a different person from the teacher she had first been.

An enthusiasm for large projects, was transferred into Emily's teaching practice resulting in learning projects for children which lasted for many days and in some cases, weeks. At the time it was an unusual approach to take to stimulate children's learning and development. Emily knew that not only did it fulfil many learning objectives for children, but it also involved the families and the entire community in the happenings at the early childhood centre.

Although she knew it was the right thing to be doing because it was based on children's interests and skills, as Emily did not have a name for what was happening, there were times when she felt she was not really a 'good' teacher. She was not following the accepted practices for early childhood educators. Then she went to an in-service course about the approach that was being taken to early childhood education in Reggio Emilia in Italy and suddenly she felt 'fired up'. There was a name and an underpinning philosophy for what she had been doing for years and it all began to make sense for her. Emily began reading everything she could get her hands on about what was happening in Italy and in other parts of the world. She had a focus for her professional development that made sense. She began trialling projects in the early childhood centre, taking photographs and documenting children's accounts of their learning experiences. Her teaching became really exciting. Colleagues recognised the value of what was occurring in the centre and she was asked to present workshops on the approaches that she was taking to children's learning and development. Emily's personal philosophy became her professional philosophy and she felt valued and respected for her ideas and practices. Her interest eventually took her to Italy to observe first hand the practices in that country.

Emily appears to be an energetic person, one who goes looking for projects. She says she feels driven to improve things. As a child she was given very strong messages that it was important to care for people. A strong sense of social justice is part of the force that drives her. It is this driving energy that also inspires Emily's teaching style. She strives to

provide a caring, safe environment for children that is stimulating and challenging; an environment where children can ask questions and are challenged to find the answers. She believes that learning is a lot more real to children if they can find their own answers. She believes children are empowered as people when they are supported to make sense of their world. Teachers are not all-powerful beings who know the answers, but assistants to children's learning. She has recently moved from the kindergarten where she has been for many years, to a full day childcare centre in a difficult situation. Her need for a project is being severely challenged.

For Emily, professional development is learning that helps her to build on layers previously formed. Sometimes her "gut feelings" provide half-theories that she goes on to develop and articulate. There is a very real sense that life is a continuous project for Emily, and also that her personal and professional development is never ending.

Coda:

Not only is the teacher at the heart of the educational process they are also at the heart of professional development experiences and programmes. This chapter has introduced the participants, and identified that for each of these individuals, professional development means something different.

The stories that have contributed to the vignettes emerged as each person told of the experiences and happenings that contributed to their personal and professional lives, and brought them to the place they are now as people who are also teachers. Kelchtermans (1993) believes that by taking a biographical perspective, adopted for this study, the professional behaviour of a teacher is not only determined by the organisational context, but also by life history and related experiences. In other words, experiences from the past and expectations about the future influence the perception of the present situation. Since no two people have the same life experiences, we all learn to perceive the world and ourselves as part of it in different ways (Keltchermans, 1993, p.199).

CHAPTER FIVE

Experiences

In the next two chapters the voices of the six early childhood educators who participated in the study will be heard. Their stories will be presented in such a way that not only their words will be heard in excerpts from the interviews, but also the links between experiences, concepts and themes that form the components of their stories will become visible. This qualitative study that adopts a narrative approach, relies on descriptions that add up to a believable authentic portrayal of the data, to create a gestalt that answers the research question; What are the influences on the professional development of early childhood educators in New Zealand? Jalongo and Isenberg (1995) elaborating on the work of Smith (1989), believe that personal stories contain three main components: experiences, concepts and themes.

Experiences are the facts that happen to us. They are the people, places and events that become part of our history. ... Concepts are beliefs or ideas we have about ourselves and others that we use to screen and interpret experiences and guide our behaviour. ... Themes are general, abstract principles that summarise and consolidate experiences and concepts. Themes give unity to personal stories. They are like templates that organise the concepts of a personal story into a coherent, meaningful whole (Jalongo and Isenberg 1995, p. 9).

This chapter focuses on experiences and the other material; concepts and themes will be analysed in chapter six.

The experiences of individuals are influenced by many factors both from within and outside the person. Happenings that may appear both significant and insignificant can be important. The presence and influence of other people and the places where remembered happenings occur all contribute to how experiences become part of our history. An analysis of the data material, using the Jalongo and Isenberg (1995) framework, has revealed that recalled experiences in the narratives of the six participants can be grouped mainly into the following categories:

- ◆ Training and Teaching
- ◆ Personal Experiences
- ◆ Family Experiences
- ◆ Memorable Events
- ◆ Wider Social and Cultural Experiences
- ◆ People and Places

Polkinghorne (1995, p.10) refers to the “best fit of a categorical scheme” in which groups of qualitatively similar material link to one another and are grouped together to suggest the dominating qualities in the category. In the ‘best fit’ categorisation of this study, each category will be divided into smaller sub-categories, with quotes from the transcripts illuminating and informing the meaning.

◆ **Training and Teaching**

The focus statement at the beginning of the first interview set a context for remembering, both professional and personal. People were asked to recall a significant event that had a major influence on their professional development. All six participants talked about their training and early teaching experiences. Other experiences that have also been influential and will be discussed in this section are formal professional development events and professional demands.

Training and early teaching experiences

Both initial training and experiences as beginning teachers were significant influences for participants. Katrina brought people, places and events into the opening of her story.

The most significant influence started when I first became a parent. I was a very young parent and we lived in a very isolated community, and the Playcentre was the only early childhood service on the island at the time. I became involved because my sister-in-law was the Supervisor and through her and my husband, they encouraged me to go along. At the time the women there were very, very strong women. Very assertive, knew what they wanted, had their own philosophies worked out and I think that was probably the biggest influence on me. On my parenting, and my child-rearing practices at the time. What I observed them doing with other people's children in the environment (K. p.1 interview 1).

Katrina refers to the starting of an influence, an historical event in her life that continues to have an influence on her now.

I guess I track it all back to there. It had such an influence on me. I suppose I was quite impressionable, I was still quite young, perhaps going through some sensitive periods as far as working out parenting issues that I wanted to deal with as a parent, different from my own upbringing. There was a lot of training and professional development going on at the time and that had a significant influence on me. The need to go out and learn more, and take from what you learn, and put it into practice. To keep improving, to keep finding out more, to keep educating, keep questioning why and looking at the needs of the children (K.p.2 interview 1).

For Betsy and Emily their early experiences of teaching were also influential. For Emily the experience drove her out of teaching for a considerable time.

I finished my training in 1973 and I taught on the West Coast for two years. I went from being a teacher to head teacher within a year and when I look back on it I was not equipped to cope. I wasn't dealing with the needs of children or their families and I got very depressed about teaching and left the service. Then I worked on farms and did all sorts of things. Got

married and had my daughter. These are the sorts of things that have influenced my life (E. p.1 interview 1)

Betsy's experiences became the impetus to seek a new appointment.

Fresh out of university I wanted to put all these ideas into practice, but the owner and the other staff at the childcare centre were very set in their ways and didn't like change very much, so after a year and a half of frustration I left. I felt my capabilities and my experience and the ideas that I had in my mind were not being utilised, so I left and went to another job where I've been ever since. I love my job now, I love the team that I work with, I agree with their philosophies. Our employers value us as teachers and they value our ideas and experiences. They provide excellent professional development programmes for us and I feel respected (B. p. 9 interview 1).

Katrina tells how the presence and influence of strong supportive women in her early years of teaching were very significant (and continue to be so now). Such influences were missing from Emily's story and the lack of such an influence contributed to Betsy's decision to seek a new job. It is widely recognised that the first years of teaching are critical (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Katz, 1995), they have become known as the 'survival stage' in a teaching career. Both Betsy and Emily have indicated the affect of too much responsibility too soon. New teachers are often shocked by the stamina required for the job, the amount of paper-work, the range and intensity of children's needs, the demands of parents and the lack of support for their efforts within the school and the district (Ryan, 1986).

The written accounts provided by five of the six participants (summaries appear in appendix five) about significant professional development experiences over the previous year also reveal the importance of mentors. The work of Joyce and Showers (1996) places an emphasis on peer coaching. They suggest that training followed by coaching is more influential than training alone. Although coaching has not been referred to specifically in transcripts, the presence of supportive colleagues has influenced the professional

development of Katrina and Betsy. The lack of such an influence has also been of significance for Emily and her resultant departure from the teaching profession for a time was the result of such a lack.

All the participants in the study identified their early childhood training as an influence in their on-going professional development, mainly as the point where they began their careers in early childhood. However Betsy was able to be a little more reflective about the way in which her training had provided a foundation from which subsequent understandings emerged.

I think most of my underlying principles, the way that I teach and empower children comes from my University training. I think I've taken a lot of it on-board from there. You don't realise how much at the time, but when you go out and actually start practicing you think, oh well, I remember this and I remember that and I began to figure out my own philosophy. Once you start teaching, you figure out what you really are about, what skills you've taken on board and what you agree with. (B. p.8 interview 1)

Taryn perceived a lack in her training that motivated her to continue studying. She was not satisfied with the academic level of the first two courses that had brought her to Diploma level. She believes that early childhood has a low status both academically and in the community and thinks that it is important for early childhood educators to present themselves as professionals. In order to do this she considers she needs to work at a certain level and have a good grounding and background training. Her on-going University study at Masters level is important professional development for her, partly because she is following an interest and partly because she wants to contribute to the status of a highly qualified early childhood profession. Congruent with such an opinion is Kelchtermans' (1993) theory that "teachers' professional behaviour and its development can only be understood properly when situated in the broader context of their career and personal life history" (p.198). He asks the question "can the study of the teacher's life cycle provide insight into the factors and mechanisms that determine ... changes in teachers' professional

behaviour?" The motivation for on-going professional development that Taryn described has given us just such an insight.

Taryn was able to perceive her professional development as a journey, she considers that at different stages on that journey certain elements are needed to stimulate and support professional growth. She believes that beginning teachers are likely to need strategies to cope with the day-to-day demands of teaching. More experienced teachers are able to gain professional insight that results from self-inquiry. Her comments and reflections are mirrored in the work of others who recognise the journey that teachers take.

Teachers' professional behaviour develops during their career.

Terminating the teacher education programme and receiving a certificate doesn't mean the end of the training process and the achievement of competence (Kelchtermans, 1993 p.198).

Ashleigh talks about the difficulties he had throughout his training and early years of teaching,

One of the troubles I've had with my professional career, when I first went off to University no one in my family had been to University before. I didn't know how to structure an academic or a professional career ... and again when I went into teaching, it was a shock to the system. I wasn't quite used to it, I wasn't quite prepared for it. I didn't know what I actually had to do about Teacher Registration. I had a little pamphlet but it didn't really make it clear to me. Unfortunately I'm now in my sixth year of trying to get registered because I didn't know what to do and there was nobody in the centre where I was working that could supervise me through the registration process" (A. p.5 interview 1).

At the beginning of Ashleigh's career as a teacher he was not able to access the professional development and support he needed to take the next step. His story may be mirrored in the stories of other teacher graduates whose first teaching positions were in early childhood centres where there were no registered teachers to supervise them through the registration process.

After an initial disillusionment with teaching Emily discovered that her training and early teaching experiences had equipped her to take a different direction. She became a nanny so that she could have her own baby with her. She was responsible for a family of three children, four including her own baby, and she felt she was teaching again, teaching the children she was caring for vital skills for living. When her daughter started school and she had more flexibility, she moved into a job with IHC (IHC is a recognised title for an Association that works with children who have an intellectual handicap), teaching children with special needs in a segregated setting. She describes this as “*a huge learning curve*”, where she learned more about children’s development and behaviour than she had thought possible “*and from there I went back into kindergarten*” (E. p.5, interview 1). In Emily’s story there is a sense of movement, of re-focusing, responding to life cycle changes and looking for opportunities.

Emerging from the transcripts is the significance of experiences that involve changes in employment

In a childcare centre like this you cannot put into place strategies that have worked in a kindergarten. It just doesn't work. I've had to re-think the whole thing. It's been a big professional step for me and I'm having to learn new skills, like accounting and budgeting. The other challenges for me in this area are dealing with people whose lives are disordered by unemployment and poverty and the anti-social behaviour that goes along with it like drug and alcohol misuse. That's a huge professional challenge (E. p.15 interview 1).

Becoming an employer instead of being an employee has brought new professional understandings for Taryn and become a major influence in her professional development. Having worked for someone else and now in a position where others work for her has changed her attitudes. “*In terms of professional development, I've become far more aware of quality*” (T. p. 3).

Betsy appears to be preparing for any eventualities. *“Everything I’ve learned from professional development programmes I’ve been involved in is always stored up in my little kit that I pull out every now and again if a certain thing comes up”* (B. p.22, interview 1). ‘Storing up’ professional development for a future eventuality is not a comment that has been mentioned by others. In fact it appears to contradict the opinions of other people in the study who believe that professional development must be immediately related to practice for it to be useful. The uniqueness of each individual in the study contributes to an overall picture of the variety of influences that impinge on teacher professional development.

Formal professional development events:

Three overlapping ways that a professional learns have already been discussed in chapter two as formal, informal, and professional learning (Collis, 1996). Collis describes formal learning as something that is organised by someone else and constitutes such events as a seminar, a course, or a workshop. Hoban’s (1997) theory also discussed in the early childhood section of the literature review describes learning of this kind as the Outside-in model of professional development. It is these descriptions that define the discussion in this section.

It has been widely considered (Carr, 1998) that one day workshops and seminars are usually ineffective as a motivator for change. It is therefore interesting that all six participants in this study have talked about the influence of short courses and conferences on their professional development.

I went to a professional development course that was being run here ... about Reggio Emilia pre-schools and project work, and it fired me up something amazing and I felt for the first time that I wasn’t a bad teacher. I didn’t believe in making huge numbers of finger plays and huge numbers of resources for flannelgraph stories and things. There is a place for them and that’s fine but I didn’t go overboard on that style of teaching, a regular type of teaching and I’d always felt I was a bit

naughty, or a bit neglectful for not doing those things. Suddenly there was a name and a philosophy for what I had been doing for years, following the children's interests and encouraging projects that went on for days. I felt I'm not a bad teacher after all, it really is okay to do what I've been doing. So I started reading every bit of information that I could get my hands on about the pre schools in Reggio Emilia, and the project work, and what was happening in other parts of the world, and it was just, --it really, -- I really felt I'd come home philosophically (E. p.6 interview 1).

Emily returned to this experience again in interview two. *"To me it was just like a lightning bolt. I came away from that course floating on air, it rocked my socks off it really did"* (p.28). She was describing a professional development experience that resonated with her own practice. In a sense the course that Emily refers to did not change her practice, nevertheless it did change the way she considered and valued her practice, and in that respect a short one day course changed her as a teacher.

Jade places a different emphasis on one-day courses. She considers them to be fun things that she does for herself.

