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# **An Educational Journey**

## **Stories of Adult Learners**

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## **Abstract**

This research tells the stories of a particular student cohort, all of whom are women, studying at The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand in the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) programme. These students are adult learners and adult learners are an increasing part of the tertiary sector. They have interesting stories to tell of their learning journeys, for example, stories of how they found their passion later in life or revisited an earlier passion they were unable to fulfil. The researcher has gathered, recorded and analysed the stories of these students, stories of their education experiences; their experiences within their family and society; the communities they lived in; their work histories and most importantly their study histories. Key themes common to the research participants emerged from their stories and these are linked to a variety of literature. The aim of this research is to add to the limited body of information about the learning journeys of an often silent group of people within the tertiary sector, and is an acknowledgment of the success of adult students in their studies later in life.

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This research is dedicated to the students; past, present and future, of The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand Diploma of Teaching (ECE) programme. Without your commitment to early childhood education and continued participation in tertiary education, this research would not have been possible, useful or relevant.

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## Chapter One: Setting the Scene

Where does the second chance learner notion come from? Is second chance the next step from secondary? Mature adult learners are an increasing part of the tertiary sector and they have interesting stories to tell of their learning journeys. This research describes how a particular student cohort, all of whom are women, came to be studying in a level 7 tertiary education programme. In this research the stories of the Semester 2, 2005 cohort of students of The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand who enrolled in the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) programme have been gathered, documented and analysed. The key themes of their stories are linked to literature and add to the currently scant body of information about the learning journeys of an often silent group of people within the tertiary sector.

The purpose of this research into the learning journeys of a group of students in initial teacher education is outlined in this chapter. The first section outlines the research aim and process. The second section looks at the context of the research including the reasons behind the study and introduces some of the literature that is explored in later chapters. The third section briefly describes the institution providing the initial teacher education and the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) programme that the research participants are enrolled in. The final section introduces the researcher and positions her within the context of this study. The contents of the other chapters in this study are briefly outlined at the end of chapter one.

### **The research**

The aim of this research is to discover the answers to the research questions:

*What are the stories of the Semester 2 2005 cohort of students of The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand who enrol in the Diploma of Teaching (ECE)?*

*What journeys bring them to enrol in this programme?*

Subsidiary question:

*How is the cultural capital of learners who come to study later in their lives recognised?*

The research is underpinned by socio cultural theory and is conducted within a phenomenological framework. There are three layers to the data gathering for this research:

#### Layer 1. Demographic information

The demographic information from the Semester 2 2005 student intake was gathered from their programme application forms recording geographic location, age, marital status, children, educational background, ethnicity, work history and any other relevant information. The researcher analysed these using quantitative methods on a raw data grid recording the data to allow for further analysis.

#### Layer 2. Questionnaires

A questionnaire (Appendix 2a) was sent to each of the students in the cohort with a stamped addressed envelope, an information sheet (Appendix 2b) and a permission form (Appendix 2c) including an invitation to take part in layer three. The questionnaires were analysed under the question headings, identifying any common themes that have emerged. This analysis informed the interview questions used in layer three.

#### Layer 3. Semi structured interviews.

The researcher conducted phone interviews with 10 participants who volunteered to be interviewed. Barriers were encountered, the main one being the logistics of conducting interviews by distance. The decision to interview by phone was made for two reasons. The first was that it was consistent with the distance nature of the programme and the second that the travel and costs involved made other data collection methods, such as focus groups, impractical. A third reason became apparent during the interviews. The interviewees were more anonymous than they might have been during face-to-face interviews. They were able to be very open and honest in their answers, an aspect that at times was both challenging and humbling to the researcher. Full analyses of the data from Layers 1-3 are contained in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

### **The context of the research**

When confronted with the term 'second chance learner' the researcher has always been tempted to ask: What happened to the learner's first chance? Did they fail in their schooling and need to be given a second chance? Is studying later in life a re-sit of their education? During the teaching career of the researcher these questions, and the often negative connotations attached to adult students, have indicated a need for research in

this area of education. Second chance students have been characterised in the literature (Harris, Rainey, & Sumner, 2006) as people for whom open entry is the only way for them to achieve their qualifications. The researcher's own experiences as a second chance learner and, more importantly for this research, the experiences of others who have walked a similar path to achieve their tertiary qualifications, have indicated that a deeper understanding of this group of learners would be useful.

Mature students; adult students; second chance learners; non traditional students are some of the descriptors given to students who no longer require high school academic entry criteria to access tertiary education. The students who fall into this category are over 20 years of age and some may argue that reaching this age does not automatically mean that students have the academic ability to pursue a course of study at a tertiary institution. The cohort in this research are from a mixed age group, the youngest is 18 and the oldest 54. The majority of them (93%) are over the age of 20 and therefore eligible for open entry into a tertiary institution. The cohort is all classified by the Ministry of Education as non traditional students as they have left school without directly attending a tertiary institution.

Statistics show that non traditional or mature students are increasing in numbers across tertiary institutions in New Zealand, in particular, institutions providing distance education. This trend is also occurring internationally (Tumblin, 2002; Harris, Rainey & Sumner, 2006). Non-traditional students are increasingly figuring in the student debt figures, uplifting student loans and allowances alongside their school leaver student colleagues (<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics>). Mature students, even those with a low school leaving age and no formal high school qualifications, are gaining good grades in their tertiary studies and indeed have high completion rates. The added pressure of studying extramurally while engaged in the world of family and work may indicate that a decrease in the completion rates would be more likely for these students. In reality, the statistics show that their completion rates are high, between 85 and 90% for the students in the programme researched (Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, 2002; Murphy, Edlin, Everiss, McClew, Margrain & Meade, 2006).

This research aims to share the stories of people who achieve later in life and by doing this perhaps give others the confidence that their ways of knowing are valid and that

they can achieve, no matter where they start their educational journey. The intention of this research is to begin to extinguish the negative connotations around adult learners, in particular to dispel the myth of the second chance learner.

The researcher discovered during conversations with students at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (Open Polytechnic) and other tertiary institutions, that many students have doubts about their abilities. These doubts are often a direct result of their failure to achieve at an earlier age and are difficult to dispel. Women who undertake teacher education in their thirties, forties and in some cases their fifties, have interesting stories to tell about their journey to gain a teaching qualification. Many of these women have raised families, run businesses, worked in menial jobs to keep the bills paid and struggled to maintain their relationships. In most cases, their passion to see if there is something better out there for them has driven them to find a career to fulfil and nurture their sense of self. Is this their second chance or the first chance they have had to spend time doing something for themselves? The notion of time and in particular the timing of study (Te Hereripine Hill, 2005) is explored in later chapters. The consequences of improving their career prospects are, in many cases, an attempt not only to improve their own lives but also the lives of their families.

Socio cultural theory is integral to the early childhood education sector and teacher education within this sector (Ministry of Education, 1996) therefore underpins this research. Bourdieu's theory of the acquisition of cultural capital through family reproduction is also explored. Although cultural and family reproduction can be used to explain the gap between the intergenerational haves and the have not's (Adams, Clarke, Codd, O'Neill, Openshaw and Waitere-Ang, 2000), there is increasing evidence that individuals within 'have not' families can successfully progress through education. This research aims to explain how this may occur when they are adults rather than when they are at school or a school leaver.

Through discussions with the students of the Open Polytechnic, there is evidence that their experiences in the formal education system may not have been as useful as their work experiences and the tertiary education they have undertaken as adults. Many of the students are the only person in their family (immediate and extended) who have attempted tertiary education. Their achievements have often been gained amidst

scepticism, especially from family members, as to whether they can achieve at all. A child, watching with a sense of pride, as their mother graduates at a formal graduation ceremony may well be encouraged to achieve academically. This could lead to increased achievement within the family, as the next generation see that it is possible to achieve academically. Although the increase of cultural capital within a family may be another research avenue to explore, it is touched on briefly in this research through the changing aspirations within the families of those researched.

Exploring and documenting the backgrounds of the adult students studying in the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) programme, at the Open Polytechnic, allows the information collected on their educational journeys to be formally acknowledged. This information may help to inform tertiary teaching methods and in particular, pastoral care provisions by confirming that these learners have value in our knowledge economy. The Ministry of Education in their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Policy Review (Part B) outline how the recent literature review on ITE by Cameron and Baker (2004) found that *“while there is a general belief that people entering teaching are academically weak there is little data to confirm or disconfirm this belief”* (2007, p.28). The findings of this research may add to the picture of the quality of those undertaking ITE, although a caution is needed here; if a student teacher is achieving top grades in their course of study, does it matter what their initial academic qualifications are?

There has been discussion on the value of merit as opposed to open entry pathways to tertiary institutions. If open entry provisions are changed, many adult students may be denied their chance at a tertiary education (Ministry of Education, 2002b). The idea that open entry decreases the standard of tertiary education in general has been refuted as elitist (Martin, 2002) and this discussion appears to have come to a close for the moment. In fact, the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission has included adult students as part of the Tertiary Education Strategy for New Zealand (<http://www.tec.govt.nz/upload/downloads/Minister-speech-notes-University10May.pdf>).

More recently, the former Colleges of Education have been merged with their local universities. According to the Ministry of Education’s Initial Teacher Education Policy Review (Part B), these mergers will *“provide structural support for research and teaching in initial teacher education”* (2007, p.20). With this change, diploma of teaching

programmes are moving towards becoming degree programmes, for example the three year Bachelor of Teaching and Learning provided by the University of Canterbury College of Education. Degree level study through a university appears to be seen as being valid while at present a moratorium is maintained on degree programmes in other initial teacher education (ITE) providers. This could mean that distance institutions such as the Open Polytechnic may be unable to gain approval to deliver a degree level teacher education programme. This could limit access to a degree level programme for many adult students and for those who leave secondary school and have to travel to study.

Research already exists on transitions and pathways for secondary students into tertiary education (Maxwell, Cooper and Biggs, 2000; Vaughan & Hipkins, 2002; Higgins, 2002; Leach and Zepke, 2005; Harris et al 2006) but the initial literature search for this research found few research reports on adult learners, especially in the field of teacher education. Little research is available on the experiences of adults returning to study after a break, often of many years, and with little or no formal qualifications.

The student cohorts at The Open Polytechnic from the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) programme have many of the following characteristics. They:

- ✓ Are mostly women
- ✓ Are currently in the workforce (mostly working in early childhood education)
- ✓ Have extensive family commitments
- ✓ Are generally over the age of 25
- ✓ Have children (ages ranging from babies to adults)
- ✓ Are married or separated from their spouse
- ✓ Often have limited high school education and little or no prior tertiary education experience

The key common characteristic initially identified is that these students see distance education as their best option to complete their qualification for a variety of reasons, which may include any of the above factors. Location has little bearing on their choice of provider, indeed many reside in cities where there are existing tertiary options. The information gathered during this research shows that they are also relationship oriented

people, perhaps why they have chosen teaching in early childhood education as their career.

The information gathered in this research could be useful to the academic staff at the Open Polytechnic to increase completion rates by more effectively targeting their pastoral care and academic support. The participants may benefit by receiving more effective, targeted academic support and pastoral care thus enabling them to succeed more easily. A secondary benefit could be in using the information gathered to target the marketing of the programme. The aim of this research is to add to the body of knowledge in adult education. If we do not know our students, we are missing the opportunity to provide effective, relevant learning experiences and sufficient pastoral care to enable them to achieve.

There may be a wider use for the data gathered on the secondary school experiences of the participants. The information regarding the secondary school failure of the majority of the participants in this research could be useful in planning future changes to the secondary sector. The personalising of a course of study that fits within the context of the student may be a more effective method of teaching those most at risk of failure in the compulsory sector. This is another avenue for future research.

### **The programme and institution**

*“Over its 60 year history, The Open Polytechnic pioneered the cost effective provision of distance learning that transformed the national skill base of some 850,000 persons across all sectors of the economy and society”* (The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, 2005, p.6). The Open Polytechnic is one of New Zealand’s largest open and distance learning tertiary institutions. The main campus is located in Lower Hutt on the banks of the Waiwhetu Stream. The majority of the academic and administration staff are based at the Waiwhetu Campus with other staff working in three Learning Centres based in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

Among the programme portfolio of the Open Polytechnic Centre for Education Studies is the Diploma of Teaching (ECE). The Diploma of Teaching (ECE) is of mixed mode delivery with distance and face-to-face components in three formats. The students are

posted written materials; required to attend workshops; and participate in organised professional practicum. The Diploma can be completed at the student's own pace, in their place and takes between 3 and 6 years to complete. A regional lecturer is allocated to the students when they enrol. These lecturers are based within the student's geographical area and are responsible for each student's pastoral care, practicum requirements and workshops. Students set their own study pace around personal, family and work commitments with the guidance of their regional lecturer. There are sixteen Regional Lecturers nationally many working from their homes and based from Kaikohe in the North Island to Dunedin in the South Island. Clusters of lecturers are based in Auckland and Christchurch located in the Learning Centres and on the main campus at Waiwhetu, Lower Hutt. The administration and management of the programme is undertaken from the main campus.