I do fun things as well and I've just done a science workshop that was brilliant. I did enjoy it. There was a lot that I already knew but I came away with three or four new ideas which was good. So sometimes I do things just because it's an area I'm interested in. I just need to know that I'm doing it right and it's quite nice to sit there and think yes we're doing that, or yes I know that. I think that's just as important as packing in new information, and so sometimes I choose those sorts of things just for me (J. p. 12, interview 1).

One example of teacher change shows a movement through three stages, "procedural (involving techniques and materials) to interpersonal (involving classroom atmosphere) to conceptual (involving the integration of theory and practice)" (Carr, 1998, p.15). If this model of teacher change is relevant, then being in the right place at the right

time (or at the right course at the right time) will greatly influence the accessibility of new ideas for teachers and the influence these will have on their practice. Betsy identifies a course she attended as one of two very significant experiences. She rates the course as having a comparable impact on her professional growth as the death of her sister, both of which she perceives as changing her way of thinking as a teacher and also as a person. The death of her sister provided her with the skills and understanding to find a positive in a negative experience and the course she attended changed the way she teaches as it enabled her to:

Empower the children as well as myself, but a lot of it for myself. After a few years teaching I think you get a bit sort of stale and set in your ways and this course opened it up again for me, the enjoyment of teaching. I've always thought I was there for the children and I discovered that I'm there for myself as well. My learnings from the course have influenced me in such a way that I'm more positive about myself as a teacher and also in the ways I interact with and teach children. The skills I learned are important in all aspects of my life, and so I'm a better person" (B. p.20 interview 1).

Ashleigh was more ambivalent about professional development courses. He found some short courses a bit "airy fairy" but others that served to re-inspire him when he was feeling jaded and tired.

So courses have helped inspire and re-inspire me, but I think that's also due to personal reflection and personal growth. The content of a course and the people I meet there that I have a professional conversation with also contribute to the influence a course has on me, but when it all boils down it's what I can make of it (A. p. 21 interview 1).

Taryn no longer finds short one-day courses as great an influence as when she was a beginning teaching.

They were really good then because it doesn't come easily (teaching) and you have to have a bag of tricks somewhere along the way. My initial

training was not hugely useful, it didn't give me a very good grounding and I discovered this quite quickly (T. p.2 interview 1).

Very practical needs drove Taryn to attend short courses early in her career. According to Carr's description she was at the procedural stage in the teacher change process (Carr, 1998). Now going to a short course does not provide "*huge moments of enlightenment*" for her. She might go to a short course and take back one little thing that she will act on, or try out. Katrina also has found the influence of short courses not as great as other experiences. She describes the books and articles she reads and the papers she's undertaken as more influential. She acknowledges however that she has "*taken things from those courses, but probably not as much as from my own personal study and reading*" (K. p.16 interview 1).

The focus group identified one-day in-service courses as a preferred professional development option, and all five participants who provided a written account of the professional development they had been involved in during the previous 12 months mentioned short courses as a significant influence. It may be that all participants referred to short one-day courses because there is a long tradition of ongoing in-service training that incorporates this model. The term, professional development may have triggered the response as it has long been associated with day long in-service courses. Programmes currently funded by the Ministry of Education include this model in many of their provisions and are therefore familiar to all the participants in the study. Short courses are triggers for teacher change to a greater or lesser extent for each person in this research study. The Duthie Report (1997) discusses programme flexibility as a key issue in professional development, recommending a variety of professional development and support programmes, to support early childhood personnel at differing stages in their development (p.4). The experiences recounted by the six early childhood educators in this study support Duthie's recommendation.

Hoban (1997) delineates professional development models into three groups, "Outside-in models, Inside-in models, and Inside-Outside models, according to the source of knowledge used" (p.1). Short courses such as those previously discussed fit the outside-in model drawing mainly on knowledge generated by others for the teacher to draw on in

his or her practice. The narrative material just considered suggests the Outside-in model constituting a formal professional development event. Hoban would consider short one day courses or seminars as formal knowledge as opposed to Inside-in models which are teacher generated and are therefore regarded as practical knowledge. Betty Collis's (1996) theory of the three overlapping ways that a teacher learns, also considers courses and seminars to be formal learning, where knowledge is imparted by 'an expert'.

Professional learning:

Professional learning is when explicit use is made of professional contacts, resources and activities with a specified goal of improving professional practice. Resources such as books, reports, journals and magazines, attendance at conferences and conventions and professional networking can contribute to professional learning (Collis 1996).

Early childhood centre based action research programmes considered by the focus group to be one of the preferred professional development models is considered professional learning as defined by Collis. Hoban (1997) would describe such programmes as the Inside-in model of professional development, drawing on teachers' own knowledge and experiences. Teachers control programmes such as these as they experiment with their own ideas in the context of their workplace. Professional learning talked about by teachers in this section of the study appears to belong more accurately in Hoban's third model, the Inside-Outside model which draws on both teachers' generated knowledge and the experiences and knowledge of others, in order to promote a community of discourse.

Katrina describes her involvement in a centre-based programme.

We are part of the College of Education's professional development programmes. We work with a great facilitator who has given us a lot of support. She works with teachers and management and she's been a great help. We want to follow a similar process next year because it's been so effective. At the beginning of each year we sit down, we basically brainstorm what we want to achieve this year and then she (the

facilitator) *works with us to achieve those goals. Not only that, but she has also been great about providing us with reading material and study resources and she supports us to meet all the DOPS (Desirable Objectives and Practices, 1996) Through our reading and discussions it's made me reflect on my practice, and I believe it's really important to reflect on how we do things and why we do them* (K. p.11 interview1).

According to Carr's (1998) descriptions of teacher change processes previously discussed, Katrina could be said to be at the conceptual point in teacher change where she involves the integration of theory and practice.

Ashleigh also found working in the Inside-Outside model of professional development encouraged him to reflect on practice and led him to realisations that he had not previously had about the value of observing and evaluating teachers' interactions, his own included, with children. With the encouragement of a facilitator from a Professional Development team, the staff in the centre had used a video camera as a way of recording practice. Lack of time and organisation influenced the effectiveness of the programme as the evaluation process was not what he had hoped for. Ashleigh did not find this approach as helpful as leaving the centre and going to a course. His preference is almost certainly influenced by his stage of teacher development.

Jade has found being part of a research programme in her centre, investigating children's thinking "*really brilliant, without a doubt it has influenced my professional development*" (J. p.6 interview 1). She also plans to attend a conference every year. She finds she needs to stop and totally reflect on where she is and where she is going. Her ideas are challenged, and she finds her contacts with those that attend stimulating and encouraging. Jalongo and Isenberg (1996) believe it is the rich exchange of teachers experiences at conferences such as those that Jade attends, that increase teachers' knowledge, affirms their learning and beliefs and helps them to internalise the special vocabulary of teaching. Collis (1996) describes the attendance at conferences as professional learning.

There is a mixture of information in these stories that strongly suggest the need for a variety of professional development experiences. Teachers who are at a stage of maturity in their teaching are able to recognise their professional requirements and choose the activities that meet that need. More formal professional development events, the outside-in model described by Hoban (1997) can take away the necessity for reflective thought about movement on a professional development journey, and simply provide comfort stops to refresh and refuel. However as Jade describes they can also provide a time for challenge and reflection.

Five of the six teachers in the study spoke about their professional networking. Meeting with colleagues both inside and outside their centre was very significant. Two people said that this was the best part of going to a course or a conference. Hoban (1997, p. 11) refers to such contacts and conversations as a 'community of discourse', the value of which can only be measured by the people involved. Teacher-to teacher conversations or practice-centred discourses can become an avenue for exploring critical issues in teachers' lives (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995). The argument suggesting that such conversations are professional learning when explicit use is made of professional contacts to achieve a specified goal (Collis 1996) is affirmed through discussions that emerged in the transcripts.

For the group of people involved in this research, professional contacts were likely to be informal, with friendship as a reason to meet together. Shared interests in early childhood and shared teaching experiences contributed to the ensuing discussions. Sometimes such conversations occurred in the supermarket, or in a car together between meetings.

Story is an indispensable part of the educational dialogue. It encourages teachers to talk, to exchange beliefs, to share experiences with colleagues, and to wrestle with the dilemmas associated with teaching. However, opportunities to talk about teaching are seldom a planned part of teachers' daily lives (Jalongo & Isenberg 1995, p. 152).

Planned professional development can happen when opportunities are provided for teachers to talk teaching, where a focused learning conversation takes place. Two of the teachers in

the study are involved in individual professional support programmes funded by the Ministry of Education. This model provides opportunities for planned professional conversations between a facilitator and a participant, often with an identified goal. Such programmes are identifiable as professional learning, probably for both people involved in the discussion.

I really respect W. who I've had quite a lot to do with over the years so I guess she could have been a bit of a mentor really ... and although we haven't seen each other much lately, I still try and stay in touch (T. p.12).

Professional demands:

Katrina has a very succinct way of describing professional demands. She believes you gain skills when you have to do something. For her it has been administration tasks that have presented her with a big learning curve. There was extrinsic motivation for her in this experience. It was simply a job to be done and she was the person to do it. She believes she would never have gained the skills without the professional demands.

The demands of being considered a professional have influenced a lot of Taryn's professional development experiences. Internal motivation has been the spur for her activities.

I did have a B. A. degree but it didn't have any Education papers in it, so I thought I had better do stage 1 to 3 in Education although I could have gone straight into a M.Ed. So I did those three papers and then I went into a Masterate. ... Early childhood is such a low status area and I think it's important to present ourselves as professionals if that's how we want to be considered. ... I think now we're not really professionals and I think we have to work very hard to earn the respect of others (T. p.4 interview 2).

Throughout her story Taryn spoke of her internal motivation to achieve a quality early childhood sector. She considers it to be an exciting field to be involved in but finds the low status quite frustrating. When she is out socially and people ask her what she does, she

finds the expression on their faces when she replies that she is in early childhood very telling. It is her experience that people invariably change the subject because of what she perceives is their lack of interest and that is partly what she means about low status. The demands of professionalism drive both her and Katrina who believes that if “*we want to be seen as professionals, we have to have professional systems in place to ensure that we are accountable*” (T. p.20, interview 1).

Bell and Gilbert’s (1996) model of teacher development referred to in Chapter Two incorporates the social, personal and professional aspects of what it means to be a teacher. They believe that in the past there has been an emphasis on professional development to the exclusion of all else. More recently an emphasis on self-understanding and self-reflection has been evident. The transcripts in this research study indicate that it is likely that the Bell and Gilbert model more accurately reflects the realities of those involved. The professional, personal and social aspects of what it means to be an early childhood teacher are intertwined in their stories. It is to these more personal experiences that I will now turn.

◆ **Personal Experiences**

Personal experiences both within and outside the early childhood centre have evoked a lot of reflection about professional development for all of those involved in the research. Personal study and personal interests and projects have been very significant for some.

Personal study

Jalongo and Isenberg (1996) suggest that it is the absence of meaningful professional dialogue in the teaching context that prompts many teachers to increase their qualifications or return to University. In New Zealand, the endeavours of many early childhood educators to increase their qualifications, are prompted by Government moves to ensure that all of those who work in early childhood centres have at least a Diploma of Education, Early Years by 2005. All of those involved in this study already have a

minimum qualification, so such a requirement was not driving them to return to University for a personal course of study. It could be, as Jalongo and Isenberg suggest, that it is indeed the need to be involved in professional dialogue that drives early childhood teachers to pursue their studies. However for Jade, Betsy, Ashleigh and Taryn, there are other underlying factors contributing to their personal study.

When asked to focus on a specific incident or event that has specifically influenced her professional development Jade described the programme of study she is currently undertaking to complete her Bachelor of Education degree. She completed her Diploma of Teaching: Early Childhood, five years ago. Completing her degree is not likely to bring a monetary increment in her present position, so there is little extrinsic motivation prompting her study. Her story provides an insight.

University or further education was not an option for me when I left school. It was for my brother but not for me, and now you see I've done a lot more than he has. I think probably deep down, if I was being perfectly honest I would say to you that a part of why I do what I do is because I just wanted to see if I could. Other than the fact that I want to learn things and apply what I learn to my practice I also just want to prove that I can do it. When I began my initial training I had this terrible fight with my mother who thought that women should not work. Again when I started my first degree paper extramurally, I came up against a lot of criticism, because I already had a diploma, I had a job, I had a family and my parents told me I shouldn't want anything else. However now that I've completed my degree my parents are very proud of my achievements (J. p. 18, interview 1).

Jade began to tell this part of her story after interview one had ended. I asked her permission to turn the tape back on and she gave it freely. At the very beginning of the interview she explained her personal study differently.

Doing these papers has made me look at many issues that I might otherwise not have considered. Actually what I wanted to get out of it was the chance to put some professional development into practice and I certainly did that. I tried to choose papers that would both interest me and extend my work. What I have learned are that the issues that affect early childhood are often women's issues. ... I found the Human Development paper at level three very difficult but I got a lot out of it. Like, how we get the self, -- the self you know, --- and how we make meaning of things for ourselves. (J. p. 2-3, interview 1)

Jade told a story at the beginning and at the end of the interview, the different emphasis is enlightening. It appears that the growth of knowledge and professional understanding she talks about at the beginning of the interview, and the personal reasons she describes at the end, have both been significant influences in her professional development. The intermingling of personal and professional self is evident in her story. There is not a contradiction here; it is a story told from a different perspective. Kelchtermans (1993) discusses a vibrant, interactionist and constructivist notion of self that is not static but goes on during the life cycle. He suggests that the self is a fundamental element in how teachers construe the nature of their jobs, signifying that self and professional self overlap significantly. Jade's story or if you like, two stories further illustrate the complexity of teacher development.

It would appear that Katrina's personal study has provided her with a tool for reflecting on her practice and taken her into challenging territory. She talks about how influential the papers she has studied have been and how they have made her reflect on her practice.

"I think it's very important to reflect on how we do things and why we do them. ... It's just wonderful, but I find it really scary because I think I know about something quite well and then I do a paper, I read a book, I go to a course and I think how little I actually know. I find that quite frightening, how very little I actually do know. It encourages me to go on, it's exciting (K. p. 12, interview1).

Katrina has found her own personal study more influential in her professional development than the in-service courses she has been involved in at a College of Education. She has been able to learn some things through in-service courses, but it is the books she reads, the articles she “*devours*” that have been the most influential. She thinks it may be because an in-service course is just for one day, but she can spend as much time as necessary with her own study. It may be that continued study will take Katrina into safer territory as she increases her understanding and knowledge. Jalongo and Isenberg are able to say from their experience, that “teachers who plow deeply into the writings of published experts in the field are often surprised and delighted to discover views and practices similar to their own” (1995, p.156).