The Level 7 Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) programme was first accredited and approved in late 1998. The redevelopment gained Institute of Technology and Polytechnic (ITP) and New Zealand Teachers Council approval in April 2002. The two hundred and thirty nine existing students were transitioned into the redeveloped programme which had its first intake in Semester 2 2002. The demographics of the 1998 student cohort for the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) programme are interesting. These students ranged in age from 20 to 60 years with the bulk of the students (74%) aged between 21 and 40 (21-30 37%; 31-40 37%). Nearly a quarter of the 1998 students were aged over 41. More than a third (39%) of this group identified as living within the four main centres Auckland (26%) Wellington (5%) Christchurch (5%) and Dunedin (3%). The rest were scattered throughout New Zealand in small urban and rural areas with 82% of the students residing in the North Island. Eighty six percent of the 1998 cohort identified themselves as New Zealand European and 8% as Māori. (The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, 2002).

The instructional design for the redevelopment of the programme in 2002 related to the key student profile characteristics:

1. the average age of the students was 35 years
2. the majority of the students have no previous tertiary education or training
3. many of the students do not have a strong academic background

4. the current numbers of Māori and Pasifika students is likely to rise as a result of TeachNZ scholarships targeting this group.

In designing the course materials for this group, the design team realised the need for the course of study to:

1. encourage student teachers to draw on their own life experiences, particularly their practical experiences in the early childhood education setting
2. consist of a mix of self-instructional written materials, workshops and practicals allow for the provision of maximum support
3. include an initial workshop on study skills
4. be written in a straightforward style with assessment criteria and requirements clearly outlined
5. increase the academic demands on students as they progress through their study
6. encourage the students to access help through their lecturers and The Open Polytechnic in general
7. include a strong bicultural perspective

(The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, 2002).

The programme, having been reviewed and brought up to date with the fast changing world of early childhood education, was once again re-approved and reaccredited in 2006. Part of this review was to combine 10 credit courses into 20 credit courses. The combining of courses served to lessen the amount of assessment, a much needed improvement. The inclusion of due dates and the linking of the courses to the workshops changed the whole ethos of the programme and the interview respondents commented this on.

There are strict intake procedures and entry requirements for the Diploma programme based on The New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) fit to be a teacher criteria, The Open Polytechnic's regulations and The Tertiary Education Commission's criteria for the age of open entry. In a three stage process, applicants are short listed; participate in a series of group and individual tasks and a formal interview. The applicants are notified of their successful entry into the programme or that they have been declined entry. Valid reasons must be given for declining a prospective student who has the right to challenge this decision. The process for entry appears to be successful given that the retention and

completion rates for the programme in 2006 were 97% and 81% respectively (Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, 2006). This high rate was also evident in the study by Murphy, Edlin, Everiss, McClew, Margrain and Meade (2006) where they state a completion rate in Semester 2, 2004 of 88%.

The cohort who have taken part in this research are the Semester 2 2005 intake, a total of 72 students. Preliminary data gathering shows a slightly different demographic picture for the 2005 cohort when compared with the 1998 data and the information in the 2002 re-approval documents. The 2005 cohort is on average younger and more diverse. This will be explored further in the analysis section.

### **The researcher**

I am a 48 year old Pakeha woman, married for 28 years and during that time raising three sons aged 28, 25 and 24. I have lived most of my life in small communities in both the North Island/Te Ika a Maui and South Island/Te Wai Pounamu. There was no family expectation that my education would continue past secondary years despite achieving above expectation at high school gaining both School Certificate and University Entrance. In my family, as in many others of the time, it was implied and reinforced through multiple channels that tertiary education was pointless because girls did not participate in the workforce except prior to having a family (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1970; Adams et al, 2000; King, 2003). The prevailing attitudes of this time are reflected in the experiences of the research participants in Layers 2 and 3 of the research, not only for those educated in the 1960s and 1970s.

Whilst raising my children the opportunity to study in the field of early childhood education arose through involvement with the Playcentre organisation. I followed a passion for early childhood education by completing my Playcentre training and going on to gain a Diploma of Teaching (ECE). I then completed a Diploma of Teaching (Primary) and my Bachelor of Teaching and Learning. I am now undertaking the final study towards completing my Master in Education (Adult Education) through Massey University College of Education. With the exception of 2 papers, I completed all of my study extramurally, whilst raising a family, operating a family business and working as a teacher and teacher educator. I appreciate the opportunities I have been given to

participate in distance learning programmes. Indeed, fitting my study around the rest of the happenings in my world has worked very well for me, keeping me motivated to achieve my goals. Without distance education this would not have been possible.

I have been employed in early childhood education, primary teaching and adult education since 1986 and in teacher education since 1999. I have lectured in several institutions, initially in the New Zealand National Nanny Certificate (Level 5) and in NZQA Level 3 certificate courses and latterly in Levels 5-7 Diploma of Teaching (ECE) programmes. I was a lecturer at The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand from January 2001 until July 2006 and some of the cohort researched were students within my geographic area. Although I have been studying, teaching and lecturing for over 20 years, I have wondered why people choose to undertake a teacher education programme and where they come from to do so. Through maintaining pastoral care for a variety of students, I have listened to many interesting stories of their pathways into tertiary education and some of the barriers they have faced and overcome on the way. Although the stories have similarities, they maintain a character unique to the teller.

After becoming an Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) facilitator at the Open Polytechnic in 2005, I was motivated to further my knowledge and research into the various pathways to tertiary education. The APL process enables prospective students to produce evidence of their work experience as well as any academic qualifications to gain entry into a programme of study with some credits. Most research and literature appears to be based mainly with secondary students and their pathways to tertiary education (Maxwell, Cooper and Biggs, 2000; Vaughan & Hipkins, 2002; Higgins, 2002; Leach and Zepke, 2005; Harris et al 2006). A range of this national and international literature has been reviewed in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

My recent focus on the teaching of adults has led me to a pathway of discovery regarding the issues and benefits of adult education, especially for women returning to study and often to the workforce. Certain questions have sprung to mind: Will watching their mother achieve academically empower children in their own education experiences? Will they gain the cultural capital to study themselves, even when it may require them to leave home to do so? There may be an opportunity to explore the aspect of the participants' children's cultural capital in a later study.

Whilst completing this thesis a change in my employment has given me the opportunity to work alongside and develop relationships with early childhood teaching teams. I have discovered that many of these teachers have stories similar to the student teachers I worked with at the Open Polytechnic. There are many women in the early childhood workforce who came to tertiary study later in life achieving their qualifications amidst the te ao huri huri of life. My hope is that they will read this research as an acknowledgement of their achievements.

This Masters thesis contains six chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the research topic and given some background information including an outline of the data collection methods and an introduction to the researcher. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature around the topics explored in this research. In Chapter 3 there is a discussion on the methodologies and methods used to gather the research data that will be analysed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the data including triangulation with literature and Chapter 6 the outcomes, recommendations and limitations of the research plus a discussion on further possible research in this area.

## Chapter 2 Literature review

In this chapter the researcher will explore a selection of the literature relevant to this research. The first section has a sociological focus with a discussion on cultural and social capital and the role of family in future success. Women in education will also be discussed within this section. The next section outlines the literature on adult education, in particular teacher education, including retention and transition research. This section will also briefly discuss distance education, especially in teacher education.

### Sociology of education

According to Nash (1993) *"sociology attempts to provide sociological explanations of social phenomena, events and processes"* (p.25) and the phenomena, events and processes he discusses include education. Education is one of the most important structures for cultural and social reproduction. In their research on social disparities in educational outcomes Lauder and Hughes (1990) concluded that *"schools could not compensate for society. Rather the structures of society would have to be changed if equality of opportunity was to be made a realistic goal"* (p.38) while Liz Gordon (2004) states that *"at best, education holds within it the power to transform individual lives as well as societies. But more often it is implicated in the reproduction of poor outcomes. A famous quote from Basil Bernstein in the 1960s was that schools cannot compensate for society, but schools can make a difference to individuals by offering them self-esteem, skills and opportunities"* (p.63).

Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural reproduction explores the relationship between society, education and the home environment, including family. According to Nash (1993) Bourdieu contends that cultural capital *"can exist in three forms: embodied as a disposition of the mind and body; objectified as cultural goods; and in its institutionalized state as, for example, educational qualifications"* (p.20). In addition to this, Nash (1993, p.21) outlines how *"cultural capital is inherited, invested in the education system, and brings forth a return in the form of credentialed knowledge which may be exchanged in the labour market for an elite occupation"* hence becoming a factor in economic as well as cultural and social reproduction.

Bourdieu's notion of habitus, described in Adams, Clark, Codd, O'Neill, Openshaw and Waitere-Ang (2000) as *"the system of dispositions he suggests we all have learned as a result of our coming to be a member of a particular society or cultural group, within the context of the family"* (p. 270) is relevant to those participating in this research. Perhaps, as Adams et al (2000) go on to say that despite a person's habitus being *"shaped within the family context, [but] it is also affected by the changing nature of the real social conditions in which people live from generation to generation"* (p.271). Studying later in life, as the participants of this research are, at a time that is more suitable for a multitude of reasons indicates that this is perhaps true. The changing work environment, requiring credentials for work when previously unnecessary, along with the necessity of two incomes for many families has changed the social conditions of the present generation.

One of the research questions that emerged through the data gathering process for this research was of the role of cultural capital in success and its stability over time. During the planning stages, the researcher read widely around cultural capital and its impacts on school achievement. Included in this was research on the choices students make post secondary school, mostly conducted in low decile schools (Boyd, Chalmers, and Kumekawa, 2001; Boyd, McDowall, and Cooper, 2002; Harris, Rainey and Sumner, 2006). According to these researchers, the cultural capital needed by students to transition successfully from secondary schools to tertiary institutions did not always come from within their family, rather from significant others who encouraged them to proceed in their education. For low socio economic school leavers, cultural capital was often directly linked to real capital and their need to participate in the world of work. They could also be discouraged by their family to continue in their study so they could engage within the world of work with a direct link between this attitude and the socio economic status (SES) of the family (Boyd, Chalmers and Kumakawa, 2001; Boyd, McDowell and Cooper, 2002; Harris, Rainey and Sumner, 2006).

Leach and Zepke (2005) found in their review of the literature on student decision making that *"socio-economic status (SES) is the strongest predictor of tertiary study"* (p.17). The research reviewed by Leach and Zepke (2005) identified three forms of SES indicators, parental education, occupation and income and they went on to state that *"these produce social capital (resources available because of connections to others) and*

*cultural capital (non-economic assets that come from high levels of education and exposure to middle and upper class values and attitudes)" (p.17). Fergusson and Woodward (2000, cited in Boyd, Chalmers and Kumakawa, 2001) found in their 21 year longitudinal study that SES at birth predicted student's entry into university; "able children from professional or managerial family backgrounds were about one and a half times more likely to go to university than children of similar ability from low SES families" (p.2).*

While many studies have found that this is certainly true of school leavers and their transition into work or tertiary education (Lauder and Hughes, 1990; Boyd, Chalmers and Kumakawa, 2001; Hipkins and Vaughan, 2002; Boyd, McDowell and Cooper, 2002) this researcher wondered if this was also true of students who began their study later in life. Indeed Hughes and Pearce (2003) discovered that the decile of the school students attended had little bearing on them undertaking study after a break. They also contended that the *"one third of university students and two thirds of polytechnic students who did not enter tertiary education the year after leaving school"* (p.199) change the demographics of those attending tertiary institutions when their numbers are included in the statistics. When excluded from the statistics, these students can be seen as silent within the tertiary sector, a group not openly planned for or supported through their tertiary education experience.

Research conducted in the USA by the Pell Institute (2004) found that students who came from low socio economic groups had *"less opportunity to study beyond the high school level"* (p.7). They also found that these *"students took longer to complete their degrees - and do so at lower rates"* (Pell Institute, 2004, p.7). This research from the USA showed conclusively that students from low income families attend and achieve in higher education at very low rates but the research only investigated students under the age of 24. If the same research was conducted on those over the age of 24, the resulting data may give different conclusions. Indeed, there seems little research from the USA about adult students.