A model of teacher development known as ‘technical rationalism’ discussed in Chapter One sounds a cautionary note. Jeeawody (1997) warns that a model of teacher development that extols improved performance and the acquisition of specialist knowledge and skills and does not take into account the contextual nature of teaching may lead to fragmentation of learning, and dysfunction between theory and practice. The resultant effect may lead to a de-skilling of practitioners. While Katrina is able to relate the information and knowledge she is gaining from her personal study to the wider social and philosophical contexts within which she functions, she is not at risk. On the other hand Ashleigh is finding that the more skills and knowledge he acquires, the less effective he feels as a teacher. “*I’m finding it very hard to be the teacher I want to be. My skill level has gone up ... but my disposition to teach is gone or going*” (A. p.5, interview 2). He has not been able to effectively translate his increased knowledge and skills into his present teaching context. Many factors contribute to this, such as the lack of money for resources, the difficulty to attract trained and qualified staff and the absence of trained relievers to call on so that staff members can be involved in professional development activities. Ashleigh’s personal study has burdened him with knowledge and skills that he feels unable to translate into practice.

Taryn’s stories of her personal study show an understanding of the wider social, political and philosophical implications of translating theory into practice. She refers to the

papers she has done on the philosophy of education and the politics of educational theory as a motivating factor in her study. She believes teachers must adopt a critical stance about putting theory into practice, especially when theories are politically driven. "*Theories must be grounded in a belief system, in a culture, within worldwide change. It's like untangling the package you're presented with and questioning if it really is something you want to put into practice. How does this fit with that?*" (T. p.17). Taryn is able to reflect and question the knowledge and skills that are advocated for early childhood. She believes that people in early childhood have been so manipulated over time that when they are presented with a format for doing something, a package, they will just accept it and do it. Obviously a professional development 'package' will not meet Taryn's professional development needs.

Middleton and May's (1997) wide-angled focus on teachers across all sectors of education in New Zealand represents an optimistic view of teachers, while affirming Taryn's wide-angled focus of the social, philosophical and political influences on teachers and teaching. In their work,

Teachers are not viewed as passive recipients of the ideas of policy-makers or the latest theoretical fashion, but as creative strategists whose theories-in-practice are products of their own agency within the constraints and possibilities afforded them by their biographical, historical, socioeconomic, cultural and geographical situations and the theoretical or conceptual resources to which their circumstances have afforded them access (Middleton and May, 1997, p. 10).

To adopt this position involves a belief in teachers as active participants in their own development. It involves empowering them to become creative strategists. Certainly there was optimism emanating from the stories of Taryn, Betsy and Katrina, and enthusiasm both about teaching and being a teacher from all participants, with the exception of Ashleigh. There was a sense that Ashleigh and maybe Emily in a new position were feeling 'done to' by circumstances and situations outside their control. A creative strategist might emerge more strongly if our conversations had continued, in the past Emily has certainly provided a great example of a creative strategist. Appropriate professional

development and support using narrative as an emancipatory tool could have an empowering influence for a creative strategist like her to jump up once again.

Personal study as an influence on professional development has been significant for four of the six teachers involved in this study. Their stories are enlightening, and as they have talked of their experiences and understandings, aspects of their development have been revealed in narrative that may not have been apparent in more structured interviews. Written accounts contain titles of books and articles read, and the name of the degree or qualification for which they are studying. The feelings and motivations prompting the study have emerged only in the narrative interviews. This is a significant finding.

The focus group did indeed provide a window on a community in interaction as Bouma (1997) predicts. Private study has not been identified by the group either as a preferred professional development option or as a trigger for change. Nevertheless wider issues such as funding for professional development and paid release time for all professional development activities, and acquiring extra skills and knowledge needed for promotion have been regarded as highly important. Included within factors like these could be individual preferences that have been subsumed into the voice of the group. This does not rob such factors of significance it just gives them another voice.

Personal projects and personal interests

An agreement that self and professional self largely overlap did not inhibit Kelchtermans from focusing on the notion of professional self in his research (1993, p.200). His interest was in the self as far as professional activities were concerned. That is also the focus in this study; nonetheless as the narrative progressed the personal and professional stories became so enmeshed in and influential to each other that the overlap became harder to recognise.

When Emily became “depressed about teaching” and left the service, she describes other things that influenced her life (E. p.1 and 2 interview 1).

Then I worked on farms and did all sorts of things. Got married and then I had my daughter, but by then my marriage had fallen apart and I was living on the Domestic Purposes Benefit. That was a big learning curve about how to live on very little and to keep myself sane I did projects. I built a house truck. I needed to feel I had something to achieve. It took me three years to build.

When she had completed the house truck and lived in it for six months the next big project called.

I bought an old run down house and started to fix it up. It was a dump but it was a start in life and then I spent the next 10 years in my weekends putting on a carpenter's pouch and renovating it. There were some more big learning curves with that project.

Emily's personal interests and projects prepared her for, or maybe led her into a professional experience that is still a major influence in her professional self. It also indicates that she is a creative strategist. She found a job where she considered the Head Teacher to be unconventional. She encouraged the children to engage in big projects, big building constructions. Emily said they sometimes took weeks to build and the whole community would be involved and provide material and equipment to complete the project. They took photos of the activities and the children wrote stories that they made into books. Emily began to understand that the more she expected of children the more they were able to achieve. They even made furniture for the centre that is still in use.

You can expect a very high standard from young children and it does work if you put the time and energy into it. We were amazed at what we achieved with the children because we expected it. It really surprised me, but then I thought about what I achieved when I was involved in the house truck and then the house re-building and I realise that I shouldn't be surprised at what children can achieve too. ... They need time to practice and do things over and over again. You have to let them do things lots of times and talk with them about what they are doing. The Reggio Emilia visit when I went to Italy taught me a great deal. It taught me about valuing children and valuing their work (E.pp.8-10 interview 1). However

my professional development now is different (she has recently been appointed as a manager in a daycare centre) I need more skills in dealing with staff, how to be a good leader, and I know that's the sort of professional development I need to look at now (E. p.19 interview 2).

It is possible to predict that personal experience, interests and projects will influence Emily's professional development as she moves into the next phase of professional growth. Ayers refers to the three major flaws perceived in actors and relates them to teachers: The failure to draw on life, on autobiography and experiences; the notion that teaching is primarily technique; the goal and expectation that you will one day "get it" when in fact the project is you and is therefore never finished (Ayers, 1993, cited in Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995, p. 142).

The intermeshing of the personal and professional self is also revealed in Jade's narrative. Jade is taking guitar lessons. Her story develops from the professional to the personal.

I'm taking guitar lessons. I'm not very good at music. I'm better at teaching art than music but the children don't care they love it. So I'm taking guitar lessons solely for me and it comes through wanting to play and sing with the children. ...I love playing at the centre because I've got some children who are interested in the notes and I am able to name the notes and play for them. I make up all sorts of tunes and songs and sing away. Some of them will come and ask me to get my guitar out. ... I have to push myself to go to lessons. It would be much easier to stay at home you know. ... My need to learn actually started when I was at College doing my training. We had guitar lessons and I'm left handed and they made me learn right-handed and I felt very left out. I never achieved anything because it was so difficult to do, but I decided I couldn't possibly spend the rest of my life fiddling around not knowing what I was doing So that's another reason why I'm taking lessons, but I love it, I really do (J. pp.8-10 interview 1).

The Association that Betsy works in is currently setting up a software administration package for a group of centres. Betsy developed a personal interest in computers while at university and has maintained her skills and increased her interest. The most computer literate person from each centre is being chosen for further professional development so that they can mentor their colleagues to come to terms with the changes in administration practices. Carr (1998) refers to a useful approach embedding professional development into other centre processes. It is known as a systems approach and it is likely that the usefulness can be multiplied when existing interests and strengths of teachers are known and encouraged.

As these stories reveal, pursuing a personal interest may well result in changes in professional practice. At the beginning of his teaching career Ashleigh was experiencing difficulty setting boundaries for acceptable behaviour for the children in the centre where he worked. To relieve the stress he was experiencing every day, he joined the local storytellers' guild. He is now a professional storyteller. The spin-off has been that he has learned a lot from attending courses arranged by the guild, and from watching other storytellers. He has also learned about himself as a teacher in the experience.

"Playing the audience I guess you could say. That has helped me a lot. ... I was looking for ways to control children and now I've found a different source, working with the behaviours, guiding children in the right directions. I had been trying to control them. I think it's come from practical storytelling. They haven't actually taught me as such, just watching other storytellers, how they direct an audience and watching other teachers, seeing how they direct children. It's something that's grown and I've recognised it and it's worked so I've kept using it" (A. p.3 and 16, interview 1).

The practice of story-making itself presents the chance to look at ourselves from two perspectives: as a participant in the experience and as a participant in the story. Stories are both mirrors of our own practice and windows on the practice of others (Jalongo &

Isenberg, 1995). The analogy of Ashleigh the teacher, Ashleigh the storyteller and Ashleigh the participant in a narrative research study is unmistakable.

◆ Family Experiences

The importance of family experiences is very evident in the stories of all the participants and have to some extent been touched on in the previous section on personal experiences. Events that happen in the family such as childhood events and influences, and the influences of being in a family are likely to have far reaching effects that influence all aspects of a life including professional development experiences.

Childhood events and influences

Jade's memories of her own childhood shape the philosophy of the early childhood centre where she teaches.

Parents say they do all these things at home, but I'm sure a lot of it is not done the way it was for us when we were children. My mother never worked and I don't remember having to hurry and be pushed along. Children get very tired because their parents are so wrapped up in pushing off to work or wherever else they're going. The children just get hustled along, and so in the centre the environment is quite relaxed and peaceful (J. p.5 interview 2).

Emily also clearly identifies the influence her childhood experiences had on the teacher she now is

I was given very strong messages as a child that you must care for people, and I think that comes through in my personal philosophy. I am a social, caring person with a strong sense of social responsibility, ... and I think that's possibly driven me into this job. My own upbringing and my education and the things that happened to me when I was a child have influenced me very strongly now that I am a teacher. ... My grandparents strongly influenced my ideals. When we were children we'd have family

dinners with them and they used to sit ... and there would be these great long discussions about political ideals and ways of thinking and acting in your life and the discussions would go on for hours. Uncle Bob would sometimes rescue the children and take us to the pictures but I believe that is where my strong sense of social justice came from (E. p.26, interview 2).

The stories contain instances of tragedy and difficulty as well as inspiration. As each person had been asked to talk about influences on their professional development, accounts of childhood and family experiences reveal a close link between the personal and the professional. Betsy not only identifies the links, but emphasises their influence.

The most significant event in my life that has made me the person I am now is when my sister died. I was nine when she was born and 20 when she died. She had a terminal illness for which there was no cure and we watched her die basically. It's given me a lot of courage to face things in my life and also in my teaching, because you get challenges in your teaching as well that I don't walk away from now. Because of her death, I have knowledge that I can face things and come through them to the other side. ... I very much enjoy being a teacher, it's a positive role and my sister's death has given me the courage to be a positive person (B. p.6 interview 2).

Being the second to youngest in a family of eight has contributed greatly to Katrina's decision to, firstly become involved in early childhood, and then to stay involved. She explains her family as being like two families. The first six children were born, and then nine years later she and her younger brother joined the family. From her earliest memories she had nephews and nieces living close and was part of a huge extended family. There were always children around and she sees this as a definite influence on her. She was very reflective about the decisions she has made to bring her children up differently from how she was brought up. Katrina speaks of the "*self analysis*" that went into making those changes and she acknowledges her husband's influence. "*He's always been such an*

enthusiastic parent and that has had a huge influence on my beliefs, values and practices and now influences me and the work I do with children”(K .p. 13 interview 1). Autobiography has been described as a process of self-formation and self-declaration that pushes back memory, revealing not only influences but also choices. Narrative can be instrumental in connecting the inner self to the public self (Ayers, 1989). Katrina’s script is indicative of such a process.

The influence of being in a family

There were no specific questions about, or references to family in either the focus statements or the key questions that framed the data collection for this study. It can be no accident that families were often referred to as being influential in participants’ professional development. It was family experiences and demands that cemented Taryn’s early childhood career.

I was in South America teaching in a British school ... and I met a New Zealander who inspired me to do Montessori training so when I went to England looking for something to do I thought I might as well do the training that she had recommended. So that was kind of the motivation to first get involved in early childhood, and then I guess after a while it became more of a necessity because I arrived here (New Zealand) with a partner who couldn't work at the time, so it just launched me into early childhood regardless. I had to be earning some kind of money (T. p.11).

When Jade’s children began leaving home she felt able to consider completing a degree. She has already told of how influential this has been in her professional development. The fact that her teen-age son came home again while she was in the middle of a busy semester did not deter her from her goal. Her life direction had changed and she continued to pursue her own career, despite the fact that she had not considered it possible earlier.

A teenage pregnancy did not deter Betsy from commencing her University training. Nor did it prevent her completing her training. It was possible to combine parenting and study. She has not talked about the difficulties she may have encountered while at University. However when she was appointed to her first teaching position she describes her search for a quality childcare centre for her son.

I had a hard time putting my son into childcare, I was very fussy. I think every childcare centre in town cringed when they saw me coming in the door asking questions like, are you trained? Are you involved in professional development? What is your centre's philosophy? They were like – wow! I finally found one that I agreed with and they had had two trained teachers which seems about par for the course nowadays but I was pretty hard to please I think (B. interview 1 p. 9).

Betsy was able to make a decision based on her knowledge of quality early childhood experiences. This parental decision based on a professional understanding, provides yet another example of the intertwining self.

Katrina provides another insight.

I had such a lot of fun with my boys when they were little, and living on the island, it was such an interesting environment for young children to grow up in and it was oh so much fun, I just wanted it to keep going. They are 20, 18 and 15 now and I really like the people they have become. I've really enjoyed seeing their progress and development and I like being around them. They're really neat people, although sometimes frustrating. I can't take off that parent hat, it stays with me and influences my practice I know (K. p.15 interview 1).

Teacher knowledge is narratively composed, embodied in a person and expressed in practice (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p.124). Concepts of knowledge such as those that have just been expressed are not usual in other forms of investigation. There will be those who will argue that such expressions of knowledge do not contribute useful information to inform the academic discourse on teacher development. Nevertheless the teachers' stories

in this study certainly contribute a great deal to our understandings of the professional development of these teachers and clearly show the wide spectrum of influences surrounding each teacher, affecting the person who has become a teacher.

This position has implications which need to be considered when we think about the composition of the teaching population. Stipek and Byler (1997) raise an important issue when they say that those involved in the training and on-going professional development of early childhood educators are typically middle class and fairly well educated. They are not proposing that personal beliefs about appropriate practices are ignored, but they predict that such beliefs may differ from the realities of others with whom they engage. Stipek and Byler suggest that personal values of both teachers and 'trainers' be made explicit, and that local cultural and contextual values are well thought-out in practices and recommendations for practice.

◆ Memorable Events

It may appear that many memorable events in the lives of these six teachers have already been heard, however there are further experiences that have left deep impressions and are worth discussing in the search for links.

Emily's experience:

Years ago, probably in my first year of teaching I got to know a family, a single parent mother with her child came to the kindergarten. Her child was a loner with some behaviour problems that we worked together on. I got to know the mother as a friend, crossovers like that happen in a small town, personal and professional lives can run together. We had a comfortable friendship and I got to know her son really well. When he started school he had terrible difficulty learning to read. I knew that he really enjoyed stories, because he had been with me at kindergarten so I knew he was interested in cowboy stories. I spent lots of time with him writing stories about cowboys and guess what? He could read those stories no trouble. That's what drove home to me that children can

achieve all sorts of things if you tap into their interests and find out what they want to know. I have never forgotten that, it motivates all my interactions with children(E. p.17 interview 2).

Betsy talks about the wonder of being an early childhood teacher

I get little bubbles from all sorts of things just about every day really. Like children who can't do things one day but then the next day will give it a go. They may get it wrong, but whoa! they try again tomorrow and the next day and then one day they'll get it right. Things like that really give me a buzz, and this project work that we've been doing. We have a science, nature project that we've been involved in all term. We're building bird houses and bird feeders and we've got a worm garden and a compost pile going. I like the wonder of the children and the curiosity when they talk about things and the looks on their faces when they hold worms in their hands and the total interest they have when they look at things. It reminds me that I can look at things the same way too. I can go back to wondering about things too, having wonder thoughts (B. p.15 interview 2).

Taryn recalls an event that had a major impact on the value she places on each child:

It doesn't really relate to professional development but it does relate to my professional approach. At the early childhood centre we had a child with a heart condition, a terminal heart condition and he died. I suppose it really changed my view about what's important, and that sort of – the way we regard children. That every one is precious really. That would be the one big moment of recognition you know.(T. p.8)

There are still other memorable events that appear in the data transcripts, experiences and events that have left lasting impressions and continue to imprint on beliefs and practices. They include stories of perceived failure, moments of affirmation when a child has shown that they have acquired a new skill or come to a new understanding, organisational frustrations, and lack of resources to achieve a desired goal. Katrina expresses the links her way;

“I believe that we have one life within which we do everything we want to do. I believe you've got to make the most of what comes along, you've got to make the most of your opportunities and you've got to be the best kind of person you can be and that includes your relationships, your career options, your family, everything basically (K.p.7 interview 2).

◆ Wider Influences

By taking an ecological perspective it is possible to see a large number of contextual issues both narrow and wide that impinge on the professional development of early childhood educators. Those that will be discussed in this section are only those that have emerged in the narratives of these six early childhood teachers. They are pedagogical influences, political and social influences and changes to the historical nature of early childhood education. Each will be discussed from the perspectives of the participants in this study, however there are umbrella issues to be mindful of when considering the data.

A critical look at narrative research in teacher education prompted Goodson (1995) to comment on some of the wider influences of the life story itself. His comments are grounded in a belief that “economic re-structuring is being closely allied to cultural redefinition”. He questions whether the life story itself represents a form of “cultural apparatus that accompanies an aggrandising state and market system”(p. 90). Others such as Denzin (1992) also identify wider issues and suggest that the emergence of the social sciences throughout the 20th century paralleled the development of what can be viewed historically as the watch dog state which required information about its citizens. Researchers gathered both quantitative and qualitative information to inform policies and practices of the state. Denzin regards the return of the life story as a celebration of the worth of the individual under the conservative politics of late postmodernism (Denzin, 1992, pp. 8–9). Such celebration does not however allay the fears of Goodson who worries that the life story may contribute to the loss of theoretical and critical discourse in favour of a learned discourse consisting of stories and practice, specific to local situations but removed from social contexts and processes.

Taryn's comments may serve to alleviate such concerns. She identifies issues of quality in early childhood and is sceptical about the role of the state in making decisions about what constitutes quality. As has already been discussed Taryn has concerns about the non-critical way those in early childhood accept 'packages' that they are presented with. She is ambivalent about The Quality Journey material that has been developed for the Ministry of Education (1999) and believes the prescriptive nature of the material, which is also time consuming might not be a very useful format for centres. Taryn's personal study has contributed significantly to her professional development and provided her with the tools to use the narrative she engaged in as an opportunity for critical discourse, the loss of which Goodson (1995) fears. A model of teacher professional development that encourages critical discourse, and embraces stories of action within theories of context, can bring about teacher change that is grounded within a variety of belief systems, and enmeshed in a culture of worldwide change.

Pedagogical influences

There are also wider pedagogical influences emerging from the transcripts that are significant. Both Taryn and Katrina refer to Maria Montessori in their stories. Her belief that world peace would be achieved through children, has influenced not only Katrina's beliefs but also her practice, and Taryn believes Montessori's skills for living are as applicable today as they were historically. She encourages children to practice these skills in her centre.

The Rudolf Steiner philosophy has been a powerful influence for Betsy.

I believe the state system of education isn't in place for the children, it's there for the government. I don't think the programmes and courses that are provided in state schools are designed for children to gain knowledge and experience. It has more to do with qualifications, so people can get jobs and become economic units that the government can collect tax from. The Rudolf Steiner philosophy is to build on what the children already

know, build on the children's interests ... give them experiences and a wide range of subjects like music, dance, rhythm and gymnastics to build strength of mind and body. I try to provide experiences like that for children (B. p.4 interview 1).

Similarly the Reggio Emilia pedagogy has excited and inspired Emily. When she first became aware of what was happening in Italy in the Reggio Emilia region, Emily gathered every piece of information available, including books and videos to inform the ideas and ideals that were compelling for her. She talked with colleagues and sought out those who shared her interest. The influence was so strong it took her to the other side of the world to see what was possible for New Zealand children within such a pedagogical framework.

Political and social influences

The wider influences which have impinged on early childhood teachers' professional development in New Zealand in the last decade of the 20th century have been concerned with implementing the early childhood curriculum Te Whaariki, and the development of management systems and accountability procedures for every early childhood centre or service in the country as required in DOPS (Ministry of Education, Desirable Objectives and Practices, 1996). The models of professional development encouraged and funded by the Ministry of Education have been: programmes in individual centres or services, that have included management and educators; seminars and courses; and advisory support and information; have supported the introduction of curriculum and been beneficial in the achievement of statutory requirements to improve quality. They have not specifically focused on the pedagogical issues in early childhood education and care, or addressed the professional growth and development of teachers in a holistic, ecological way.

The focus group identified that the requirement to attend professional development programmes in order to meet statutory obligations, which state that all early childhood

teachers should be involved in some form of ‘professional development’, regarded as “external Government directives” may add to the stresses that teachers experience.

The focus group also identified issues, which are barriers to professional development, and among these are the needs to interpret new curriculum requirements, meet external directives such as those imposed by management and government, manage the pressures to up-skill and re-train, and deal with major re-structuring within many early childhood organisations. Encouraging the development of skills and techniques to achieve imposed requirements can be regarded as a professional demand, but may not necessarily result in teacher professional development in the wider ecological sense that has been uncovered in the narratives of the participants in this study. Ashleigh has said that as his knowledge and skills have increased in curriculum and management, his disposition to teach has gone. Hoban’s (1997) theoretical models previously discussed, identified the Outside-in model of professional development as a means of disseminating new knowledge in a convenient way. As such it is a legitimate manner in which to introduce new material. However the six early childhood teachers in this study have revealed in their biographical accounts that they are all at different places in their personal and professional journeys. The fingertip effect, (which Carr which suggests is not supported by research) believes in essence that “when we put opportunities at learners’ fingertips they take the opportunities” (Carr, 1998, p. 14) does not guarantee that new knowledge and learning will be accessed and assimilated. The data in this study clearly shows that other factors such as stages of teacher development are critical and need to be taken into account.

There are many contemporary developments both political and social that are affecting the organisation and the content of early childhood education. Such changes include the growth of full daycare, the privatisation of early childhood provision, changes in family structures and parenting styles, and differing expectations of early childhood education. The political ‘market-driven’ approach to education generally, has been especially significant for early childhood where early childhood centres and services have developed as profit-driven private businesses, in some cases managed by people with no

previous experience or understanding of the philosophies that underpin early childhood education.

Historical structures and beliefs previously referred to in Chapter Two, such as the influential theories of Froebel, Montessori, and Isaacs, the charity approach which has underpinned the kindergarten movement in New Zealand, and the rural, parent-centered approach of the playcentre movement, often mentioned by the participants in this study as being significant influences in their professional development, are not immune from wider social and political changes. More recent influences such as the emphasis on literacy and numeracy and the affects of early assessment of learning were not obvious in the transcripts of these six teachers. In the current climate of change, professional development in early childhood must challenge teachers into new ways of thinking. Both Taryn and Katrina recognise this and say that they are ready to embrace change. In fact they already have, Taryn has purchased her own early childhood centre and Katrina has moved from an isolated island life where she was totally involved in the local playcentre to life in a big city and a management position in a private kindergarten. Emily also has made significant changes and has moved from sessional kindergarten programmes to full day care that includes under two year olds.

A challenge that emerges from this study is to construct professional development opportunities that will stimulate educators to contextualise their present situations in past experiences, and knowingly move forward on their personal and professional journeys into different future experiences.

Listening to them talk about why they teach as they do and how they came to be the teachers they are, and creating a life-narrative with each – are intended as a contribution to the available natural history of teaching. The purpose here is to discover how these teachers understand themselves and how they locate themselves on their own particular pedagogical journeys (Ayers 1989, p.6).

This is also a challenge for those who develop and provide professional development programmes.

◆ People and places

The analysis of experiences in this chapter reveals that events have been paramount influences in the professional development of these six early childhood teachers, more so than either people or places. Nevertheless the influence of people has been considerable and the stories of memorable events and experiences have often included people. It can be clearly heard in the stories that have been told that both people and places provide the context for stories and it is contexts that weave stories together. From this perspective people are central to many of the experiences already discussed, that form the stories of these six teachers. The best teachers are able to rise above the restrictions of time, place, and distance by looking to the past, the present and the future, and it is narrative that provides the instrument for reaching and harmonizing these perspectives. People within the stories have in some cases become the instruments.

The person we work with is incredibly supportive, brutally honest and acts in a kind of mentor role as well. She's also a person who can pull information together for me I'll ring her up and tell her that I really need to know about this or that and she'll bring me the information. Because we are a 'stand alone' community centre it's really important to have someone we can go to, someone who is up-to-date with current information, and knows where we can get the information we need, it's very, very important. She also challenges us about our practice and because we trust her we are able to consider her perspectives (K. p. 17 interview 1).

Jade said that people have been the biggest influence in her professional development. She has found that people in the College of Education professional development team have always provided her with the support and information she needs.

I'm thinking of many times, like when we had a child and there were custody battles and I've got straight on the phone and they've been there with the right up-to-date information. Another instance was when needed to call a meeting about staff appraisal, immediately we were able to get the support

and information we needed to go in to the meeting well prepared. The people are so genuine ... and the College team has always met our professional development needs. The professional network is vitally important and I know I can always obtain a professional viewpoint. It may not be one that I initially agree with but there is enormous value in considering a wider point of view as well (p. 12 interview 1).

The importance of childhood events and experiences became evident earlier in the chapter. It will be no surprise to find that people mentioned in narrative included: fathers and mothers, siblings, partners, grandparents, sons and daughters. All of these have contributed significantly in some way to the professional development of these six early childhood teachers.

Summary

The models of early childhood professional development currently funded on a contestable basis by the Ministry of Education in New Zealand provide a framework for considering the implications of this study. Early in 1992 the Curriculum and Contracts Management Division of the Ministry of Education contracted with two major providers, Colleges of Education and the Early Childhood Development Unit (ECDU), to deliver professional development and advisory support to early childhood centres and services throughout New Zealand. In the eight years that followed, other providers such as Nga Kohanga Reo, Playcentre Association, Hospital Play Specialists and other private organisations joined the pool of providers ensuring almost total coverage of the country. There was equity of access for all early childhood centres and services.

The model of professional development that materialised after negotiation with the Ministry, consisted mainly of three major strands: On-call advice and support; consulted agreed in-depth in-centre, or whole centre programmes; and seminars or in-service courses that participants left their centre to attend. These are the models that all the teachers in the current study are familiar with and provide examples of Hoban's (1997) Outside-in and

Outside-Inside model. It is through this model of teacher professional development that new curriculum has been introduced, new regulations have been implemented, new Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPS) have been launched, curriculum materials to support Inclusive Practice have been unpacked, and a formula for the Quality Journey has been delivered. Within these models there have been some regional and provider differences but the outcomes have all been identified and agreed to by the Ministry.

The Gaffney and Smith (1997) study provided evidence that the professional development programmes funded by the Ministry met a major need within the early childhood sector.

There is every indication that these programmes made a difference and that many changes resulted from their introduction. ...Contextual features need to be considered when delivering programmes to centres and groups of individuals as it is wasteful of time and resources to provide programmes when a supportive context does not exist (Gaffney & Smith, 1997).

There was a perception that issues of accountability arose for the funder of the programmes (The Ministry of Education), when time had to be spent sorting out and nurturing contextual problems such as collegiality, partnership and collaboration before the “real” professional development could begin. (Gaffney & Smith, 1997, p.86), but in matters of intersubjectivity in particular, real professional development identified by the six teachers in this study, occurs in all aspects of their lives. A wide range of significant influences discussed in these narratives fall way outside the parameters of the models of professional development that currently exist in early childhood.

As one of the objectives of the study was to consider the relevance of data in the scripted conversations of the participants, alongside professional development programmes currently being provided by the Ministry of Education, it is now possible to say that the summarised data from these six early childhood educators identify that their most significant experiences have come from; professional experiences of training and teaching, personal experiences including personal study and personal interests, family experiences,

memorable events, and wider influences including pedagogical, social and political influences, people and places.

Experiences such as those analysed in this chapter are the essential things that occur in lives. They have to do with the people, places and events that form our history. What has emerged from the data in this study is evidence of an “inseparable web of relationships”(Capra, 1996). Listening to the stories of the six people who are central to the research confirms Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon’s assertions that challenging the myths underpinning teacher development (the experts hold the knowledge) is the first step towards the development of a new theory. They believe -

That progress in research that will support improved practice will come about only when a more ecological approach to the learning-to-teach process is taken.... Such an ecological approach would see researchers attempting to link their research to, and ferret out, its meaning as it relates to the social, and cultural conditions where ... teachers will teach, the needs of ... teachers, and the values of teacher educators (1998. p 168).