In the UK, Bailey (2002) researched the learning pathways of unemployed single mothers. What he discovered was the need for the government to *"recognise the skills and knowledge gained in other roles such as being a mother and learner and that the*

*recognition of what is described as informal learning is important in analysing learner developmental needs as well as critical to facilitating participation and retention in formal learning processes such as courses*" (2002, p.2). Bailey also contended that women who are *"self directed learners are self motivated and have very positive views about being a learner"* (2002, p.10) and that they are able to see the benefits of learning in other aspects of their lives. It will be interesting to see if the high level of learner self motivation observed by Bailey (2002) is evident within this research as distance learning requires a high level of self motivation.

Bailey stressed the need for the government to recognise that *"a broader range of cultural and social skills is needed to enable individuals to become successful life long learners and to improve their life chances"* (2002, p.1). This researcher would like to suggest the possibility of improving the chances of their children becoming life long learners through increasing the cultural and social capital within their families. In the formation of the cultural and social capital required for success and participation in life long learning, *"formal and informal learning are not divorced from each other"* (Bailey, 2002, p.18). Ross (2005) also believes that informal learning, especially the experiential learning that occurs through women's lives is undervalued. She contends that these experiences are contextually based, in her words *"the contexts I live within are shaped by society and culture and determine the meanings I attribute to my experiences"* (2005, p.50). The data discussed within this thesis explores the experiences and learning, past and present, that have impacted on the participants, all of whom are women, as they strive to achieve their goals in education.

In the 1980s *"women were invisible as intellectuals and role models, as girls were socialised into 'women's work' or domestic roles"* (Kelsey, 2000, p.6). Women often lacked confidence in their abilities in the worlds of education and work and this is evidenced by the participation of few women in higher education during this time. Women undertake many roles in our society, indeed as Gillian believes *"being defined in a singular role - as a teacher, or wife or friend is not how I understand myself as a person, as a woman, or how I hear other women define their lives"* (2001, p. 89).

The roles of women in New Zealand are predicated by a number of factors, not the least of which is the expectations of women within their families. Families can be very gender

centric, although this may be an unconscious function within the family. For a family where *"it is believed that 'a women's place is in the home', then the families educational strategy for girls will simply reflect that"* (Adams et al, 2000, p.273); for a family where the world of work is also gendered boys may be diverted from the caring professions, for example teaching in early childhood, for more manly occupations. Similarly, the options for girls may also be limited to feminine occupations, for example professions that include nurturing and caring.

Generally, society reflects the gendered roles within the family. As recently as the 1980s, women's main roles were child rearing and work within the family unit. The research carried out on the child rearing practices of New Zealand families in the 1960s by James and Jenny Ritchie gave some interesting insights into the families of these times. *"The family is widely and generally considered to be the basic unit in modern society"* and *"from the data which we have it seems that the New Zealand family is a very tight, highly stable part of the social system and that a great deal of effort goes into keeping it so.....almost to the point of rigidity"* (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1970, p.23). When this research was replicated in the late 1970s and then again in the late 1980s, a very different picture emerged.

The economic hardships of the 1980s and high unemployment meant changing patterns for employment within the family. More women became involved in the workforce with *"almost half the mothers of four-year-olds [are] in paid employment"* (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1997, p.80). This amounted to upheaval within families with *"older, more mature mothers, more single mothers, serial partners, more men around the house, for better or for worse. These, as well as economic factors, were reshaping the family context of child development"* (ibid, p.81) and also meant an increase in the need for child minding services so that mothers could work. During this time roles were still highly gendered. *"There are a set of cultural contexts and expectations, pressures from peers, models from the media, patterns in the playground that attempt to lock individuals into the predetermined cultural patterns that determine sex roles"* (ibid, p.90).

Women often had to break away from these gendered roles to participate in higher education, especially when the expectation prevailed that there was little point in them training for a career. Their career was seen as child rearing by society and in particular,

their parents (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1997; Adams et al, 2000). Many women gained qualifications and support through organisations such as playcentre during this time, participating in workshops and distance education. Formalising child caring, the work of mothers, into a qualification was empowering for these women (May, 1997). The informal learning gained through raising children was thus acknowledged and led to many women continuing on the education pathway, usually in the area of education and social services.

In her research on women's informal and experiential learning, Ross (2005) outlined how *"research about women's lives and learning continues to be underrepresented in the literature"* (p.40). She contends that women's sources of knowledge, women's ways of knowing, are not acknowledged as important informal learning rather that these are not seen as learning. From his research into single mothers as learners, Bailey (2002) found that for the women *"life long learning was what you always did; it was associated with all aspects of their lives and not just paid work"* (p.13). One of the tensions for Bailey's (2002) participants was balancing the needs of their children with the need to be educated to participate in the world of work. If the learning excluded their children, they were less inclined, less motivated to participate. This mirrors the New Zealand playcentre experiences where women were engaged in learning alongside their children (May, 1997).

For many women who enter tertiary education, distance education is their preferred choice (Murphy et al, 2006) as this mode of learning fits more readily into their life style, especially if they are raising children. Distance learning is also largely anonymous, where students are less accountable to others if they fail or discontinue in their studies. In other words, because they don't have to form relationships with others, students can come and go without others being aware of their failure. Sinner's (2003) research into voice was conducted within a face to face institution but the findings can be linked to distance education. Sinner (2003) found that her research participants *"demonstrate that adult learners often adopt multiple learning styles depending on the classroom environment, which in part, shapes and reshapes the perceptions of self in the process. Self identity in the classroom is reflective of the changing roles women experience in the course of their lives"* (p.117). With distance learning, these multiple learning styles are tied in to the context of the learner, the contexts in which the learning takes place and

the people within those contexts, for example juggling children, home and work alongside study.

While these experiences are perhaps true of Western women, they can also be true cross culturally. Chan (2002) writes about her experiences as a Chinese woman completing a doctoral thesis. *"I experienced the conflict between being a housewife, a university student, and a combination of both."* (p.101). She goes on to say that her professors thought that she was lucky to be attending university, conveying to her the belief that a housewife could not conduct the research necessary to complete a doctorate. Indeed, Chan (2002) questioned whether she could meet the demands of the programme but soon found that *"my progress prove[d] conclusively that having been a housewife prior to becoming a doctoral student created no disadvantage for me when compared to male students and other working female students"* (p. 99). In Chinese culture, it was more important that Chan was a successful wife and mother than doctoral student and this was reinforced through her and her husband's families. The barriers Chan shares in writing about her experiences are also similar cross culturally.

Like Bailey (2002), Prebble, Hargraves, Leach, Naidoo, Suddaby and Zepke (2004) discovered that there were barriers for the women attending tertiary institutions such as lack information from and support structures within the institution; financial barriers and life circumstances. The culture of the institution played a major part in the persistence of the women in their study, especially the lack of value placed on informal learning and the existing skills adult students bring to their study. McGivney (2004) also discusses a possible barrier as lacking *"confidence in their ability to succeed in an education or training programme if there has been a lengthy interval since they last engaged in formal learning"* (p.34). Indeed as Clarke (2000) discovered in her research, for women going back to education it can seem that while *"education is represented as a container that can be "put on the back burner" [but] it is also as a container which might threaten to engulf you if you "take the plunge". Going back to education is contrasted with "getting nowhere" "* (p.8). Despite multiple barriers existing for women within their work and home contexts, many women are taking the risk and engaging in, and more importantly succeeding in, tertiary education.

The importance of this research into women studying is that *“high levels of parental (particularly maternal) education appear to contribute favourably to children’s achievement”* (Biddulph, Biddulph and Biddulph, 2003, p.82). Biddulph et al (2003) go on to outline how *“overseas research is consistent with New Zealand findings that the mother’s level of education is one of the most important factors influencing children’s reading level and other school achievements”* (p.83). Israel, Beaulieu and Hartless (2001) agree stating that *“family income and parents’ education reflect resources possessed by the parents that can influence the child’s academic aspirations and success”* (p.50). They also suggest that more educated parents hold *“high educational aspirations”* (p.45) for their children.

During their review of the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) conducted in the USA, Israel, Beaulieu and Hartless (2001) found that investment and successful participation in education was more likely to occur in areas where there were well paying jobs. In rural areas where this did not occur, students’ educational achievements lagged behind urban students. They also outlined that their *“findings reaffirm the significant role of parents’ socioeconomic status in shaping their children’s educational performance”* (2001, p.61). A possible solution for the low attainment of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds was also suggested by Israel, Beaulieu and Hartless, *“the goal is to create a home environment where parent-child relationships are strong, and where parents place a high value on education”* (2001, p.62) and they suggest that this is achieved by implementing *“policies designed to promote educational achievement.....to strengthen social capital in the family and community”* (p.43). In this research, the fact that the women are engaged in learning while raising their children may mean that they are increasing the potential for their children to achieve educationally.

### **Adult education**

Adult students are an increasing part of the tertiary education population in New Zealand. Statistics show that non-traditional or mature students are increasing in numbers across tertiary institutions in New Zealand, in particular, institutions providing distance education. In this research, adult students are classified as those eligible in New Zealand for open entry, that is, they are over the age of 20. In her research in the

UK, McGivney (2004) classified adult students as *“those over the age of 25 who have had a gap since completing full time education”* (p.33). McClelland (2006) gathered his data on adult students over the age of 40 and discussed this age group as adult students. McClelland (2006) in his report for the Ministry of Education on the changing population of New Zealand and the tertiary education sector described how *“people aged 40 years and over will comprise over half of all growth in domestic students between 2005 and 2014”* (p.14). This trend is also occurring internationally (Harris, Rainey, & Sumner, 2006; Tumblin, 2002).

In the USA the non traditional or adult student population is increasing, as Tumblin’s (2002) research found *“record numbers of non-traditional students were enrolling in higher education”* (p.5) a fact that Tumblin attributed to changing population demographics. Non-traditional students are increasingly figuring in the student debt figures, uplifting student loans and allowances alongside their school leaver student colleagues (<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics>). Mature students, even those with a low school leaving age and no formal school qualifications, are gaining good grades in their tertiary studies and indeed have high completion rates. The added pressure of studying extramurally while engaged in the world of family and work may indicate that a decrease in the completions rates would be more likely for these students. In reality, the statistics show that their completion rates are high, between 85% and 90% for the students in the programme researched (Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, 2002; Murphy et al, 2006).

There has been discussion on the value of merit entry rather than open entry pathways to tertiary institutions and if this occurs, many adult students may be denied their chance at a tertiary education. The idea that open entry decreases the standard of tertiary education in general has been refuted as elitist (Martin, 2002) and this discussion appears to have come to a close for the moment. In fact, the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission has included adult students as part of the Tertiary Education Strategy for New Zealand (2007) (<http://www.tec.govt.nz/upload/downloads/Minister-speech-notes-University10May.pdf>) a sector of the tertiary population that was noticeably absent from the 2002-2007 Tertiary Education Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2002a) and the Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities 2005/07 (Ministry of Education, 2002b). Adult students re entering education are an important part of our knowledge society, for

themselves and also for the cultural transmission of knowledge and power within their families and within our society.

In their research, Lauder and Hughes (1990) acknowledged adult students participating in tertiary education. They found that students from low SES backgrounds who did not achieve at high school, could *"have a professional or managerial destination because of further study while in employment"* (p.55), and this may be the same for those who took part in this research. Adult students participate in learning, often through their workplace, when they become aware that they need to upgrade their skills. In their research on the learning pathways of students in Australia, Harris, Rainey and Sumner (2006) discovered people who had to train to keep up with professional requirements and they described them as forced learners. Their changing work environment forced these people to undertake professional development. They also discovered that many of the vocational and study changes students made while undertaking tertiary study followed a pattern of interest *"where they had free choice, most of the participants were motivated by interest, usually in the vocational context, to undertake a particular field of study"* (p.40).

In their research on secondary students and their transition into the work force or tertiary education, Boyd, Chalmers and Kumekawa (2001) discovered that *"students' personal interest were found to be the main motivator behind their career decisions"* (p.45). As Harris et al (2006) discovered, there are multiple reasons for people to consider taking up study and making changes in their study and vocations *"additional [to vocational and reasons of interest] influences included being required to make the study move by an employer, location and reputation of the institution, course reputation, institutional flexibility, encouragement from friends and family"* (p.10). Murphy et al (2006) found that their research participants' key reasons for studying were personal including a love of their work and their wish to be a teacher. Although they were also often forced learners (Harris et al, 2006) this was not the main reason for studying although gaining the qualification became more of a focus for the participants later in their study.