The focus group has provided a different perspective from the narratives and written accounts of individuals. As has been already referred to “a well run focus group provides a window on a community in interaction” (Bouma,1997, p.179). The focus group combined the perspectives of individuals within the group, and presented written accounts of their discussions (a summary is included as appendix five) which did provide a window on a community in interaction. In general the group identified experiences that were relevant for their profession and not for themselves personally. Nevertheless, identifying significant triggers for change professionally indicated personal triggers, that were acknowledged by group members, as being significant for the profession as a whole. Included among these were the importance of self-reflection and self-evaluation that enabled both individuals and groups to set goals. Personal goals identified were enmeshed in professional expectations.

The theoretical model of the three overlapping ways that people learn, previously discussed, that includes formal, informal and professional learning (Collis 1996, p.8) is

reflected in the data collected from the focus group. A focus group such as the one brought together for this study, forms part of what Collis identifies as professional learning; making explicit use of professional contacts, contact with peers and others in the field, for the purpose of extending and improving professional practice. The data collected from the focus group tends to confirm that for this group, what they were engaged in was professional discussion and learning. Individual narratives contained stories of personal experiences and events. The focus group that addressed similar questions, identified significant events and experiences for members of the early childhood profession. In other words it provided a collective voice.

An ecological approach to professional development has been taken in this research study. What the participants in the study, have revealed, are the influences from many experiences in their lives that may not previously have been considered as professional development. Taking the next step, knowingly relating such experiences to practice, and developing professionally as a result of increased understanding of life experiences, provides an impetus for further study and points to new ways of perceiving professional development.

CHAPTER SIX

Concepts and Themes

Concepts are beliefs or ideas we have about ourselves and others that we use to screen and interpret experiences and guide our behaviour. ... Themes are general abstract principles that summarise and consolidate experiences and concepts. Themes give unity to personal stories. They are like templates that organise the concepts of a personal story into a coherent meaningful whole (Smith, 1989, pp 8-9; In Jalongo & Isenberg, p.9).

The concepts and themes that run through the narratives of the six early childhood educators in this study, thread together the many varied experiences of professional development described, and analysed in the previous chapter. The colourful tapestry that has emerged from the narratives confirms the complicated and complex nature of teacher professional development and the influences both inside a teaching context and outside in the wider milieu of teachers' lives that impinge on and influence the ways in which these early childhood teachers think and act.

The work of this chapter is to examine the scripted narratives of each participant in the study, to consider the concepts and themes which give a sense of unity to their stories and to see whether these concepts and themes guide their practice and influence their professional development journey. The significance of personal values and beliefs on stated practice and pedagogy will also be examined.

It has been suggested that teachers filter information through personal beliefs and that teachers' practices are closely associated with their attitudes and ideals (Stipek and Byler, 1997). To help us decide whether this is so in the lives of the early childhood teachers in this study, the transcripts will be examined separately in an attempt to isolate beliefs and identify underlying themes. A summary at the end of the chapter will bring together key points.

Selections from the transcripts confirm that practice is influenced by beliefs, however it must be remembered that stories told and lives lived may be different from and may even contradict each other.

A life lived is what actually happens. A life as experienced consists of the images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts and meanings known to the person whose life it is. ... A life as told, a life history, is a narrative, influenced by the cultural conventions of telling, by the audience, and by the social context (Bruner, 1984, p. 7).

It is within the context of the influences on professional development of early childhood teachers in New Zealand that the narratives in this study have developed. Jalongo and Isenberg (1995) believe that "authenticity, reflection, reinterpretation and response ... are the features that elevate a teachers story from the realm of idle talk" (p.12). As Helen May and Sue Middleton (1997) discovered, when provided with the opportunity to talk teaching, teachers talk teaching.

Taryn

I suppose I'm quite ambitious. I enjoy working with people and I've always enjoyed working with children. I particularly enjoy working with children with special needs, which is something we have done at the centre. We have a high ratio of children with special needs ... so it gives the children at the centre a really good experience I think of being inclusive and caring which is really important to me. I think they have to have that because among other

things New Zealand is going to become increasingly multi-cultural and they need those skills to take with them into their futures” (pp.21-22).

Taryn was unable to think of herself as a person without tying it closely to her early childhood centre context and her practice. She believes she is a caring person who has “*really grown over the years too in terms of valuing people more and more and looking at their needs and expectations. I suppose it is also partly because the financial stresses have gone and it becomes easier” (p.23).* This theme continued when she describes herself as a teacher.

There is always a lot left to learn I think. I suppose I'm reasonably broad minded and I've totally moved away from having unreal expectations of children or parenting and I suppose I've focused on, in a way I've stopped being judgmental of parents. I think there are thousands of different ways to parent children and they can all be equally effective. It's one of the things I work on with beginning teachers, not to be judgmental and not to think there is only one way to deal with a situation. So that is something that has changed for me, I've become a lot more accepting. ...working a lot with families who have children with special needs I think that's one way you really learn. That, and my own children.

The link is still there between personal and professional. Other people's children, her own children, have contributed to her learning and changed her attitudes.

When Taryn talked about the most significant influences in her professional development she identified quite clearly a concept about herself that guides her behaviour.

It's quite a strong personal drive in me to do well which I've always had since I was a child. I've always wanted to excel I suppose at whatever I do and it hasn't mattered whether it's quite a menial job or you know whatever, so I suppose since I've chosen early childhood I'd like to do it well. So that's one thing and then I'd like to excel in all aspects which is not just running a little centre, but also doing broader things. So there's that and then the other influences have been people I respect and people I've worked with (p.21).

There are other significant beliefs that obviously guide Taryn's practice, she refers to them as non-negotiables, "*acknowledging bi-culturalism. That all children and their families and all staff members have a right to participate as members of the central community and Inclusion is a very strong one*" (p.30). She also believes that the safety and wellbeing of everybody who enters an early childhood centre is a basic right. Children have the right to be extended in their thinking and learning and the opportunities to follow their own interests.

From Taryn's perspective, reflective practice is an important aspect of being professional

Oh definitely being able to be reflective, it's a pretty major influence for me. My own personal reflection, I mean I don't see the point of doing courses or any other professional development if you're not going to think this through and if ideas don't spark and have an impact on how you consider yourself as a teacher (p.29).

Being able to be reflective in a broad sense also includes the responsibility to reflect on pedagogical issues. Even major ones, like reflecting on the early childhood document Te Whaariki and looking in a slightly critical way to decide whether or not she personally agrees with it. Putting the theory in the document into practice in her centre should depend on deciding if the theory fits with her beliefs and ideals. Taryn believes that there is always lots left to learn for both her and others.

Early childhood is such a low status area, and I think it's important to present ourselves as professionals (p.4). I mean it's like a journey, it just keeps moving along which is what I really want. I don't want to stay still (p.9).

Taryn has reached a stage in her professional development where she is able to conceptualise her professional life as a journey. Such a concept is widely held by others (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Katz, 1995; Carr, 1998) who refer in differing terms, to the career themes in a teacher's life. As has been previously discussed, Carr (1998, p.15) refers

to these as procedural (techniques and materials), interpersonal (classroom atmosphere), and conceptual (integration of theory and practice). Throughout her narrative of experiences and events that have influenced her professional development Taryn refers to all three, indicating that her professional development is not an orderly journey, she goes backwards and forwards. However her comment about the importance of being reflective suggests that she has reached what Carr calls the conceptual point in her professional life. Taryn believes that professional development is of no value if it cannot be considered alongside what it means in her life as a teacher.

There is a strong pattern of care, social justice and respect running through Taryn's story. This theme is clearly reflected in her emphasis on inclusive practice and the stress she places on the rights of everybody to walk through the door and be accepted and valued for who they are. She has similar beliefs for herself. Her desire to raise the status of the early childhood profession has influenced her decision to engage in postgraduate study. It is clear in Taryn's narrative that her personal and professional values and beliefs are closely related to her stated pedagogical practices and to the type of professional development she seeks..

Betsy

At this stage in her teaching career Betsy has a clear idea of who she is as a person and who she is as a teacher. Her beliefs about herself and others appear to significantly influence both her personal and professional self.

I'm a very confident person, self-confident and I like to be positive all the time. ... I'm very close to my family and family is very important to me. I'm loyal and protective of them. I'm also very honest, probably too honest at times. ...It's important to have positive, warm, caring staff that consider children's physical needs as well as their required learning outcomes, in an environment that is sort of inviting and inspiring for them, as well as providing challenges (pp. 2-4 interview 2).

Betsy and Taryn both indicate that they “*like doing things the proper way*” (B, interview 2 p.3). Betsy sets goals for herself personally and also believes that individual children in the centre where she teaches need to have goals set for them too. She did not say if children had a voice in setting their own goals, however we could expect that if her personal beliefs underpin her practice, children would have a voice. It depends whether her beliefs guide her “*skilled, competent*” practice with children.

I think I'm quite skilled as a teacher and I think I'm a competent teacher as well. You can be skilled but that doesn't necessarily make you competent, I think I am a competent teacher (p.3 interview 2).

In the description of herself earlier, Betsy emphasises her self-confidence. When discussing children, the links are very clear.

Children should be prepared to be good thinkers and learners because if you're not a good thinker and if you don't have the capacity to be a good learner then you're not going to learn when you get to school. Children need to believe in themselves as well. If they believe they can meet challenges then they will ... it might take a while but they get there and then they know they've done it and they can move on to the next challenge. It's teaching them self-confidence ... and good self-esteem that helps their good learning (p.5 interview 2).

In the second interview Betsy talked at length about children and her beliefs in their abilities and interests. She believes their early childhood experiences should allow them to be “*children first, and they should learn skills like self-confidence and self-esteem, and how to make a friend and how to hold a friendship*”(p.10). The important significant things for Betsy become the important significant things she believes in for children. Her experiences with her own son are also relevant in this context.

My son has trouble with reading at school. He's been in reading recovery three or four times now. He's reading fine at home but when I hear him reading at school it's like another child. I think that's not my child reading he doesn't read like that at home. I've come to the conclusion that it's just because he's pressured at school to read at a certain level and he's scared of

his teacher. Like you can see him just physically deflate when they say it's reading time and then he gets upset about it at home too sometimes. And I think the school system lets children like him slip through because they're focusing just on his reading and not on himself. If they focused on confidence activities, building on his confidence then his reading level would come up at school. He's so scared of reading that he doesn't want to do it at school because he's scared he will fail. That's the message he gets from school because I never talk of failing at home. I don't care if he makes a mistake that's another part of learning. If you make a mistake, have a break and then have another go, that's the way it is and that's the way I think learning should be ... The way that we teach children should be the way that children want to learn (pp.12and 31 interview 2).

Betsy went on to talk about her own school experiences, some of which had been fearful for her too. She believes that in some cases it is not the child that needs to change but the learning environment. She also has this belief for early childhood education. Betsy believes that both children in the centre and students who come to her for training need a good positive role model and she considers herself able to provide this. The word “positive” appeared frequently in the transcript.

A teacher competency matrix provides staff in her centre with information to help them decide what professional development they need. Betsy believes she is quite capable of “*doing self reviews that are honest and reflective. I don't beat around the bush and say I'm wonderful when I'm not. I am who I am, and I know who I am, and I know what I need*”(p.21 interview 2). This comment of Betsy's seems to be in direct conflict with an observation in the vignette suggesting that she finds reflection on her teaching performance difficult at this time in her teaching career. However it is a firm statement suggesting no leeway, pointing out that significant professional development for Betsy could lead her to examine her certainties and consider other options. It is very likely that Betsy is at a point in her teaching career where she is ready to move into consolidating and refining who she is as

a teacher, characterised by experimentation and expansion of the teaching role (Jalongo and Isenberg 1995, p.132).

Betsy makes strong links between the personal and the professional, confirming again the centrality of the person, the teacher in the education process.

What I am as a person and who I am as a teacher is the same as saying what kind of person I am. Because what kind of person you are is how you are going to teach, that's what it comes down to. ... You can't separate the teacher from the person. ... What you are at home is what you are going to be in the centre basically. With teaching you can't cut yourself off, you can't be a different person once you walk in the gate. The kind of person you are, you can't separate that. ... If you want to go further as a teacher or become a more competent teacher you have to know what sort of person you are first (pp. 24-25 interview 2).

The visible themes in Betsy's story are self-confidence, a positive outlook and seeking to promote these attributes in the children she teaches. Her stated pedagogical approach is to build on children's existing knowledge and interests to stimulate their learning. One has the sense that Betsy is satisfied with who she is as a person and a teacher. Translating her pedagogical approach to children's learning, into a pedagogical approach to teacher learning, can provide her with a signal for her own ongoing professional development.

Ashleigh

Ashleigh contributes the only male voice to the study. As I have said previously, this is not a comparative study, I have made no attempt to draw comparisons between Ashleigh's narrative and those of the five women in the study. His is simply another unique voice speaking from within a unique context.

Near the beginning of the first interview Ashleigh identified his belief about the critical factors in early childhood education. *“There are three important factors in early childhood, staff communications, environments for children to work in and observations and assessment of children”* (p.11 interview 1). Ashleigh has these beliefs in common with the person who shares the Supervisor’s role with him and that is important for him, because as he continued talking it became clear that he needed people around him who thought as he did, to confirm his ideas and beliefs. Until he began his early childhood training Ashleigh had never considered who he was as a person. Now he reflects, *“I find learning about myself is one of my major goals in life. Learning who I am and what I am”* (p.17 interview 1). From his conversation it appears that he does a lot of reflection about who he is, when he is with other people.

When I went to ... a course ... I found two or three people who I had a really close bond with and it was neat. Here were people who had the same ideas, we shared things, we became friends, we studied together, we learnt about what they were trying to teach us together and we were able to draw on each other as resources. ... Having peers who are learning with me ... the opportunity to interact socially, it was a time of growth personally and professionally. That was where you could discuss ideas, it didn’t matter what they were, as it was non-threatening and everyone benefited from it. We all found it a time of growth where we broadened our perspective of the things that were important (pp.22-23 interview 1).

At the time Ashleigh participated in the study he was teaching in a fairly small town without much opportunity for the collegial discussions that he thrived on. In his professional capacity he believes that,

The best way to learn about a child is to begin talking to another teacher. I could do running records for hours on end but if I actually sit down with another teacher and say I’ve noticed this about this child, and then they’ll contribute something and we share our knowledge. ... I was talking to a child’s mother the other day. We have some concerns about her son, he appears to be very gifted but he does have some behaviour difficulties. In the

short time I was talking to her I had gained a better understanding about what I knew of the child ... and it helped me decide where to go from here (p.27 interview 1).

There is a very clear theme running through Ashleigh's narrative that indicates intersubjectivity, the importance of shared understandings, and opportunities to engage in the sharing of teacher stories with others who he respects and is comfortable with. For Ashleigh, as well as for Emily and Betsy, it is highly likely that too many responsibilities too early in a career, without relevant professional development, and advisory support, and the lack of what Day (1999, p. 44) refers to in a professional development context as "critical friendships", have significantly influenced his professional development journey.

It was during the second interview that Ashleigh revealed that he was considering giving up teaching for a while.

I don't think I'm as good a teacher as I used to be because I'm too stressed out at the moment. ... I feel a lack of success, burdened, pressured, and just a general lack of enjoyment in my work. ... if there was no pressure on me to succeed or to always do everything right I could just relax and be a teacher again but I think that's showed me that I need a break, so I'm taking a year off (p.4 interview 2).

Ashleigh has an underlying belief that he is not a good teacher any more. He feels that he must do things right (as do Taryn and Betsy) and that in attempting to do this he does not have the time to just be a teacher. His career story has been interrupted. The opportunity to talk about his perceived lack of success and the feeling that he was "battling away" served to highlight for him the things he was not achieving that he considered to be really important. A critical professional development experience for Ashleigh has been missed. Having someone with whom he could articulate his misgivings, re-set goals and re-consider professional directions may have provided a professional lifeline that could have kept him in the early childhood service. There is a direction here for professional development experiences of shared discourse, for those like Ashleigh who value being

involved with others in professional discussions. Continuing professional development experiences such as Cochrane-Smith and Lytle's (1990) 'community of discourse', referred to in chapter two, would have provided Ashleigh with the opportunity to engage in an activity that his story shows is of immense value to him

Ashleigh wants to enjoy teaching, he respects children, what they can do and he wants to stand alongside them in their learning. At the moment he feels that there are real pressures prohibiting him from doing this. He refers to management systems, government requirements and lack of funding. Ashleigh believes such influences are prohibiting him from being the teacher he wants to be. He also feels it is time for a change. He feels that he has met society's obligations by having a degree, a marriage, his own home, and has had a successful job with a leadership role. He is now asking, "what do I want for myself"? At the time of the interview he had not found the answers (pp. 7-13 interview 2). Despite the fact that Ashleigh has been teaching in early childhood for six years, at the time of the interviews, there is a strong self/survival theme (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995, p.130) running through his narrative. Katz (1995) argues that the earliest stage in a teaching career is one of survival. It is clear that Ashleigh's professional development experiences have not empowered him to move along on his professional journey.

Connelly and Clandinin (1995) identify three desires of teachers, relating to their professional development that resonate with Ashleigh's story. The desire to tell stories of practice, the desire for relationships in the telling of the stories, and the desire to think again, and reflect on practice, and its past, present and future contexts. They acknowledge however that professional development opportunities do not encourage teachers to be "knowers who can teach each other" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1995, p. 126). Hoban's (1997) Inside-in model of professional development, discussed in previous chapters is an example of how this could be achieved and Ashleigh's narrative highlights the real need for this.

Jade

I have thought quite a lot since our last interview, and I think it's people that influence what I'm doing. Like, I have a really genuine caring about the people – not just the children that I work with, but their parents as well and their grandparents and all the people that are associated from the community and the rural districts around here, with our kindergarten (p.2 interview 2).

Jade views the importance of people as a major influence in her life. This theme runs through her story even influencing the private study she has undertaken. It has motivated her to take Human Development papers to an advanced level in her degree programme. It also appears to provide her with an overarching concept, beneath which everything else rests. It could be described as the umbrella belief that helps her make meaning of what it is to be a person and a teacher, guides her professional development interests, and influences her practice.

Jade has not articulated beliefs and ideas about herself specifically, in either of the interviews or in her written accounts of recent professional development experiences. When asked to describe herself as person she floundered.

Oh I don't know, I've never thought about that. Yeah, I've never thought about that to be honest although my husband tells me I'm sometimes bossy, although I'm loveable too. I don't know what to call myself to be perfectly honest (p.4 interview 2).

It appears as if she was searching for a label for herself. Earlier in the transcript she had said:

Fussy. I'm quite fussy and I'm very motivated. Sometimes I think I'm too motivated and I sometimes wish I could leave things, not just at home but at the centre. Like – grubby things bother me. I like things to be clean and yeah I like things to be right and I think in some ways I have to be careful that I don't get myself too structured. That's not a danger at kindergarten because the children don't let you get too structured. ... but at home and with me, within myself, yes – I have even been known to dash around the house

cleaning my teeth to do something else with my other hand because I'm in such a hurry to do things and I'm always watching my clock and I think right, I've got 10 minutes to do something and I make sure that I've done it in that time and then I go on to the next thing. I don't know whether you call it fussy or whether it is just time management (p.3 interview 2).

Jade found describing herself as a professional much easier and almost in direct contrast to how she views herself personally.

Okay, that's easier because I do have a philosophy, it changes quite a bit but I do have a philosophy. As a teacher I'm quite spiritual with the children.... In my work I am quite spiritual and I'm very caring. Like - I do make sure that I get to know every child and their families and yes, my philosophy comes into it quite a lot. I think that today's children get hurried and bustled and pushed along at such speeds, even in this centre, and we attract good families, but I still feel that children work around parents these days. There are very few parents who actually have the time to stop and just quietly take their children anywhere or quietly do anything. So I'm constantly seeing children pushed and hurried and expected to be 15 when they are only four, that sort of thing ... and that really concerns me. So I try and make kindergarten a really peaceful and happy environment always for the children. And so as a professional and as a teacher it is really important for me that the staff always put the children first because this is their place. But we do have expectations of our children. For example the Christian truths like respect for adults, respect for the environment, respect for everybody else (pp. 4-5 interview 2).

It is not possible to know if respect for themselves is also an important expectation, but because of Jade's beliefs that "this is their place" it follows that children's self-respect will be important.

Systems and processes are important for Jade. She is very well organised and runs a well-managed centre. She regards herself as a professional doing a professional job and

believes she leaves her private personal self at home when she goes to her centre each day. There is evidence in this comment that for Jade professional development is the acquisition of more skills. She has not yet reached a point where her personal and professional lives are synonymous. This is borne out by evidence in the transcript of Jade's memories of an unhurried childhood, however she does not yet recognise how this influence links to the peaceful, relaxing atmosphere she tries to create for children in her early childhood centre.

Jade's narratives contain inconsistencies and incongruities that have not emerged in other transcripts. Barone (1995) suggests that narrative accounts may not be phenomenologically truthful, and may even be described as masks through which we can be seen. He further suggests that every telling is a potential prevarication, depending on the 'self' one is trying to project. In Jade's case it may also be that she is at a stage of developing awareness both personally and professionally, where her 'self' is in transition, and this could account for some of the apparent incongruities in her story.

It is possible to recognise in Jade's whole story, all the teacher change processes that Carr (1998) identifies, procedural involving techniques and materials, definitely interpersonal - classroom atmosphere, and also conceptual, integrating theory and practice. Her written account provides further evidence of these processes.

I find the C.E.C.E.A.A. conference (Christian Early Childhood Education Association of Aotearoa Inc) refreshing in that I have time to reflect on many things both personally and professionally. There are many benefits for the children, the centre and me! ... All professional development is valuable to me in some ways as I take what I need from it. It stimulates new ideas, and challenges me both in the workplace and personally.

It appears that Jade is unaware of the connections between her personal beliefs her practice and her professional development. McLean (1991) whose research argument has been discussed earlier in chapter two believes that, the "often-tacit knowledge"(p.6) of early childhood educators should be brought to the surface, making it explicit. Creating meanings about what it means to be a teacher, is based on an understanding of the broader personal,

social and cultural context in which they are embedded as persons. Professional development, when narrative is used as a means of developing an integrated awareness of 'self' provides a different emancipatory model of professional development than Jade has so far experienced. An increased awareness of herself as a person and the links to herself as a teacher may take Jade more fully into Carr's (1998) conceptual stage of teaching, integrating theory and practice.

Katrina

The vignette that introduces Katrina (Chapter Three) indicates a variety of ways that she translates her beliefs and ideals into practice. It also suggests that she is able to make the links between the concepts she has of herself and others.

I have a belief that has influenced me to do the best for my own children. I believe that I am responsible for structuring children's learning environment. It's important for me to be the best teacher I can be to meet the needs of children and their families. ... I believe it's important to look at theories (of learning and development) but also to look at our own beliefs and philosophies and try and work out where they come from, how they influence our practice. ... Pulling different theories together and matching them with your own values and beliefs, I find that so interesting, so fascinating (p. 3 interview 1).

Maria Montessori's beliefs have influenced those of Katrina.

I like the compassion she had for the child, and I like the peaceful approach she recommended for children. In the kindergarten I spend a lot of time trying to make sure that children feel they belong here, that they have a place here, but also that they have a responsibility for other children in the kindergarten. ... Montessori believed in world peace and she believed it would occur through children. If children this young learn it, then they will always have it. So we teach the children when they are young and therefore they've always got that with them. ... I guess it's a belief in a philosophy that you take with

you no matter where you go. I don't think you can take one hat off at the door and put another hat on (pp.6-7 interview1).

Katrina is not afraid to examine imposed requirements in the light of her own beliefs. *"I think Te Whaariki is a really important baseline for early childhood but I think it is only a baseline"*(p10 interview 1). She believes it is the interpretations people have of Te Whaariki, that will in turn be influenced by their own beliefs and values, that will add to the document and ensure its usefulness. She believes that imposed material such as Te Whaariki, Quality in Action: Te Mahi Whai Hua, and The Quality Journey (Ministry of Education material) can be counter productive to professional development. At the time of the interview, Including Everyone, Te Reo Taataki, the most recently released curriculum materials package had not been published.

I guess there's a balance in this, so that everybody can have a positive experience. There needs to be time set aside and enough professional support to assist centres to implement new material ... sometimes we're expected to do things without important information and I find that can be very frustrating, especially when I'm the one involved and I'm not sure what is expected of me. I believe professional development programmes should provide what teachers need, not what others think we need (pp. 15-16 interview 2).

The theme to emerge from these excerpts of Katrina's story is one of self-directed learning. In her professional journey Katrina has reached a point of renewal and review (Katz, 1995).

Katrina made a very significant observation about Ministry funded professional development programmes she had been involved in recently

I don't believe that we are affirmed enough as teachers. I have been involved in other professional development, nothing to do with early childhood and I have had specific affirming feedback. ... I don't see that happening in early childhood. ... We often have professional development because of a perceived

lack. You know the biggest professional development changes I've ever made in my life have been as a result of intense discussions with colleagues. ... It's really glib and rather patronising to be told in a big group, that you are doing a good job. That's too broad to be helpful (pp. 20-21 interview 2).

She envisages professional development to be where her practice is specifically observed and constructive affirming feedback is given on the spot.

In both interviews, Katrina talked with clarity about her experiences, and the beliefs she has about herself and others that guide her practice. She has also identified with clarity and a degree of precision her perceived needs of professional development at this particular point in her teaching career. She has moved a long way from needing professional development to add to her tool kit, or to validate her practice by the approval of others.

Emily

Emily's recent experiences in the preschool centres in the Reggio Emilia district in Italy have greatly influenced her beliefs and practices, or rather they have reinforced her beliefs about how children learn. She refers to the beliefs practiced in the centres in Reggio Emilia about valuing children and valuing their work and working closely with the community, as the key that pulled all her beliefs together. Concepts about the need to be working with children's interests, alongside children and giving them the opportunity to practice a skill until they acquire it. She believes, as did the founders of the Italian pre-schools, that,

It's terribly important in the low socio-economic areas for young children to see that the work they produce is valued and for the parents to see that it is valued, because for many of these people they are unemployed and they don't place any value in themselves (p.11 interview 1).

Emily believes that she now has a vision of quality early childhood centres after having seen the pre-schools in Reggio Emilia. It is ideals that have been the impetus in Emily's professional development.

I think it has always been ideals that have prompted my professional growth. I mean I personally believe strongly in social justice and I think as a country we've strayed off the path of social justice and I think we need to do a bit of a turn-around to be a more caring society. That's my strong feeling. ... perhaps we don't need to have such lean government departments or lean, hungry businesses, employ more people and have a more caring society where people feel useful (p.20 interview 1).

Emily agrees that there is a link between the historical beginnings in Reggio Emilia, an early childhood education movement that emerged in a country that was completely dysfunctional after the Second World War because parents, teachers and the community held hands to make it happen, and her beliefs in social justice. She believes it can happen in her centre too.

Emily's teaching focus is to build on children's interests to help them learn new skills and develop new understandings. She believes there is a need to have a strong core curriculum and she is currently attempting to increase centre resources. She has not worked with under two-year-olds before and future professional development experiences need to be related to improving her skills and techniques in this area, but it must also allow time for reflection.

Looking at things, how could I have done that differently and being open to a range of different ways of approaching the same situation. ... Are we being fair to teachers in New Zealand? We are not giving them time to look at their own practices. We are sometimes taking time to look at management structures and meeting the requirements of the DOPS and things like that, but they are structural things and teachers need time to reflect on themselves as teachers and their own practices (p.19-20 interview 2).

Ideals are themes that run through Emily's narrative. They have significantly contributed to her professional development. They have also contributed to personal and professional conflict and disappointment when the ideals cannot be translated into practice.

I think my personal philosophy is very strongly about being a socially caring person with a sense of social responsibility for those less fortunate than ourselves, and we happen in our society at the moment to be a society where there are a lot of people with an awful lot, and a huge number of people that don't have much. I think that's possibly driven me into this job. (a community daycare centre in a neighborhood with a lot of unemployment and issues of poverty) One that I possibly didn't recognise before this, until now.

The value of time for reflection is obvious in Emily's last comment.

Almost all of her second interview was taken up with her ideals for the early childhood centre she is in. She referred to it as a personal project and projects have also been a major theme running through Emily's adult life.

I feel that in a position like this you can do an awful lot to help. You not only teach children, but hopefully it instills some good values. You can help families, directing them in the right directions when they really don't know where to go for help. By providing a centre that is warm, open, friendly, accepting, and I'm trying really hard to turn it around into being that, you can't do it overnight and it takes a lot of time for people to develop a sense of trust (pp. 1-2, interview 2). Often I go home after a particularly bad day and I think, I review my interactions with the children and I say to myself, Emily you could have been much more – you could have approached that in a different way, now don't lose the plot, just remember next time to try it a different way (P.15, interview 2). The reputation this place had -- so I find myself here with a great sense of commitment to picking it up and taking it and turning it into a centre that has very good practices and promotes quality education for young children (p. 4).