While there is already research on transitions and pathways for secondary students into tertiary education (Maxwell, Cooper and Biggs, 2000; Vaughan & Hipkins, 2002; Higgins,

2002; Leach and Zepke, 2005; Harris et al, 2006) the initial literature search for this research found few research reports on adult learners, especially in the field of teacher education. There is also little research on the experiences of adults returning to study after a break, often of many years, and with little or no formal qualifications.

When the researcher began exploring the literature for this study, there was much discussion in the media and in academic circles about the decline of standards in teacher education. The validity of open entry for those over the age of 20 years was also a topic for discussion. This was due to the perception that the entry to university of non traditional students somehow constituted a dumbing down of the tertiary sector. At the same time NCEA was also implemented into the secondary sector and the public outcry over a perceived lack of academic rigor inherent in the new system led to a climate where research into these sectors was needed. The Ministry of Education (2007) in their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Policy Review (Part B) outline how the recent literature review on ITE by Cameron and Baker (2004) found that *"while there is a general belief that people entering teaching are academically weak there is little data to confirm or disconfirm this belief"* (p.28).

Kane (2005) outlined how *"in addition to academic criteria, all ITE qualifications require applicants to demonstrate attributes beyond academic competence. These attributes are typically related to the applicant's suitability to teach, experience with children and young adults and commitment to the profession. Therefore, contrary to the perception (as articulated in the submissions to the Education and Science Committee's inquiry) that entry standards had been eroded over the past decade, criteria for entry into an ITE qualification exceeded those for similar level qualifications in other disciplines"* (p.24). While this may be true of primary and secondary ITE, in the researcher's experience there is currently a discomfort within the area of early childhood ITE that perhaps the need for teachers means the acceptance of students without the necessary skills and attitudes may occur.

The research by Murphy et al (2006) was conducted in the same ITE programme as this research. As with Murphy et al's (2006) research, this research is important in its timing. Pathways to the Future (Ministry of Education, 2002) the 10 year strategic plan for early childhood education (ECE) requires that all ECE teachers are qualified to a minimum of

a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) by 2012. Couple this with the increased participation mandate inherent in the strategic plan, the introduction of 20 free hours to facilitate this and the increase of overseas childcare chains and it is becoming evident that a qualified teacher shortage is likely to happen. This is occurring because the demand for early childhood education is surpassing the speed in which teachers can gain their qualifications (a minimum of three years for the diploma qualification) and the current number of qualified teachers within the industry.

In this climate the importance of distance teacher education cannot be ignored. Indeed as Murphy et al (2006) contend "*distance education supports the government agenda to increase the number of qualified staff in early childhood education services, through providing an accessible training option to students who may not easily be able to access other training options – for example, rural students, students in paid employment, students who are parents, and students without transport*" (p.5). As many of the students who engage in ITE in the ECE sector are already working in services, distance learning is becoming increasingly popular and many institutions are adapting their programmes to accommodate this need. There is a tension with the difficulty of transferring a face to face programme to distance mode and the different support ITE students require when learning through distance education. Clarke (2000, p.2) discovered in her research in the UK that while "*flexible learning programmes often claim that the processes of teaching and learning can be liberated from the constraints of time and place*" they are also located within a space, or a context so require structures in place to support students within these contexts. The data gathered from this research indicates that distance education is indeed the preferred option for many engaged in ITE and this will be discussed in future chapters.

At the 2005 NZARE Conference in Dunedin, a paper was presented on improving tertiary student outcomes in their first year of study (TLRI project). In this paper, drawing on Bourdieu's theory, Zepke and Leach (2005) claim that institutions need to adapt to students and that institutional culture should value teaching and relationships and have a learner centred approach. This work also acknowledges that students' lives are a major factor in retention and that even good students have moments of doubt. While teacher support and encouragement and good information on courses are important to student success, an adult student's sense of belonging is arguably the most important factor in

their success in tertiary education. Indeed in their later dissemination of the 2004 findings, Zepke and Leach (2005) state that *“where this [cultural capital] is valued and fits with the existing institutional culture they are more likely to be a ‘fish in water’ (Thomas, 2002, p.431) and to achieve”* (p.8).

In New Zealand, we are entering into a new world of education with the changes to the compulsory sector curriculum and the introduction of the Māori education strategy, Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 1997c). In their presentation to the 2005 NZARE Conference in Dunedin, Boyd, Hipkins and Bolstad (2005) shared their research into life long learning, in particular the dispositions required for people to become life long learners. While their research was conducted in the compulsory school sector, it has resonance for this study. While adults returning to education may be seen as life long learners, they can struggle with their confidence to achieve in the initial stages of their study (Murphy et al, 2006). The research by Boyd et al (2005) raises a challenge to the compulsory sector to include dispositions in their curriculum, *“to foster the dispositions needed to engage with ongoing learning”* and they contend that this *“is caught up in the sweeping social changes broadly characterised as the “knowledge society”*. Gilbert (2005) outlines the nature and implications of these changes, and identifies both economic and social justice imperatives for ensuring that all students leave school with a sense that they can continue to learn” (p.3).

Dispositions education in the compulsory sector is a very exciting development and one that has been part of the early childhood curriculum for many years. Positive learning dispositions also enable adults to succeed in tertiary education. This researcher believes that dispositions education is the way forward within the fast paced society in which we live. Gifting children the ability to transform their knowledge throughout their lives, across their multiple contexts will indeed ensure that they are equipped to cope on the shifting carpet that is the knowledge society, based within the knowledge economy. More importantly, the benefits to the future generations cannot be ignored.

In the next chapter the methodologies and methods used to conduct this research are outlined. Chapter four contains a presentation of the results from this research while Chapter five continues the exploration of the literature alongside the research findings.

## Chapter Three: Research methodologies and research methods

Mutch (2005) cautions that the meanings of the terms research methodologies and research methods are often seen as synonymous. She believes that *“methodologies link theoretical frameworks to methods”* and *“methods are a coherent set of strategies or a particular process that you are using to gather one kind of data”* (p. 108). For this research, the terms defined by Mutch (2005) are used as headings for sub sections that include a description of both the methodologies and methods. The theoretical underpinnings of the research are also explored within these sections.

### Methodology

The research design is underpinned by the socio cultural theories that abound in early childhood education, especially the notion that learning is situated within contexts; time and physical contexts. For this research, the student teacher’s contexts include the tertiary education provider; their work place; their home and their student cohort as well as the time in their lives in which they are situated. Bronfenbrenner (Drewery & Bird, 2005) would describe these contexts as systems, systems that are contingent on each other and interlinking. To research within a socio cultural paradigm, a phenomenological approach is most useful as the ability to be subjective, to describe and to interpret how a person is situated within their various contexts allows the freedom to gauge how they make sense of the world. A phenomenological approach is also well suited to the philosophy of the programme of study the participants are engaged in where children are seen as active learners entitled to quality education provided by teachers who understand the diverse ways in which children make sense of their world (The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, 2002).

Denscombe (2003) describes phenomenology as *“an approach that focuses on how life is experienced”* (p.97). Using phenomenological methods when conducting research allows the researcher to elicit the views of individuals to explain a phenomenon present within the world of the research participants, and often within the world of the researcher themselves. Mutch (2005) describes a phenomenon as *“the object, idea or activity under scrutiny”* (p.222) while Denscombe (2003) believes that *“a phenomenon is something that stands in need of an explanation”* (p. 97) and the Oxford Dictionary (1994) as

*“observed or apparent object, fact or occurrence; remarkable person or thing”* (p.473).

For this research, a phenomenon is a mix of all these descriptions; an observed activity under scrutiny and in need of an explanation. A tension occurs in the analysis of phenomenological data, and that is the faithful representation of the experiences of others. This tension is explored in the ethics section of this chapter.

While phenomenological research is largely descriptive, that is it describes the experiences of the participants through their interactions with their world, it also lends itself to exploring the key common features of those experiences. In this research, the descriptions focus on the participant's experiences but also *“focuses on how [the participants] come to see things as they are”* (Denscombe, 2003, p.101). In other words, how their understandings of the world have been constructed through their experiences.

The researcher's observation and experience of a phenomenon has been the starting point of this research, but in the tradition of Heidegger (1962) cited in Denscombe (2003) this research seeks to explore how *“the essential qualities of the experience [that] exist at a general level”* (p.104). The hope of the researcher is that the data gathered through the stories recorded will go some way towards explaining the phenomenon of success for a group within the tertiary sector who have previously not experienced success according to more traditional views of success. Following the participants' learning journey thus far by recording their stories should enable the researcher to answer the questions outlined in the methods section.

A phenomenological approach enables a clearer understanding of how a person experiences their world by allowing the person to describe phenomena within their world, in this case through the telling of their life stories. All three layers of this research contribute to the stories of this student cohort, therefore fit within the parameters of phenomenology. The first layer used the demographic information contained in the cohort's application forms to present a picture of the contexts of those researched, the contexts from which they told their stories. The second layer signalled their context further in that the participants wrote the answers to the questionnaire in a way that showed how they experienced their world. This was of course limited by the scope of the questions asked. The final layer was very much situated within the phenomenological and socio cultural paradigms as the participants were interviewed whilst in their own

homes, at a time of their choosing. This allowed them to describe their experiences, to tell their stories, while situated within their dominant context.

The telling of life stories is integral to a phenomenological approach. During the interviews, the participants were encouraged to tell their stories thus enabling the researcher to *“enter into the worlds of real people engaged in everyday situations. For a short time [we] get to imagine not only what the experiences being recalled might have felt like for the tellers but to consider how we would think, feel and act if faced with similar situations. In the process of engaging with stories, we construct meaning.....Stories allow us to glimpse the worlds of others and come to know our own world more fully”* (McDrury & Alterio, 2002, p. 36). And this certainly was a two way process where the researcher and the participants often engaged in reflective dialogue, reflecting on their joint realities and making sense of this within their own contexts. Examples of this were evident in this research and are discussed in Chapter 5. McDrury and Alterio (2002) go on to describe how storying meshes with Vygotsky’s socio cultural theory by describing the work of Witherall (1991) who believed that we find meaning in the context of relationships through interactions. They also describe how *“like teaching, story telling is a discursive process and an interpretive practice...[that] help students make connections between self and other, subject and object, and thought and feeling”* (McDury and Alterio, 2002, p33-34).

Using storying as a data gathering method in her research, Norum (1998, p.13) discovered that *“telling stories is a very human thing to do and we all have stories. ‘Humans are story telling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2)”*. She goes on to say that *“by telling stories, we remember our past, invent our present, revision our future, discover compassion and create community with kindred souls (Keen & Valley-Fox, 1973)”* (Norum, 1998, p.13). For this research, there was the ability to not only tell individuals stories but also to find commonalities within the stories and these commonalities are explored in future chapters. During her research using group, focussed conversations as a method, Nutbrown (1999 in Clough and Nutbrown, 2002, p.77) outlined how *“what I was interested in was not simply their stories and experiences of work with young children but also the way in which their collective experiences fitted together”*. This is also true for

this research and to an extent the interviews used individual focussed conversations as a method.

There is a caution in telling the stories of others, one that became evident at various points during this research. Many of those interviewed were initially reluctant to tell their story honestly, as they believed that they were perhaps the only ones to experience life in this way, a notion further explored in the ethics section of this chapter. Norum contends that *"for [peoples] stories to be heard they must be told. For people to want to tell their stories, they must first "see [themselves] as a speaking subject worthy of voice"* (hooks, 1994, p.149 in Norum, 1998, p.3). The participants, at times, struggled with the notion that their experiences were valid and worthy of telling, that although they are *"the authorities of their own life stories"* (Norum, 1998, p.14) they asked for reassurance. Stories also *"shape our social reality as much as by what they exclude as what they include"* (McLaren & Tadeu de Silver, 1993, p.73 in Norum,1997, p.15) and the researcher suspects that there is more to tell on the experiences of those interviewed than can be told in an hour.

To fully explore the themes contained within the questionnaires and interviews, the interpretive social science approach has been used to analyse the data. Neuman (2000) describes the interpretive social science (ISS) approach as *"the foundation of social research techniques that are sensitive to context, that use various methods to get inside the ways others see the world"* (p.75). The true test of the validity of research undertaken using an ISS approach, is that it makes sense to those taking part in the research. For this research, the participants were posted the transcripts of the interviews and through signing and returning these accepted the transcripts as their views; their understandings of how they view their world. Comments made on the returned transcripts are also used in the research whether they are included as extra reflections or corrections by the participants thus including the *"meaningful everyday experiences"* (Neuman, 2000, p.73) of those studied. The researcher hopes that by including the voice of the participants and analysing the common themes using ISS that the phenomenological approach will be honoured.