Emily is currently facing issues of lack of funding, the need to develop management skills different from those that were needed in her previous position, and building a sense of coherency with the staff, many who were there before her. They have been working on developing a philosophy for the centre that can be shared and accepted by all the staff, but it has been difficult and there have been times of trauma. Although Emily has not articulated

that her professional development needs are not being met in her present teaching context, there is a clear impression that she is at a critical point in her teaching career, facing big challenges. As has been said in previous discussions, Emily seems to be a creative strategist with lots of energy. Katrina's comments about professional development programmes arising from a perceived lack, are valid in Emily's situation. A focus on her ideals, what she is struggling to achieve rather than on those things that are not being achieved is a direction for her professional development journey. She is already a reflective teacher. Skillful professional development can steer her into professional directions and actions that utilise her energy to make her ideals achievable

Developing a comprehensive theory of professional development such as that described by Hoban as the Inside–Outside theory that draws upon the knowledge that teachers have generated from their own experiences and the knowledge of others to promote a community of discourse, may provide significant directions for Emily. Underpinning this model is personal reflection by the participants and the introduction of alternative views to provide a rich variety of perspectives from others outside the immediate education context (Hoban, 1997, p.12). The critical factor is that the teacher's views and knowledge are valued and affirmed.

Summary

The work of this chapter was to analyse the narratives of each of the six participants in the study to identify the templates, the themes that give unity to their personal stories and to consider how these have influenced their professional development processes. For most of the participants, identifying themes in their stories has been relatively straightforward as they have been clearly evident and able to be recognised, for others such as Jade this has not been so simple. Linking themes to professional development has also been relatively easy for the researcher, probably not so obvious in some cases for the participants, although as the excerpts indicate Katrina, Taryn and to some extent Emily are very clear about their professional development needs. There are incongruencies in Betsy's story, e.g. on one hand she says she feels unable to assess her own performance and would prefer others to

evaluate it, and at another point in her story she declares “I know who I am and I know what I need”. Jade and Ashleigh have an approach to professional development that could be regarded as a smorgasbord approach, try a bit of everything and there will be something to suit.

Emerging from this chapter is a picture of six unique individuals who are early childhood teachers. They have things in common with each other, such as a desire to provide the best learning environment for children; and the need to do things right, or get it right. They have different ideas about what is best and how it can be achieved, but their commitment to the importance of early childhood education and themselves as professionals is strongly evident in their narratives. Each of them values people, people are central to their stories although not often specifically named. The concept of early childhood education centres being caring, accepting, warm places is also common to all, as is a common belief that parents and families are central to children’s learning.

It is valuable at this point to return to McLean’s (1991) research study previously discussed in Chapter Two, to consider the extent to which the stories in this study are snapshots of the social/historical context of early childhood teachers that have influenced the teachers they are and the stories they have told. McLean identifies qualities that have in the past been deemed necessary for those who work in early childhood education. She argues that the qualities are distilled from the experiential knowledge base of several generations and identifies that early childhood educators must be warm and affectionate, patient, friendly, flexible, self-confident, compassionate and empathetic, sensitive and responsive, nurturant, optimistic about children’s potential, in good physical and mental health, and highly aware of self. She refers to other qualities as being happy, having a sense of humour, being alert, resourceful and imaginative, being dedicated, genuinely liking children, having a sense of order an appreciation of beauty, and being interested in children, families and the world at large (McLean, 1991, p.8).

The analysis of data in this chapter confirm McLean’s assertions that such perspectives are influential predictors of beliefs and attitudes in early childhood teachers.

Professional development requires that early childhood teachers develop other important attributes, e.g., a sound theoretical and knowledge base on which to build practice, wide pedagogical understandings and the equal importance of care and education. Therefore a critical understanding in the teacher change process, is an awareness of the influence of the social/historical beliefs and attitudes that have been shown in these narratives. Coombe's (1990) argument referred to in chapter two, that society's expectations for those who teach in the early childhood sector are identified by predictability which is comfortable in its conformity but stifling of relective change, cannot be ignored in the light of the findings in this study.

Stipek and Tyler (1997) suggest that teachers filter information through personal beliefs and attitudes and that practices are closely associated with their attitudes and ideals, The threads running through each story in this study reflect that these six early childhood teachers use such filters. Integrating Stipek and Tyler's beliefs into models of professional development requires a step back from the individual stories, to a broader perspective such as that outlined by Day (1999).

Being an adult learner means reflecting upon purposes and practices and the values and social contexts in which those are expressed. Disclosure and feedback, central to reflection, are processes of learning which challenge not only the emotional and cognitive competencies of teachers but also the personal and professional values, which underpin these and which lie at the heart of professional practice. If teachers are to continue to develop then they need to engage in different kinds of reflection, action research and narrative over their careers and be supported in meeting the challenges of doing so. It should always be remembered though, that reflection on teaching is not simply a cognitive process. Like teaching itself, it demands emotional commitment. It will involve the head and the heart. Perhaps the greatest challenge for individuals and organisations is to ensure that both of these are nurtured in systems designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning for teachers as well as students (Day, 1999, p. 47).

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to gain a deeper insight into the professional development experiences of early childhood educators in New Zealand, through an increased understanding of what is significant for the six early childhood teachers who participated in the study. The central research question developed to meet this purpose was: what are the influences on the professional development of early childhood educators in New Zealand? The research methodology, set within a qualitative paradigm, included adopting a narrative method to collect and analyse data. The findings confirm that the chosen methodological approach provided data that answered the research question, achieved the objectives that were developed to guide the study and accomplished the purpose of the thesis. It also achieved another purpose. By incorporating the use of narrative, listening to teachers as they told their stories, accepting their feelings and respecting their ideas, the study provided an opportunity for teachers to examine their assumptions and their practice, to experiment with and maybe eventually consolidate change (Tertell, Klein & Jewett, 1998).

Margaret Carr (1998), referring to one of the main points in Gould's (1997) position paper, which suggests that professional development may be different for early childhood, believes that the school based model of professional development from which most research emanates, may be adapted to meet the needs of early childhood teachers. Nonetheless, if as Hawthorne (1994) suggests, teachers are the key element in educational change, it is probably neither desirable nor appropriate to adapt existing models of teacher

development without paying more attention to what early childhood teachers believe are major influences in their development. The stories of the six early childhood teachers in this study identified a wide variety of experiences that have been and continue to be influential in their professional development, confirming the holistic nature of learning.

The data in this thesis clearly reveal the teacher as a whole person, operating within an ecological context that includes not only the early childhood setting where they work, but also the wider influences of family, and social and political organisational structures. The findings in this study establish that the ecological context and the holistic nature of learning contribute significantly to the professional development of teachers.

Main Findings

An analysis of the collected data revealed various experiences which influenced professional development. These have been sorted into six main categories. The six main categories broadly outlined below provided the framework to de-contextualise and re-contextualise the data (Tesch, 1990), in order to achieve the purpose of the research and answer the research question.

Training and teaching

This included experiential accounts of initial training and early teaching experiences; formal professional development events such as courses, seminars, and programmes funded by the Ministry of Education; professional learning broadly categorised as conferences and discussions of teaching with colleagues; and professional demands such as the implementation of new curriculum or the development of a strategic management plan.

Personal experiences

It is difficult to delineate purely personal experiences as each story has been personal to the storyteller and contains many facets of each participant's life. Some personal experiences have related to teaching and training, however other experiences have included

personal study at a variety of levels, personal projects and interests, (e.g. playing the guitar, joining the storytellers guild and building a house truck).

Family experiences

Family experiences were significant for all participants. Influences on professional development were as diverse as the family backgrounds of the participants. They came mainly from childhood events and experiences, e.g., sitting around grandparents' table listening to political discussions referring to social justice issues, events in the wider family such as the early death of a sister, family expectations, and the experiences of being a parent.

Memorable events

Memorable events could also be regarded as critical incidents, those experiences that have left lasting impressions and altered the way in which particular things or events in the future are regarded. Events such as these have appeared as experiences within families, and training and early teaching experiences, but those that did not fit in these categories involved child-related events such as seeing a child being unfairly treated by a teacher, failure or perceived failure where professional goals are not achieved due to outside influences, frustration, disappointment, and successful experiences, for instance when children exhibit new learning or achieve a difficult task.

Wider influences

These were harder to identify and were not included in all narratives, nevertheless as they were considered to be significant by three of the six they have been included as, pedagogical influences, political influences and historical influences, in other words the broad ecological framework within which they live and teach. References to Te Whaariki, the influence of privately owned and managed early childhood centres and services and the emergence of consultant professional development facilitators and well respected early childhood leaders, both national and international, contribute to the wealth of information that the data generated.

People and places

In the summary of the previous chapter the importance of people to all participants, was discussed. Jade identified people as the main influence in her practice and her on-going professional development and it was the importance of respected colleagues and friends that was the overriding theme in her narrative. Places were mentioned in relation to where teachers had done their training or been employed, but with the exception of the Reggio Emilia district in Italy that was vitally significant for Emily, places provided the context for significant experiences, contributing to the ecology of the narrative, rather than the place itself being of particular importance.

The six categories discussed provide evidence of the wide variety of experiences that influence the professional development of these early childhood educators and make a significant, original contribution to the existing literature on early childhood professional development in New Zealand.

Other Key Points

There are other key threads running through the narratives of the participants in the study. First, the data confirms the strong links between personal and professional development. A considerable body of research, (see Chapter Two) suggests the links between personal and professional lives. This study contributes further evidence. It becomes impossible to discuss professional development as if it exists in isolation. Hawthorne's argument that "The re-conceptualising of teacher professional development should reflect a growing commitment by providers and participants to personal development and growth" (Hawthorne, 1994 p.48) is clearly evident in the narratives of these six early childhood educators. For each their professional development has not been confined to formal learning experiences or programmes. Their lives, personal and professional, have been influenced by their experiences. As Day (1999) suggests,

professional development, like teaching itself is not simply a cognitive process, it will involve the head and the heart.

Secondly, it is clear in these narratives that there are identifiable stages in the process of teacher development. Previous research studies (Katz, 1995; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Carr, 1998) have described these stages. This thesis uses the stories of teachers to clearly illustrate, not only teacher development stages but also the needs of teachers at each stage, or at each process in their on-going development.

Thirdly, the evidence from the transcripts shows that for these teachers, the person they are is the teacher they are. Hawthorne's (1994) argument discussed earlier, that teacher professional development should reflect a growing commitment by providers and participants to personal development and growth is corroborated by the data in this study.

Finally, only by taking an ecological perspective of the professional development of teachers will it be possible to address the wider issues that have been identified by the participants in this study.

Links to Other Studies

Previous studies of early childhood professional development in New Zealand (Allan, 1993; Allan & Gibson, 1994; Gaffney & Smith, 1997; Duthie Educational Consultancy, 1997; Hampton, 2000) reviewed and discussed in Chapter Two, provide pertinent information about professional development providers and professional development opportunities for early childhood educators. They do not contain the voices of individual teachers in the way that this study does. The unique contribution made by this thesis that includes teacher narratives, adds a deeper understanding of teachers and the events and experiences that influence and impinge on their professional growth and development.

The variety of ways that individuals learn is very apparent in this study. Collis (1996) argues that in general there are three ways that a teacher learns, through formal learning events, through informal learning experiences and by explicit professional knowledge. Judging by the narratives of those in this study the three types of learning as Collis suggests, can and do overlap considerably and all are significant when an ecological approach to learning is taken.

Hoban's (1997) theory of professional development that arises from where the knowledge comes from, is also of significance. The six teachers in this study have demonstrated that at times they need to draw on the knowledge of others who have a wider knowledge base, at times they know and want their own knowledge recognised and valued, and at other times the shared knowledge of other teachers, the community of discourse that has been previously discussed, is important.

Examining professional and personal growth through narrative has been successfully implemented in other early childhood studies (Ayers, 1989; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Tertell, Klein & Jewett, 1998) that have influenced the framework for this thesis. The stories in their studies were not only teachers' stories about themselves as in this thesis, but stories about children, and classroom happenings and the teacher's role in these events. In these studies, opportunities to analyse critical incidents and re-play the events through narrative were used very effectively as professional development tools and provide examples of how similar processes could be used realistically in New Zealand early childhood development programmes.

Strengths and Limitations of the Research

The greatest strength of this research study is the methodological approach that was chosen to investigate the question. Adopting a narrative research method in this study allowed the voices of teachers to shine like beacons. Their stories are enlightening, and as they have talked of their experiences and understandings of professional development, aspects of their development have been revealed in narrative that would not have emerged in more structured interviews. As has previously been said in Chapter Five, the written

accounts of the participants contain titles of books, articles read, and the name of the degree or qualification for which they are studying, however, feelings and motivations prompting their professional development have emerged only in the narrative interviews. This is significant.

The focus group provided a window on a community in interaction. Wider issues such as funding for professional development and paid release time for all professional development activities, and acquiring extra skills and knowledge needed for promotion have been regarded by the group as significant influences on their professional development. Included within such factors could be individual preferences that have been subsumed into the voice of the group. This does not rob such factors of significance, it gives them a group voice. Nevertheless it was the individual voices in the narrative interviews that provided evidence of the intertwining self, involving the head and the heart.

Another strength was the data analysis process. Sifting through the transcripts for narrative anecdotes of experiences, concepts and themes that indicated significant influences in professional development, although time consuming, provided a wide ecological perspective of the life of each person and generated relevant, informative material to answer the research question. It also resulted in a better understanding of each participant in the study which was one of the research objectives. The analysis process provided stories confirming the view that the teacher is very much at the heart of the education process.

The limitations of the research also need to be considered. The selected sample from different areas in the country did not show any significant differences relating to geographical area, suggesting an unrecognised bias. The decision to select only those who were, or had recently been participants in Ministry of Education funded professional development programmes, probably contributed to this bias. Geographical differences that were expected, were not visible in this small sample of early childhood teachers. This suggests either that professional development models agreed to by the Ministry are similar throughout the country, or that those who volunteered to participate in this study were not

affected by rural isolation or lack of access to programmes. Such was the case in previous early childhood studies referred to earlier in the chapter that used postal surveys to collect data. In this respect the size of the sample is a weakness.

The subjective bias of the researcher also places limits on the research findings. As has previously been discussed, in a narrative study such as this, the researcher becomes part of the story and has a significant interpretive influence on the data analysis process. Restrictions of time and funding also limit the breadth of the study.

Visits to observe and work with participants in their teaching contexts would have added an immensely valuable dimension to the narratives, allowing the narrative to become more fully a learning conversation – emancipatory research, in which change and personal and professional growth may have occurred. There are implications here for a model of professional development.

Implications for Professional Development

This original research study makes a significant contribution to current knowledge and understandings of the influences on teacher professional development in early childhood in New Zealand and clearly indicates future directions for professional development. The key points to emerge from this study are: the wide variety of experiences that are influential in professional development, the different stages in a teaching career needing different professional development opportunities, the strong inter-links between personal and professional lives and the need to take an ecological view of professional development.

The diversity of training backgrounds, age, gender, culture and level of ability to reflect on practice, within any early childhood group or team, is a dilemma (Duthie Report, 1997) for those involved in early childhood professional development in New Zealand, only when one sort of professional development opportunities are provided. In the same way that knowing the child well is essential to support and encourage their learning and

development, so knowing the teacher is crucial in designing and planning on-going learning opportunities. If teachers are to continue to grow professionally, then as Day (1999, p.47) argues, “they need to engage in different kinds of reflection, action research and narrative over their careers and be supported in meeting the challenges to do so”.

Narrative studies such as this thesis show the usefulness of narrative as a learning mechanism for early childhood professionals and a further direction for professional development in early childhood education. Constructing models of professional development that provide what teachers need, not what others think they need, is a strong challenge that emerges from this thesis.

Key Elements for Future Models of Professional Development in Early Childhood

Integrating key points from the research findings with existing literature, highlights the key elements of a new approach to professional development. Many models could develop from integrating and synthesising the key elements that emerge from this study. The evidence in the thesis shows the need for a variety of different models. The main findings clearly indicate that underpinning any model of professional development are two critical factors:

- An ecological perspective that takes account of the contexts within which people function as the people they are and the teachers they are.
- The understanding that teachers move through various developmental themes and stages over time and need influences that will nurture their developmental progress.

Key Elements

<p>The teacher as a person is central to the learning process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attitudes, beliefs and ideals shape practice ➤ Experiences, knowledge and history are influential ➤ Making sense of what it means to be an early childhood educator is critical 	<p>Three overlapping ways that teachers learn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Formal learning including courses and seminars ➤ Informal learning gleaned from day-to-day experiences ➤ Professional learning explicitly related to professional activities
<p>Mechanisms for learning opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Time to think critically about influences on attitudes and practice ➤ Narratives that promote growth and change ➤ Community of discourse when teachers talk teaching 	<p>Three models of teacher development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ the Outside-in model such as employing consultants and experts ➤ the Inside-in model where teacher knowledge is the basis of learning ➤ the Inside-Outside model where teachers and others share knowledge

Implications for Future Research

Future research directions to further the argument that is developed in this study will include teachers as co-researchers in narrative and the use of a much larger sample than has been possible in this study. Jalongo and Isenberg ask,

Is the goal to discover the one best system of educational practice and thus control curriculum and teaching? Or is knowledge to be used for illuminating the complexities of human learning for the purpose of enriching teachers' own thinking about their practice and empowering them to see teaching and learning through many lenses (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995, p. 13).

The use of postal surveys and formal interviews such as the methodologies used in previous New Zealand studies provides useful information but does not increase understandings of the teacher in the way that this study does. The narratives in this study reveal the value of empowering teachers to see teaching and learning, their own and that of the children in their centres, through many different lenses.

The work that this thesis begins is the use of narrative as a way of identifying teachers' stories and using them for reflective analysis and exploration of alternative ways of being and acting. A research study that not only listens to teachers stories but observes teachers in practice as they work in their centres would provide opportunities to explore and make explicit the previously unrecognised ideals, values and beliefs from which their teaching practice stems. Taking the next step to change practice would place such a study into the field of emancipatory research. It would also place teachers as the central researchers of their own professional *development*.

Further studies could include the stories from teams and cohorts of teachers working together. The data from the focus group in this study provided different stories from those of the individual participants, nonetheless the selection of specific cohorts of teachers at similar stages of development (such as beginning teachers)

Further studies could include the stories from teams and cohorts of teachers working together. The data from the focus group in this study provided different stories from those of the individual participants, nonetheless the selection of specific cohorts of teachers at similar stages of development (such as beginning teachers) could provide a specific sample group in which to study the effectiveness of narrative as a professional development tool. Teachers would bring stories of practice to the group and in a 'community of discourse' could find a professional voice to present, analyse and weigh experiences. Such a study could be an important arena where teachers could activate their theories about teaching, and talk about their beliefs and practices in a teacher-centred discourse that could be a place for investigating critical issues in their lives as people and the teachers they are becoming (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995).

As a means of evaluating the effectiveness of professional development programmes, research studies adopting a method such as the one used in this study could provide links to specific professional development moments. A significant finding in this study was the difference between the written accounts of professional development experiences that the participants provided and their narratives. Evaluation using formal questionnaires supplies some information, talking about memorable professional development moments and events will give a clearer indication of the otherwise undisclosed perceptions and reflection of participants. Such methods illustrate the difference between evaluative research often done by the professional development providers, and emancipatory research which encourages reflection and change.

Summary

This thesis set out to discover the influences in the professional development of early childhood educators. It achieved this purpose. The main findings and key points that have been identified and discussed in the study clearly indicate the need to take a wider view of professional development than has previously been taken. A view that conceives

on-going learning and professional development of early childhood educators in an encompassing fashion that is more than simply topping up their buckets of knowledge. Organisational administrative requirements, and curriculum are not at the heart of the educational process; the findings from this study confirm the argument that the teacher is.

However, what is also clearly evident to those involved in improving the quality of early childhood education and raising the status of early childhood professionals is that it is not enough to understand and value the teacher as a person, the person who is the teacher must be knowledgeable and competent. Involving teachers in professional development experiences that are not what they need or even want does not contribute to either their knowledge or competencies. Adopting a different approach such as that suggested in this study demands change, not only from those who develop and provide professional development programmes but also from teachers themselves. An ecological, narrative approach is a new way of viewing professional development in New Zealand.

The need to introduce and develop new curriculum and develop quality programme structures has dominated early childhood professional development provisions in recent years in New Zealand. This thesis provides evidence that it is critical to rethink the centrality of the teacher in the process of early childhood education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

Letter to Contract Directors

Dear

I am currently embarking on a thesis to complete my M.Ed. The central research question guiding my investigation is What influences the professional development of early childhood educators in New Zealand? The methodology includes taking a narrative research approach in order to obtain data that will link real life experiences of educators to planned professional development programmes.

I am seeking participants from among those who have been involved in programmes currently available through Ministry of Education Contracts, as I want to consider the significance of such programmes in the scripted conversations of participants.

I would be really grateful if you could supply the names of people that you consider may be interested in participating in such a study. I only require one participant from your area, but it would be helpful to have a few names to contact. To comply with ethical and privacy considerations could you please obtain their permission before you give me their names and contact phone numbers. I will then contact them personally before formally inviting them to participate. The study will involve two semi-structured interviews of approximately one-hour duration. Participants will be asked to write in the interval between interviews, an account of professional development experiences they have had in the previous year and to comment on the influence of these on their professional growth and development.

If you would like more information, please get in touch. As you can see I am hoping to begin the data collection phase of my study very soon. I know the pressures you work under and I am reluctant to add to these, but I would appreciate a prompt reply. I feel the proposed study will contribute significantly to on-going discourse surrounding the issues of early childhood professional development and I am really looking forward to the months ahead.

Thank you for your anticipated support
Warm regards

Joy Mephram

INFORMATION SHEET

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 1999

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. Before meeting with you, in accordance with Massey University's Code of Ethical Conduct for research involving people, I would like to supply you with the following information so you can make a formal decision about further involvement.

My name is Joy Mepham and I am currently completing requirements for a Masters in Education at Massey University. I first trained as a kindergarten teacher and have since been involved in early childhood education for many years, in a variety of ways. At the moment I am the Director of an Early Childhood Professional Development Contract for the Ministry of Education, employed by Massey University College of Education. My current research project reflects an ongoing interest in professional development and seeks to identify what influences the professional development of early childhood educators in New Zealand. Judith Loveridge who is also employed at Massey's College of Education, in the Department of Learning and Teaching, is supervising the project.

The study will involve you in two informal interviews a few months apart, each approximately one hour's duration. In the interval between interviews you will be asked to write a short account of professional development experiences you have had in the last year and to comment briefly on the influence these have had on your professional and personal growth and development. I will be taking a narrative research approach, which means that I would like to hear the stories you have to tell. All you will need is the time to be involved and the willingness to talk. With your permission I will record our talk.

The information gathered in the interviews will be used as the basis for discussion in my Masters thesis. Confidentiality and anonymity will be protected, guaranteeing that you will not be able to be identified. The tapes used will be your property and will be returned to you at the completion of the study if you require. When I have the tapes transcribed I will send you a copy of the transcripts before I analyse or use the data and you will have the right to ask for parts to be withheld or deleted. At the completion of the project the transcription will be destroyed unless you give permission otherwise.

As the study progresses I will willingly share the process with you and on completion it will be stored at Massey University available to be viewed on request at the Library. I expect to complete the study at the end of December 2000.

Throughout the study you have the right to:

- refuse to answer any particular question, and withdraw from the study at any time
- ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation
- provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researchers and you will remain anonymous
- be given access to a summary of findings from the study when it is concluded.

Joy Mephram

APPENDIX THREE



CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Awanui Building, Hokowhitu Campus, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, New Zealand Telephone: 06 350 9269 Facsimile: 06 3509288

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: LINKING THE INFLUENCES OF LIFE EXPERIENCES TO PLANNED EVENTS CONSENT FORM

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 understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission. (The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this project).

I agree to the interview being audio taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

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

Signed:

Name:

Date:

APPENDIX FOUR

Interview Statements and Key Questions

Interview one: focus statement

I would like to know the things that have influenced you as an early childhood educator. As it's not possible to live your life in separate boxes, please feel free to consider all the experiences in your life that have influenced your professional development. It is possible that these may not only be the courses and programmes you have attended or been involved in, but also other things that have happened which you feel have influenced the person and the educator you are at this time.

Interview one: key questions

- Can you think of an experience that has changed your attitude towards your educator role or in some way changed your practice?
- Have there been incidents or events that you can recall with clarity?
- Are there personally significant incidents, which have had an influence on your professional development?
- Is it possible for you to decide which have been the most significant? For example has it been courses you have attended or other things, can you explain why you think this might be?

Interview two; focus statement

At our first session you were able to talk about some of the things that had been an influence in your professional development. This time I am hoping you will talk about things which contribute to your 'self' as an early childhood educator. Now that you have read the transcripts from the first interview you may also want to make changes to what you said last time?

Interview two; key questions

- How do you describe yourself?
- How do you describe yourself as an early childhood educator?
- What kind of learning environment do you think it is important to create for children? Can you say why you think this is important?
- What are some of the influential principles underlying your practice? Can you link these to professional development experiences you choose?
- Tell me about some of your memorable moments in early childhood.
- Do you set professional development goals for yourself as person, as an educator?

APPENDIX FIVE

Summary of the Data:

Experiences are the 'facts' that happen to us. , they are the people, places and events that become part of our story (Jalongo and Isenberg p. 10). Those that are summarised here are only those that have been mentioned as influential experiences, they do not include incidental mention in the course of conversation.

Concepts are the beliefs or ideas we have about ourselves or others that we use to screen and interpret experiences and guide behaviour.

Themes draw things together to provide a template for living

General themes running through each narrative

Caring
Wanting to do things right and be the best
Professionalism
The value of on-going learning
Being positive
Social justice, bi-culturalism and equity
Inclusive practice
Self-confidence and self-esteem
Warm and accepting
Belief in children as competent learners
Valuing parents and families of children
Accepting challenges
Energetic

Events		Concepts about self	
Training	6	Personal beliefs about self	6
Early teaching experiences	3	Personal knowledge	4
Statutory requirements	1	Relating theories to beliefs	4
Marriage	1	Beliefs about children, to beliefs about self	3
Parenthood	4	Concept of self as parent	3
Teaching experiences	3	Self as student	2
Personal projects	3	Self as professional	6
Personal study	4	Concepts about beliefs	3
Personal Interests	3	Justice and social equity	4
Professional Development short courses	6	Beliefs, interactions with children	5
In-centre development	2	Motivating concepts	6
Conferences and Conventions	3	Concepts about knowledge	6
Visiting other early childhood centres	2	Concept of self as teacher	6
Videos	1	Beliefs about the opinion of others	1
Change in employment	2	Self as questioner	1
Other people's life experiences	2	Formal learning experiences-	
A failure experience	3	influencing concepts	2
A frustrating or disappointing experience	2	Changed circumstances changing beliefs	2
A success experience	3	Others concepts of self	2
Time with colleagues	4		
Family Expectations and demands	4		
Family Experiences	3		
Childhood Experiences	4		
Events influenced by beliefs	1		
A Significant event for a child	5		
Building a kit of teaching resources	1		
Events that trigger a desire to know more	2		
Professional demands	2		
Overseas experiences	2		
Philosophical, historical, political influences	2		
Internal motivation	5		
People and Places		Concepts about others	
Playcentre colleagues	1	Children	6
Maria Montessori	3	Montessori	2
Early childhood leaders	1	Parents in the early childhood community	3
Ministry of Education facilitator	5	Playcentre women	1
Lecturers at university or teachers college	2	Professional development facilitators	2
Professional development team	2	Kate Birch	1
Teaching colleagues	2	Steiner	1
Partner	2	Manager	1
People who have challenged their practice	3	Mother	2
Father	2	Other early childhood educators	4
Mother	3	Teachers in relation to children	1
Siblings	4	Teachers (school)	1
Own children	4	Student teachers	2
Wider family	2	Associate teachers	1
Rudolf Steiner	2	Professionals	1
Employers	1	Government	3
Kate Birch	1	➤ People and places cont.	
School teachers	1	Union representative	1
Study of self	2	Tertiary training institutions	5
Children in centres	2	Places where they lived	5
Grandparents	1	Places where they have taught	4
People in the community where teaching	2	Overseas	2

Summary from Written Accounts		Summary from Focus Group
Residential courses	2	Preferred options
Teacher Refresher Course		Individual development, alone or with a colleague
Christian Early Childhood Association		Centre based action research projects
Visits to other centres	2	In-centre programmes if there is a change in staff
Reggio Emilia		One day courses
Other centres in the region		Opportunities to meet early childhood colleagues
Whole centre programmes	4	Courses which are financially subsidised
Core curriculum		Release time to gain teacher registration
Using video as a learning tool		Paid release for all professional development
Behaviour management		
Programme evaluation and review		Issues that Impinge on and Influence
Books and readings	3	Professional Development
Web sites, and journals		Stability of staff group
Books to follow current interest		Organisational re-structuring
Mentoring	1	Interpreting curriculum requirements
Professional supervision with a colleague		Staff dynamics
Professional discussions	1	Leadership style and vision
Early childhood network and liaison		Management objectives and policies
Seminars and courses	5	Financial pressures
Science/Numeracy/ Literacy		External (Govt.) directives
Listening skills		Pressures to up-skill and retrain
When to say "when"		
Behaviour management		Triggers for Professional Development
Infant and toddler learning environment		Self-evaluation and reflection
Assessment of children		Political, economical and societal change
Private study	3	General dissatisfaction and the need to change
Extra-mural study, undergraduate		Boredom need to step out of comfort zone
Post graduate study		A shared vision
Personal experiences	1	The need to complete a project
Tough love training		Acquiring extra skills and knowledge
Group dynamics course		Informal networking
Supervision course		Emotional security
		Seeking promotion
		External demands
		Programme reviews