## Research methods

The mixed methods aspect of this research design is counter to a truly phenomenological approach. The researcher used a more quantitative method with the analysis of existing documents to gain an overview of the possibilities of this research, in other words to check if the research was appropriate and useful to conduct. By analysing the prospective student teacher's application forms patterns of qualifications, work experiences and other socio cultural data were gathered to ascertain whether the phenomenon informally hypothesised by the researcher existed. Evidence from the application forms confirmed the researcher's hypothesis and provided motivation to continue to explore the topic, ultimately to establish a small group of volunteers willing to share their life experiences with the researcher through semi-structured interviews.

The aim of the research is to answer the following research questions:

- What are the stories of the Semester 2 2005 cohort of students of The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand who enrol in the Diploma of Teaching (ECE)?
- What journeys bring them to enrol in this programme?

Subsidiary question:

- How is the cultural capital of learners who come to study later in their lives recognised?

The research contained three layers:

1. The gathering of data from the application forms of a particular cohort of students.
2. Questionnaires sent to all of the cohort
3. Semi structured interviews with 10 volunteers from those who returned the questionnaire.

Layer 1. Data gathering from existing documentation

The researcher gathered demographic and socio cultural information from the application forms for The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand Diploma of Teaching (ECE) Semester 2 2005 student intake. Geographic location, age, marital status, children, educational background, ethnicity, work history and any other relevant information was gathered from the application forms and recorded in a table. The gathering of this

information reinforced for the researcher that the phenomenon observed did indeed exist and it set the scene for the first and second research questions by providing background information, for example on the cohort's highest formal qualification prior to engaging in this course of study. Delving into the data contained on the application forms indicated to the researcher that this was indeed a very diverse student cohort with a wide age range, place of residence and educational qualifications.

## Layer 2. Questionnaires

Questionnaires, attached as Appendix 2a, were sent to each of the students in the Semester 2 2005 intake with a return envelope, an information sheet (Appendix 2b) and a permission form (Appendix 2c) if they were prepared to be interviewed. Each of the questionnaires was numbered to enable the researcher to link these to the data from the participants' application form. The purpose of the questionnaires was two fold. Firstly they were sent out to enable the researcher to gather some more in depth data on the participants. For this purpose the questions were formulated from the gaps in the data gathered from the application forms, for example in the section that looked at education the questions were designed to ascertain what school was like for the participants rather than an outline their formal qualification.

The second purpose was to seek a group of volunteers to interview. For this purpose, a form was attached for those returning the questionnaire to either accept or decline the invitation to be part of the interviews. In seeking permissions in this way, the data gathered was able to be triangulated from the three sources using a common numbering system. This also allowed questions to be formulated that were relevant to each of the participants. The questions asked during the interview included reference to the answers the participants gave in their questionnaires.

The questionnaire was split into four sections: Life style and family; educational background; employment and current study. Each section contained a variety of questions, mostly asking the participants to describe their contexts. The exception to this was question 34 where the participants were asked to rate statements on a Likert Scale. The questionnaire contained 35 questions in all, including one at the end of each section where the participants could add any extra comments they wanted. The questionnaires were analysed under the question headings, identifying any common themes that

emerged while including comments specific to individuals. This method enabled the researcher to establish how the participants made sense of their world, individually and collectively, in keeping with the ISS methodology. By allowing the participant's voice to be heard through the research, the researcher was able to "*share[s] the feelings and interpretations of the people he or she studies and see things through their eyes*" (Neuman, 2000, p.71). This allowed the researcher and those sharing in the research, including the participants and those who later read the research, to "*discover how people construct meaning in natural settings*" (Neuman, 2000, p.71) through their life experiences.

The initial data analysis assisted in forming guiding questions for the interviews, but more importantly, started to build a picture of the cohort, who they were, where they had come from and what brought them to studying at this time in their lives, again in keeping with the ISS methodology. Their answers also contributed to the overall findings of this research and when added to the other data, further confirmed the researcher's original hypothesis. An exploration of how the data gathered from the questionnaires contributed to the answering of the research questions is included in chapters four and five.

### Layer 3. Semi structured interviews.

Phone interviews were conducted with 10 of the 11 participants who volunteered by returning their permission form. The eleventh volunteer was unable to be contacted as the number she gave was no longer current. There were barriers with the interviews, the main one being the logistics of conducting interviews by distance. The researcher chose to interview by telephone for two reasons. The first was that it was in keeping with the distance nature of the programme of study the participants are undertaking. The second was of a more practical nature, the travel and costs involved to ensure national coverage of the research participants. Another reason became apparent during the interviews and that was that telephone interviews were more anonymous than face-to-face interviews. Given the openness of the participants, the researcher surmised that this method perhaps allowed the participants to be more open and honest than in a face-to-face context. The participants were also interviewed in their own homes at a time they had chosen meaning they could relax and fully engage with the researcher.

The interviews were conducted with a recorder and the researcher and, as mentioned above, the timing was chosen by the participants. The recorder was an experienced typist who word processed the responses of the participants as they spoke. The researcher recorded the questions. The interviews took from between 35-50 minutes and consisted of the guiding questions, attached as Appendix 3a, plus other questions as they arose where comments or questionnaire responses needed clarifying or further exploration.

The participants were sent the transcripts of the interviews and signed their consent for these to be used in the research (Appendix 3b). They were asked to check the accuracy of their transcript and given space to make further comments after time for reflection on the interview content and process. These comments are also explored in the analysis section. The interview data was analysed by identifying common themes across participants or groups of participants as well as including their individual voice when telling their personal stories. This allowed the researcher to ascertain how individuals made sense of their world within their socio cultural context, in other words how their *"meaning system is generated and sustained"* (Neuman, 2000, p.85) within their context.

To allow for the triangulation of the data, this information was applied to the application and questionnaire data through a numbering system that maintained confidentiality while enabling the researcher to build a clearer picture of the research participants. This method allowed for the interpretation of a variety of data applied to each participant to enable a deeper description of how the participants saw themselves situated in their contexts. It also allowed the researcher rich data to be used to answer the research questions and to explore the changes over the time of the research (3 years) in their contexts. As Neumann (2000) contends data gathered and analysed using ISS methodologies is *"rich in detail, sensitive to context and capable of showing the complex processes or sequences of social life"* (p.419).

### **Replication of this research**

There is the ability to replicate this research within The Open Polytechnic and within other tertiary institutions. It would be particularly interesting to gain a more comprehensive picture of those participating in initial teacher education in the early

childhood education sector, by replicating this research across the providers from this sector. With the implementation of the 20 free hours of early childhood education for three and four year olds, there is a shortage of qualified teachers to fill existing positions in the sector meaning that places in programmes are in high demand. Will this factor, as well as the government's focus on this sector, affect the quality of those training to be early childhood teachers? A topic, perhaps, for another research project.

To replicate this research in other institutions a similar analysis of the application forms could be conducted. Demographic data are available, as all students must fill in an application form to enter their chosen course of tertiary study. The demographic data could be collated from a variety of different institutions to provide a larger sample of students than this research. Gathering information about students from across tertiary institutions, throughout the country may give a more accurate picture of participation than this small study undertaken in one institution. Collated evidence of New Zealand wide tertiary participation may allow for accurate targeted provision of tertiary education to particular groups as well as seeing to whom tertiary education is accessible. While the questionnaire layer could be omitted in future research, the data gathered in these added to the overall picture of the socio cultural status of the students.

Interviews of a sample of the cohorts researched would offer data that is more detailed. While interviewing a sample of participants from the institutions would be a major undertaking, the data gathered may be valuable in making social comment about the changing nature of education in New Zealand, across sectors. In particular, it may highlight the importance of open entry for those who had previously little experience of success in the formal education sector. The notion that success at tertiary level later in life is not dependent on secondary school success or failure may be useful to explore through researching a much larger section of the tertiary student population.

### **Ethics**

Ethics are critical to the integrity of research. The consideration of the ethical issues of the research conducted protects the organisation where research is undertaken, the researcher and, most importantly, the research participants. The term ethics refers to a code of conduct or practice that must be applied by the researcher to their research. Neuman (2000) believes that *"the researcher has a moral and professional obligation to*

*be ethical*" (p.90) while Mutch (2005) outlines how ethics are critical due to the researcher being in a position of power. The implementation of ethical practices is often guided by Codes of Ethics. Codes of Ethics are seen as the hallmark of a profession and in education are evident in many institutions, including New Zealand Teachers Council. Correct ethical approvals were gained to conduct this research and a copy of the ethical clearance letter is attached as Appendix 1a.

To begin this section on ethics for this research, the researcher seeks to outline an ethical dilemma faced when analysing all three layers of the data. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) ask "*how does a researcher make sense of data derived from the voice of others?*" (p.82). The researcher had to decide how to ensure that the voice of the participants was being heard within the research while maintaining their anonymity. The phenomenological and interpretive social science approaches also require analysis of the data that is the faithful representation of the experiences of others. For the analysis of the first data gathering layer, including comments made on the application forms that may be identified by the participants and may also identify the participants was considered. This was particularly important for this layer as, although correct permissions were gained from their tertiary institution, all students in the cohort had their applications analysed. The permission letter gained from the Open Polytechnic is attached as Appendix 1b. To ensure anonymity, the comments were grouped as main themes and recorded and analysed collectively rather than individually.

As individual consents were gained for the questionnaire and interview layers, direct quotes could be used giving the participants a voice while maintaining their anonymity. The use either of pseudonyms for the interviews or not including identifiers from the questionnaires further allowed for the participant anonymity. The grouping of similar themes was also used where practical. For these layers, the participants were fully informed of the purpose of the research through the letter accompanying the questionnaire. By returning the questionnaire, they were volunteering to participate in this layer while additional permissions were sought for the interviews (Appendix 2c).

Those who volunteered for the interviews were phoned and asked if they were still willing to participate. During this phone call, a date and time was set for the interview as well a discussion on the structure of the interview. The participants were able to

withdraw at any time, including the withdrawal of their interview transcript. A typist recorded the interview data and although the transcribing was mostly accurate, there were some details of conversation that were not recorded in the transcription. For the most part, this additional conversation had little bearing on the research questions but may have identified the participants.

The other major ethical dilemma faced by the researcher were the power issues inherent in researching within one's own organisation. The power issues were two fold. The first was the organisation's power to influence the research by restricting access to relevant information that may be sensitive, commercially and legally. There is also the tension around publishing deep analysis where it shows that the organisation's processes may not be as robust as is required in their field.

The second issue was around the power of the lecturer over the cohort. As the researcher was working as a lecturer, the students from the lecturer's specific cohort were to be excluded from the interviews. Because the questionnaires had few identifiers, they were not excluded from this layer. The exclusion of participants did not occur as the researcher gained changed employment prior to the interviews being conducted. Because of their interest in the research being conducted, three of those who volunteered to be interviewed were former students of the researcher. The now neutral status of the researcher enabled a more honest response from the participants, something commented on by several of those interviewed.

An ethical issue that became apparent during the interviews was that the participants were telling very personal stories often involving the revisiting of times in their lives when they were unhappy or stressed. While their comments on these times were recorded, the participants were given the option of including these or not. To achieve this, the researcher sent the participants their transcripts to approve, change or add to as they felt appropriate. Allowing them space to add to their stories after a time of reflection served to give them power in the process and this worked well for the participants, with most of them adding comments before returning the signed transcript. The researcher also acknowledged the feelings of the participants during the interviews by actively listening to and valuing their stories.

## **Summary**

This chapter has outlined the methodologies and the methods for this research. Phenomenological methodologies were used to conduct the research which occurred within a socio cultural paradigm using mixed methods. The ethics of the research were explored, especially the integrity of the stories and the ability of the researcher to maintain the participants' anonymity. Possible areas of future research have been suggested along with suggestions on how this research may be replicated in the future. The next chapter contains a layered analysis of the data gathered. The data is further explored in Chapter 5 and linked to the literature.

## **Chapter 4: The Layers of Data**

In this chapter, the data from all three layers of this research is presented in a layered data analysis. There are three sections to this chapter. The first section of this chapter outlines the first layer of data; the demographic data gathered from the entire Semester 2 2005 cohort. The second section analyses the second layer; the questionnaire data returned by nineteen of this cohort, while section three summarises the data gathered from the third layer; the interviews of ten volunteers from within the cohort. While these layers are discussed independently in this chapter, they are synthesised in Chapter 5 where the common themes that have emerged are linked to the literature.

### **Layer one: The Demographic Data**

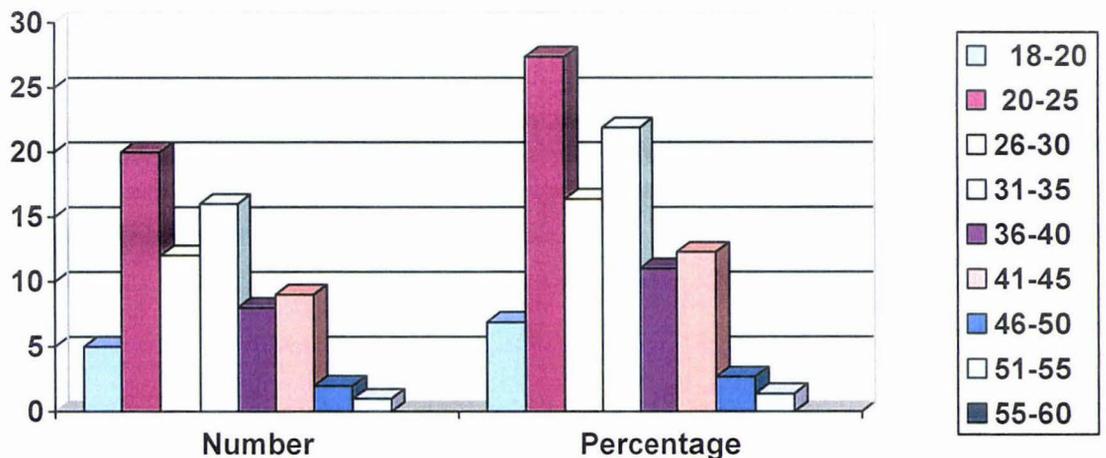
The Open Polytechnic Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) Level 7 programme was first accredited and approved in late 1998. It was later redeveloped and gained Institute of Technology and Polytechnic (ITP) and New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) approval in April 2002. There is demographic data recorded within the 2002 documentation provided to ITP and NZTC and this data is used to situate the current student demographic data within the norms for this programme of study, to allow a point of comparison.

The demographic data for this research was gathered from the application forms of the seventy three students accepted into The Open Polytechnic Diploma of Teaching (ECE) programme for Semester 2, 2005. The raw data was collated in a data grid under ten headings including age, ethnicity, children and education and work histories. The data was further analysed by using statistical processes to create percentages of the whole to enable discussion. This also ensured the confidentiality of the cohort as no one person could be identified from the information. A selection of the other comments made on the application forms is also included in the data presented while taking care to protect the anonymity of individuals.

When analysing the age groupings 5 year spans are used, except for those under 20 in which the grouping was 18-20 year olds. The entry age for programme is 18 years of

age. The 18-20 age group also has strict academic intake criteria and is traditionally a small group, with most school leavers choosing to attend a face to face institution. None of the 18-20 year olds accepted into the programme (4) consented to being interviewed and only one returned the questionnaire.

Graph 4.1 below shows the spread of ages for the Semester Two 2005 cohort of students. There is a slightly different demographic picture for the 2005 cohort when compared with the information in the 2002 re-approval documents. The 2005 cohort is on average younger and more diverse. In the 2002 documentation, the majority of the cohort was over the age of thirty (62%) while this cohort is appreciably younger with 49% being over the age of thirty. In 2002, the students ranged in age from twenty to sixty years with the majority of the students (74%) aged between twenty one and forty (21-30: 37%; 31-40: 37%). The average age of the students was 35 years. For the 2005 group, the average age was 31 and the age range was younger, from 18 to 55 years.



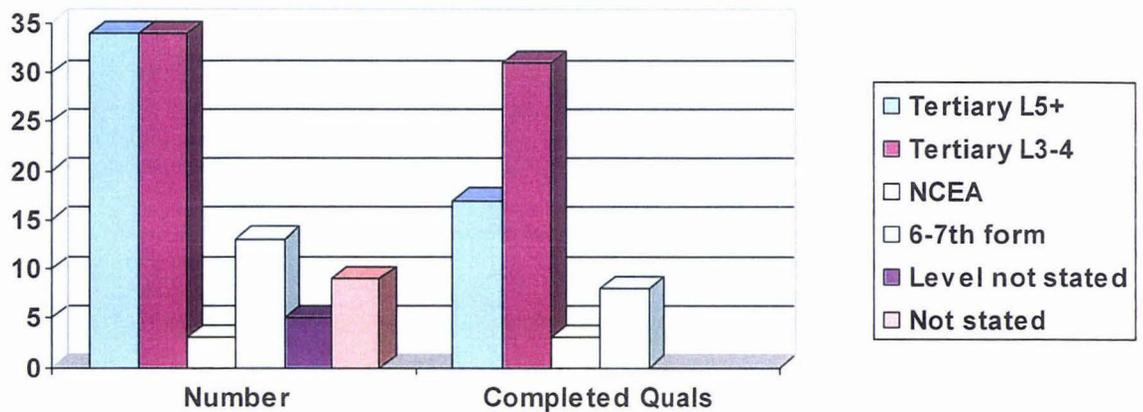
Graph 4.1 Ages of the cohort

In the applications, seven (9.6%) of the cohort indicated that they include Māori as part of their ethnicity with the vast majority (71%) indicating that they are of Pakeha ethnicity with 8.2% acknowledging both ethnicities. This indicates an increase of Māori students since the 2002 Open Polytechnic data where 7.5% of the students identified as Māori and 86% identified as Pakeha. When comparing these percentages to the overall participation of female Māori and Pakeha in study in the Level 5-7 Diploma qualification

per percentage of population, they feature as 12.7% and 9.2% respectively. While this may not allow a direct comparison, the percentages of the Pakeha population enrolled at a bachelor's level of study increases to 28.5% while for Māori it increases to 23.1% (<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics>).

The marital status of the cohort is almost evenly split with 44% (32) of the cohort single at the time they applied for the diploma programme and 47% (34) married. The other 9% did not indicate their marital status. Interestingly, 41% (30) of the cohort did not have children, a difference in the demographics from earlier cohorts in this programme. Almost 14% (10) had only one child and 10% (7) had more than three children. Two of the cohort had grandchildren and one had a step child. Twenty six percent (21) of the cohort had children under 5 and a further 26% had children aged between 5 and 10 years. The next highest group was those who had adult children, 16% (13). Children in the 15-20 age group were underrepresented at 5% (4) while 15% (12) did not state their children's ages.

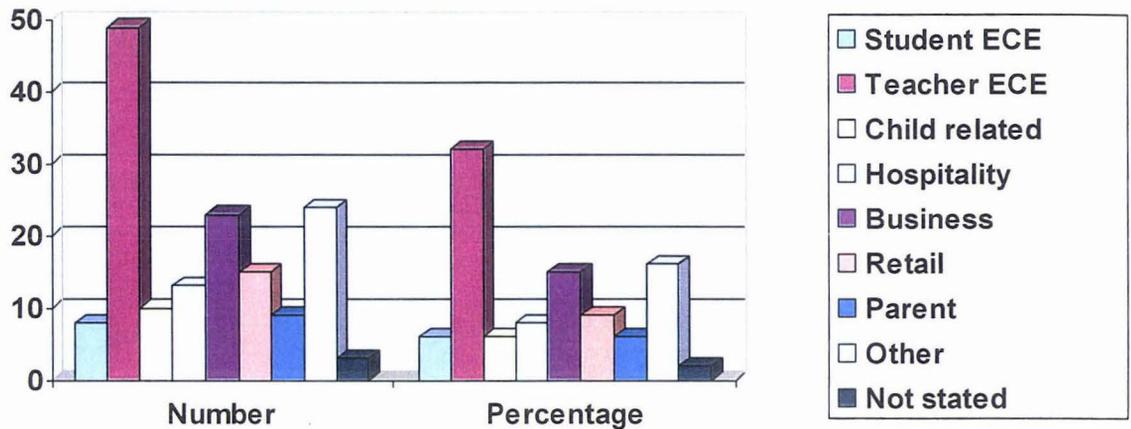
Where this was stated on the application forms, data was gathered on the cohort's education background and their work history. The participants highest education achievement, secondary or in some cases tertiary, were collated. The education backgrounds the cohort included on their application forms show that 78 % (57) have participated in some form of previous tertiary education with almost 51% (37) having completed the qualification studied. Many have listed multiple qualifications and all qualifications listed, completed and uncompleted, have been included in Graph 4.2. The information about the education back grounds of the full cohort is important to this research as it provides a base for comparison and sets the scene for the stories shared in the next two layers of the research. Interestingly the 2005 cohort has a higher level of education than the 2002 data indicated where the majority of the students did not have a strong academic background. There is more detailed information on the education backgrounds specific to the individual participants who returned the questionnaire and were interviewed in later sections of this chapter. The Graph 4.2 below shows the educational status of the cohort at the time they began their ECE qualifications journey.



Graph 4.2 Qualifications of the cohort

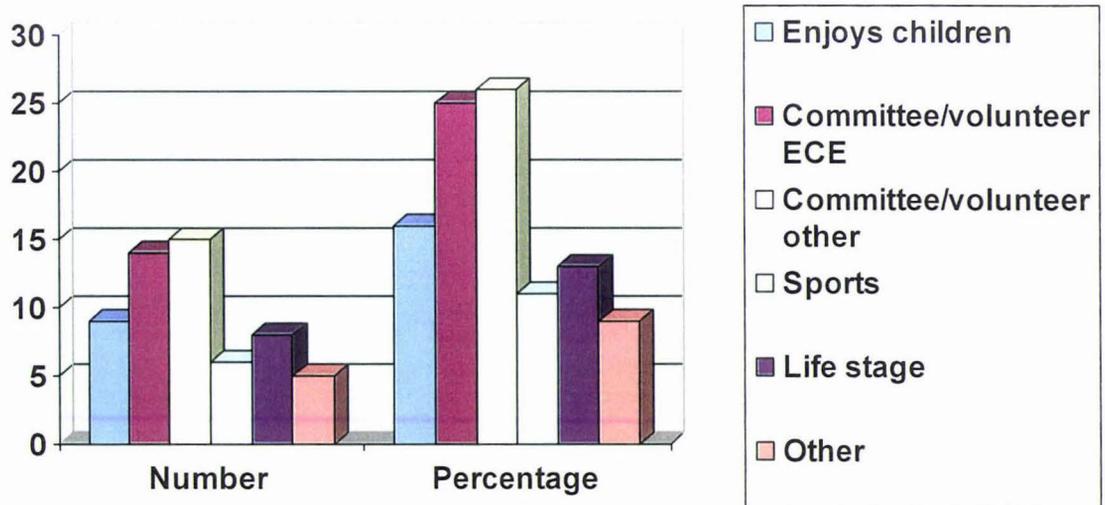
There was good information on the application form about the cohort's current and past work status. The application form data showed that 32% (49) were working in early childhood education at the time of applying for the diploma programme with another 6% (10) working in child related positions such as teacher aid in a primary school. A further 6% (9) were stay at home parents. Overall, 44% of the cohort were working in child related industries, although a caution needs to be added for these statistics. One aspect of The Open Polytechnic acceptance process for students into this programme relates to an interest in working in early childhood education. Indeed, there was a requirement at this time for the students to do so as part of their Diploma studies once they had been accepted into the programme.

Many of the respondents indicated that they had worked in several fields hence the higher number of responses (154) recorded in Graph 4.3. For clarity of display the researcher categorised the working experiences into student, teacher ECE, hospitality, business (including office administration, banking and marketing), retail, parent and other. Other is an interesting category as it includes health workers, a car painter, cleaners, a Department of Conservation ranger as well as manual workers. The high percentage in the business category is mostly due to the fact that many who worked in that industry had several positions listed and these were all counted towards the total.



Graph 4.3 Work experiences prior to applying to study

There is also a section on the application form where the applicants complete a written exercise and another where extra comments are invited. Graph 4.4 illustrates the main themes of the comments made. In the other category some of the comments are that this is the opportunity for the prospective student to work in their dream job; that they are a music teacher; unemployed due to illness or have an interest in special needs teaching. The life stage comments relate to those who have wanted to train to teach for years and now this is their time to do so. These participants are mostly in the over 35 age group.



Graph 4.4 Comments from the application forms

On the application forms the applicants indicated how they had heard about the Open Polytechnic Diploma of Teaching (ECE) programme and this is important information when considering the marketing of this programme. Word of mouth advertising from the workplace, friends and current students account for almost 55% of applications for the programme with all media advertising rating only almost 21%. Only 5% stated that they accessed programme information through direct contact with The Open Polytechnic.

There was a split between expected full and part time study for the cohort with 52% indicating on their application forms that they intend to study full time. Interestingly, only 5% of the cohort did not state their intentions. While this is the applicant's expectation prior to beginning study it may change during their course of study. Four (5.5%) applicants had applied for TeachNZ scholarships which is low when the high number of rural applicants and the focus of TeachNZ on students in early childhood education teacher training are considered. When discussing this with the lecturing staff, the researcher learned that many more of this cohort were advised to apply for this scholarship at their individual interviews. The updated numbers were not available to the researcher.

The application forms provided a wealth of information that situates the cohort within their socio cultural contexts. By exploring this surface level information and linking it to the data gathered in the next two layers, a clearer picture is beginning to emerge of the lives of this cohort; of their family situations and their life stages. Deeper level information is explored through the questionnaires and the interviews while a numbering system allows the researcher to move through the data from each of the layers to build a clearer picture of the cohort, to get to know them better to be able to record and share their stories more effectively.

### **Layer Two: The Questionnaires**

There was a disappointing return of the questionnaires. Of the 73 sent out, 19 (26%) were returned. The low return could possibly mean that there is not a truly representative sample of the cohort. The low return may also be due to a number of other factors, the main one of these relating to the timing of the questionnaire. Due to delays with gaining ethical approval (included as Appendix 1) the questionnaires were sent out to the cohort

after they had received their course materials and had taken part in their first workshop. The researcher's intention was for the cohort to have the questionnaires in the time between being accepted into the programme and the start of the semester. The researcher believed that timing of the research in the gap between the cohort being accepted to the programme and receiving their course materials may have ensured a higher percentage return. There may have been other contributing factors including the confidence of the respondent to complete the questionnaire and time to do this while managing family and the new course of study. Despite the low return rate, there was rich data in the questionnaires received as the analysis shows.

Taking onto account the age grouping of those who have consented to be interviewed, it was interesting that despite 16% of the cohort falling in the 26-30 age group, there were no respondents from this age group. The only respondent over 50 completed the questionnaire and was willing to be interviewed. The percentage return from the largest group (31-35) was also lower than the older age groups. When compared to the total cohort, the percentage return was low.

The questionnaires were analysed by grouping together the answers to each of the questions on a raw data grid. Common themes were extracted from the data and individual comments relevant to the research were also recorded under the questions. The following analysis is split into the sections on the questionnaire; lifestyle and family; educational background; employment and current study. Under each of the sections, the participant's comments on the questionnaires are included as well as the common themes that emerged through the analysis of the questionnaire data. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix 2a.

### *Section 1: Lifestyle and family*

In the first section of the questionnaire the respondents were asked eleven questions relating to their lifestyle and families. Among these were questions relating to their community and their roles within their community.

The respondents came from a wide variety of communities and they described their communities from 'very small gossipy' to a 'wonderful neighbourhood'. Many of those

who responded live in rural areas or small towns. It is interesting that their descriptors of their communities, of the contexts within which they are living, working and studying at this time in their lives, tend to be of the experiences they have had there, for example 'had a child', 'strong family traditions' and 'was in hairdressing competitions'. Other comments include peaceful, picturesque, friendly, community oriented, close to the beach, relaxing and safe. While this is only a selection of the answers to the questions in this section, they are typical of the group. When asked for more detail about their communities during the interviews, once again the respondents' experiences in the places where they lived or grew up were foremost in their minds.

When asked where else they had lived, six of the respondents had only lived in one place other than their current residence and two had lived in the same place all their lives with one commenting "Gisborne only never wanted to move". One person had lived in seven different places including overseas (Europe and the Pacific). Seven of the respondents have lived for a time overseas (Australia, Singapore, the UK and Europe, Papua New Guinea) with two recording that they were born in England. Seven of the respondents had lived in three or more different places in their lives to date.

Of interest is the level of involvement in the community the respondents had, especially those in the older age groups. Five of the respondents had roles in sports clubs in their community with eight taking part in sporting activities, three of these in multiple sports. Other community activities undertaken include church; PTA; Board of Trustees; Le Leche League; teacher aid; after school care volunteer; and support for children's school and kindergarten. One commented that she had had roles in the past but no current ones and another that she had no roles due to undertaking study. Ten of the respondents had no roles in the community although, of these, four were under 25 and three were new to their communities.

When asked to describe their family eight responded with a comment about their families being close or tight with three of these adding that their families were small. One respondent had family in the UK only and one commented that her family had "been through a lot". Other descriptors included homely, easy going; sports minded; love a good laugh; the best; there for each other; supportive and fun; blended; children out flattening; fulfilling; separated; Māori dad there for children's cultural influence; busy; life

experienced; and "large, loud close, argumentative bloody fantastic". Overall, the respondents appear by their descriptions to mostly have had close family units.

There were two questions that asked about the respondents' ethnicity and what their ethnicity means to them. The researcher chose to explore this question separately to both ensure the respondents anonymity and to extract a more detailed response. Of the respondents, six identified Māori as part of their ethnicity. One of these is Pakeha who identifies strongly with Māori as tāngata whenua. Seven of the respondents commented that their ethnicity makes them lucky, proud or fortunate to be a New Zealander. Other comments included that the respondents were still learning about their ethnicity; that they valued their ancestral roots; and that their ethnicity gave them a sense of belonging, especially within their family and when on New Zealand soil. From these comments it can be concluded that the respondents feel strongly situated within the New Zealand culture, whatever their ethnicity.

For the final question in this section the respondents were asked for any other comments. Only two chose to respond and these were both over 40: "if you live in NZ you are a kiwi" and "no regrets for decisions made in life". Interestingly, these two respondents have given permission to be interviewed and have made other insightful comments in this and other sections of the questionnaire.

### *Section 2 Educational background*

In this section of the questionnaire the respondents were asked about their schooling, including what they liked, disliked and the people who supported them. The first questions were phrased to ensure the respondents were able to refer to all stages of their education although most referred only to the high school years. An assumption has been made that one of the respondents did not like school as she stated that she didn't remember it despite being in the 31-35 age group. Thirteen of the respondents mentioned friends as being part of what they enjoyed about school with one of those who didn't like school stating that she wasn't popular. Four of the respondents mentioned teachers, three of these as an aspect of school they enjoyed and one as an aspect she didn't enjoy. Three commented on outside factors as part of them not enjoying school including one who had to leave at 17. The reason for having to leave was not stated on the questionnaire. Interestingly, only two of the respondents

commented on specific school subjects (art and transition class) as being useful to them later in their lives. Of the other respondents, six commented on respect and tolerance including valuing difference; three on communication; and eight on social/life skills as being useful in their later lives. The researcher explored these questions further through the interview process.

When asked who supported them, the respondents commented that no one supported them in either their school (10) or family (9) or declined to answer, possibly inferring that no one supported them. One commented that only her friends supported her at school. Six commented on teachers who supported them with one of those naming a teacher, while three had people encourage them at school but only in their sport. Only one respondent mentioned the passion of a teacher as being significant in this question. When asked who encouraged them in their study, three of the respondents recorded their parents as the people who encouraged them to study. One respondent named a friend's father as the person who gave strong encouragement for her to achieve. Two of the respondents mentioned brother's interests and skills as encouraging them in that area and one was encouraged through gaining a job. It was interesting that the wider whānau had an impact on only three of the respondents. This runs counter to much of the research conducted on school leavers and this will be discussed further in Chapter 5. From this data there are beginning indications that perhaps the influence of family is not stable over time and this too will be discussed in the next chapter.

The respondents were asked about their previous tertiary education and twelve of the had undertaken tertiary study with eleven of these completing their course of study. Two of the respondents completed their study while working through an apprenticeship with four others completing their study through distance or open learning. When commenting about their best memories from their previous study, five expressed a sense of achievement with comments like "passed the final exam"; "getting assessments back and achieving desired mark"; "proving to self I could do it". Two of the respondents mentioned friends as the best part of their study with four commenting on aspects of their course of study such as the learning environment.

Of the aspects the respondents did not enjoy, two commented on their tutor/mentor not being supportive with one commenting that their mentor questioned what she had done and the other commenting that the tutor had treated them like an "uneducated person".

Four respondents enjoyed their previous tertiary experiences with one commenting that she wanted to give up when things got too hard. One of the respondents commented that after completing her study, she was astonished that she “only got English school certificate”. The researcher took this to mean that she had achieved beyond her expectation during her later study and this is reinforced by her comment on the previous question that she was “proving to myself I could do it”. Only one of the respondents commented on leaving family to study as being an aspect she didn’t enjoy.

In the extra comments question, one person commented that having to leave home and earn money had removed tertiary education as an option for her when she was younger. This respondent is in the 46-50 age grouping. Another respondent commented on her aspirations in this section, outlining how her work as a teacher aid left her wanting to help children more. This respondent is in the 41-45 age grouping.

### *Section 3 Employment*

In this section the participants were asked about their work experiences, their best and worst memories and a description of their past and current work contexts. Many of the respondents had previous work experiences in multiple fields, with twelve of these including work in early childhood education or other fields of teaching as part of this experience. Thirteen of the respondents had previously worked in customer service in the hospitality, finance and retail sectors, including supermarkets. One of the respondents had completed an apprenticeship in car painting and had worked in that industry commenting that her worst memory about her previous employment was “doing the same thing everyday”, another cited being bored as her worst memory. Most of the comments in both the best and worst memories included the people the respondents worked with. Of these, six of the respondents mention relationships with children as their best memories with the others commenting on forming friendships with their colleagues. The respondent’s worst memories vary with eight commenting on aspects of management, such as being undervalued and being bullied.

When asked about their current employment, all except two of the respondents commented positively about their current employment. Descriptors used included fun; friendly; like a family to me; brilliant; relaxed; awesome kids; rewarding. One respondent

found her work to be “stressful, conflict ridden, noisy” while another made the comment “OK” but did not elaborate any further. Fifteen of the respondents commented that teaching in the early childhood education sector was their first choice of employment, although five of these had future goals that also included working in early childhood education, such as being a coordinator and working in kindergarten. Of the two who said no, both want careers with children, one as a psychologist and the other working with special needs children. One respondent did not answer this question although she did answer the other questions in this section.

Four of the respondents included extra comments in this section: “Working from home also gives me opportunities to study in the afternoon when the children are sleeping”; “I’m very lucky to be in the ECE centre with a wonderful lot of teachers to guide me, being able to recognise Te Whāriki in action”; “Life keeps throwing curve balls and I’m not good at catching!”; and “even though educators are qualified, some are unbelievably uneducated in some aspects of child care”. Three of these comments come from respondents who are over 40 years with the fourth from a respondent in the 36-40 age group.

#### *Section 4: Current Study*

In this section the participants were asked about their lives as students, both within their current and past study experiences. Fourteen of the respondents were encouraged to undertake a teacher education programme by another person. For two of the respondents their partner encouraged them and for one their parents. The rest of the respondents were encouraged by people from their work, or study, within the field of early childhood education. Four of the respondents stated that it was their choice or that they wanted to gain a qualification with two adding this to their response as well as including encouragement from other people. Three of the comments “boyfriend believed I could do it”; “telling me I could do it” and “helped me believe I had skills and could do it” indicated to the researcher that perhaps these respondents initially lacked the confidence to engage in a course of study. The first of these respondents was U20, the second in the 30-35 age group and the third in the 36-40 age group.

For fifteen of the nineteen of the respondents the field of early childhood education was their first choice of study. Of the others, two had undertaken apprenticeships previously and one would have preferred tourism and song writing. Of the three who commented on the question about why they didn't continue in their first choice of study, one realised they wanted to work with children; one had the barrier of no drivers licence preventing her from working as a nanny and one had children and realised her interest lay in this area. Another commented that earlier in her life she was unable to afford tertiary study, although this field of education was her first choice. This respondent is in the 41-45 age group.

When asked about their choice of ITE provider, fifteen of the respondents stated that The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand was their first choice with four qualifying this with comments on how they had looked around first. Of those who answered no to this questions, one preferred Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/NZCA; one had checked with other providers and listed the reasons in the next question why the Open Polytechnic was preferred; and one commented that it catered for distance learners and fitted her lifestyle.

For the question of why the respondents chose to study with the Open Polytechnic, the ability to work and study (8) was the main reason with flexibility (7) a close second and included by five of the respondents were comments about being able to work and study. Four of the respondents had heard about the Open Polytechnic from others, commenting that their workmates or others had enjoyed the programme. It was interesting that four of the respondents used the Open Polytechnic's slogan of own pace, own place or a close variation of that in their answer. Structural aspects such as no lectures; an easier travel option; catering for long distance learners; and course materials fitting with life style were also commented on. The initial contact with the institution was important to the respondents. One commented that she dealt with a nicer person (than another named provider). That the Open Polytechnic was perceived overall as a friendlier and more helpful organisation was indicated by several of the respondents.

When asked what they hope to gain from their study, greater knowledge of early childhood education in general and children in particular was stated by twelve of the

respondents. Being a great or effective teacher was stated by two of the respondents with other comments including change of lifestyle; respect in the ECE profession; more pay (2), confidence and job choice (2); a talent to share with children; confidence to gain further qualifications (2); more friends; the ability to identify under achievers and empathise with children from difficult back grounds; see education gaps to be addressed; a sense of achievement; sustainable income for family; satisfaction; knowledge of people; cultural understanding; te ao Māori; and make a difference in a centre somewhere. While these are diverse comments, they are mostly linked to education. The theme of confidence was also indicated in the interview data.

For the final question, the participants were asked to rate the importance of nine factors in their choice to study in the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) programme. Using a Likert Scale that contained five points ranging from very relevant to not relevant at all with the centre point being neutral. The factors were:

- to keep their job due to the new government requirements;
- that they enjoy working with children;
- that their employer required that they were qualified;
- as a role model for their children;
- to learn more about children so they could be a better teacher;
- that to be a teacher has been their lifelong ambition;
- that their home responsibilities had lessened or changed so that had more opportunity to study;
- a specific career goal;
- that they were upgrading from other ECE qualifications to the diploma.

The key factors that the participants saw as very relevant to them undertaking their Diploma of Teaching (ECE) study was being a better teacher (68%) and enjoying children (95%). In addition to this, for both these factors all the respondents (100%) felt them to be either very relevant or relevant. This is particularly interesting when it is considered that all of the participants are working in the sector, some for many years and some recently, some full time and some to meet the contact requirements of the diploma programme. The Open Polytechnic has a rigorous interview process and not all applicants are accepted into the programme. Part of the process is an individual interview and from this interview it is usually clear to the lecturers the people who have a

passion for teaching in the early years. Those who are clearly unsuitable are not accepted into the programme.

The government strategic plan requirement (Ministry of Education, 2002) that all teachers in early childhood education are qualified and registered by 2012 was a very relevant factor for undertaking study for only 26% of the respondents with a further 21% seeing this as relevant. While the researcher would have considered that this would be a highly relevant factor for all the respondents, 37% saw this as not relevant; one did not respond which may indicate a level of irrelevance; and 11% were neutral. A total of 53% saw this factor as not that important.

The employer requiring their staff to engage in training to gain relevant qualifications tells a similar story. Of the respondents, 48% indicated that it is very relevant or relevant while 52% saw this as either neutral or not relevant. This may indicate that perhaps the mandating of the requirement for qualified registered teachers is less important than the choice of people to become teachers. One respondent did comment that being qualified was a requirement of her gaining employment and this theme has emerged from the interview data as well.

Linked to these factors, the respondents were asked about upgrading their qualifications. Interestingly, all the respondents had an opinion on this with 42% seeing it as relevant or very relevant and 58% seeing it as not relevant. This, along with the prior learning and qualifications of the respondents recorded in the demographic data, shows that many are entering the programme with some previous tertiary study in the area of ECE. There are many different qualifications in early childhood education from generic certificates at NZQA Levels 3-5 to STAR courses and nanny certificates (usually Level 5). Most of these courses qualify people to work in the home with children. Some of these qualifications are able to be cross credited into the diploma programme but some are not, for example NZQA Level 3 or 4 certificates have no cross credit value while the NZ National Nanny Certificate (Level 5) has limited cross credit value. For some of the respondents the process of RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) was used to ascertain their level of entry to the programme and for others the process of APL (Assessment of Prior Learning) was used.

The more personal factors of teaching being a life long goal and a career ambition came through strongly with 53% including teaching as their lifelong goal as very relevant or relevant and 84% including their career ambition as very relevant or relevant. The life long goals of the respondents and their career ambitions were explored in greater depth through the interviews and some of the findings discussed in the next chapter are counter indicative to some of the literature the researcher has accessed. The family situations of the respondents, such as being role models for their children and their home responsibilities changing, were also a strong focus of the interviews and will be explored further in Chapter 5.

For the last question, the participants were asked for any final comments. Four of the respondents commented: One hopes diploma will allow right direction for work in special needs teaching as the hours and money not good at present; another commented that she has course four of the Playcentre NZQA training; one is looking forward to being interviewed; and finally one is hoping to have achieved her goal by December 2007.

### **Layer three: The Interviews**

To avoid repetition, the majority of the data from the interviews is analysed in Chapter 5 with the main themes of the findings summarised in this section. In Chapter 5 the participants will tell their stories, in their own voices, from within their own contexts while this section relies on the voice of the researcher to share the themes common across their stories. In Chapter 5, the interview data will be analysed in age groups, the respondents under 25 and the respondents over 25. In this analysis, the main themes of all of the interviews are discussed together because there was only one respondent under 25 interviewed. The researcher decided to split the age groups in this way for Chapter 5 because, when the analysis of the interview data was linked to the literature and the other layers of data, different themes emerged from these two groups. An example of this was the different experiences the under 25s had at school as compared to the respondents over the age of 25.

One of the key findings from the interview data was that the women interviewed had found their passion later in life or revisited an early passion that someone else, often family, had discouraged them from beginning. Four themes emerged from this finding; barriers to study; the academic ability of the participants; women's role in society at the time the participants were at secondary school and familial cultural capital.

The interviewees identified a myriad of barriers, many of them common across the age groupings, to them participating in their Diploma studies. High amongst these was their confidence in their own ability to succeed at tertiary study. This was linked to the second barrier, the academic ability of the participants. From their experiences at school and within their families, the women commented on their lack of confidence in their own abilities to succeed at this level of study, indeed one commented that she had put off undertaking diploma study for six years due to a lack of confidence. Others commented that their high school teachers and families had told them that study at this level was something they should not aspire to. Several commented that teachers told them to leave school as soon as they had something else to go to, usually a job, because it was pointless them staying at school. Others had family pressures that undermined their confidence in their abilities. One of these pressures was the cost of study to the family, both from the participant having to pay for study and the value of them being a working family member contributing to family finances. Indeed the financial barrier was one all of the participants commented on and the ability to work and study was one of the key factors that attracted them to the Open Polytechnic.

The other two themes; women's role in society at the time the participants were at secondary school and their familial cultural capital, had an effect on the interviewees not participating in study as school leavers. These themes came firstly from within their families and were reinforced through their schooling. There was an expectation from others that a career was pointless for the participants as they would leave work to have their families coupled with the fact that no one else in the family had participated in higher education. Whilst getting married and having a family was considered by others to be the end of a woman's working life in the time that most of the participants were schooled, their passion to become a teacher remained strong.

Through their aspirations to become teachers, many of the interviewees worked in child related industries as teacher aids and untrained teachers. They had worked alongside others who were qualified or undertaking study and gained confidence and motivation from their colleague's encouragement that they should also become qualified. This led many to apply for the diploma programme, although all of those interviewed commented on being surprised and thrilled to be accepted, perhaps once again indicating a lack of confidence. For some, studying led to divisions within their family, at the very least, a lack of understanding about why they were studying at this time in their lives. Some chose not to share this part of their lives with their wider family group.

Within the current climate of early childhood education, there is a requirement that teachers are qualified and registered by 2012 so the timing of the participants study meets the mandated requirements of the strategic plan for early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2002). In other words the timing of the participants undertaking study fits the politics of early childhood education in New Zealand at this time.

Timing is also related to the time in the participant's lives that they are undertaking study. For most, they have chosen this time because it suits their family situation. For some their children have grown up leaving them with time to do something for themselves; for some the timing meets a financial need; and for others this is the time when they have gained sufficient confidence to know that they can succeed in a course of study. For all of the participants, this is the right time in their lives to undertake study, evidenced by the fact that all of those interviewed are still studying.

## **Summary**

In this chapter the key data from the application forms and questionnaires has been analysed and discussed. The data from the questionnaires is more fully analysed through the inclusion of direct quotes as they relate to the literature and the interview findings in the next chapter. In Chapter 5 the participants will tell their stories, in their own voices, from within their own contexts with extracts taken from all three layers of the data gathering process. The data is richer when all three layers are combined. When the combined data is also triangulated with the literature it becomes more meaningful within the context of the participant's lives; their families; their workplaces; and finally within the

political climate in early childhood education in New Zealand today. Chapter 5 continues the story of the cohort of semester 2, 2005.

## Chapter 5: The stories gathered

Within this chapter the researcher will endeavour to explore more fully the themes emerging from the questionnaire and interview data. The themes identified will be linked to the literature to explain how they impacted on the participants in their decision making whether for their education, career or family. As the findings differ for those over 25 and under 25, this chapter is separated into these two sections with subheadings within the sections. A change to the political climate in early childhood education in New Zealand was an underlying theme throughout the research and this will also be explored in this chapter. In keeping the phenomenological approach, the participants' stories are told through direct quotes from both the questionnaires and interview data thus honouring their voice.

### The experiences of the participants aged under 25 years

Reading through the literature and mining the data from all three layers of the data gathering, the researcher was reminded of her initial reasons for wanting to undertake this research. When tutoring in a nanny programme in a private training enterprise (PTE) in 1999/2000, she noticed that the academic standard of the trainees was extremely low. While undertaking interviews with these trainees, it became clear that working in early childhood education, and in particular nannying for families, was seen as a very low status occupation. Many of those interviewed were told by their high school guidance counsellor that they were not academic so should consider working in early childhood education. Some of those interviewed were from special classes or as Hipkins and Vaughan (2002) discovered in their research, the classes the other students called the cabbage classes. So why did those in control of the career guidance of these prospective nanny students tell them that, in the words of one of those interviewed, *"I'm no good at anything else so [named teacher] told me I should work with little kids"*. Many of the respondents in this research have also commented on this situation, especially those under the age of 25.

At the stage of the research when the demographic data was gathered, there were twenty five applicants under the age of 25. Of these, only one achieved at high school in

any significant way and she also achieved a bachelor degree in an unrelated subject. Her motivation to study was wanting to *"take care of my baby [when I have one], so I need a job in the field"*. She had had previous experience in caring for children within her own ethnic group. Of the other twenty four applicants:

- Six had no qualifications
- Three listed low level vocational courses they accessed through school, for example Food and Beverage L2 and Tots n Toddlers
- Four had level 3 certificates in childcare
- Three had level 4 certificates, two in ECE and one in tertiary study skills
- Seven had level 5 certificates, five of these gaining the NZ National Nanny Certificate, and the other three a hair dressing qualification, two papers towards a certificate in ECE and a generic level 5 certificate in ECE.

From the applications of the participants who are under 25, one included no school qualifications and one of her referees said of her that *"you have to be a certain kind of person to work with young children. This would not be based solely on academic achievement"* while the second referee hesitated to recommend the applicant on the grounds of struggling with written communication. She also stated that the applicant had a natural ability to work with young children. A consistent message from the referees of these applicants was that they had a natural ability with children and that their colleagues would support them in their learning.

In her recent research into initial teacher education (ITE) Kane (2005) outlined how *"in addition to academic criteria, all ITE qualifications require applicants to demonstrate attributes beyond academic competence. These attributes are typically related to the applicant's suitability to teach, experience with children and young adults and commitment to the profession. Therefore, contrary to the perception (as articulated in the submissions to the Education and Science Committee's inquiry) that entry standards had been eroded over the past decade, criteria for entry into an ITE qualification exceeded those for similar level qualifications in other disciplines"* (p.24). While concern must be expressed at the low level of academic qualifications outlined above, those under 20 years of age had to meet set academic criteria and those who had reached the age of 20 had to show evidence of prior success at tertiary level as well as aptitude as outlined by Kane (2005).

There were five respondents under the age of 25 in the questionnaire layer and one in the interview stage. One of these commented "*my mum and dad said my strength lay in child care*" (questionnaire). This respondent struggled to answer some of the questions in the questionnaire and studied mostly vocational courses at school. She left school in the 6<sup>th</sup> form and completed a level 3 nanny certificate. While her parents had obviously encouraged her in her career choice the researcher was left wondering if this was due to a lack of understanding on the part of her parents as to what was involved in an ITE qualification. In many studies, parental guidance has been shown as a key factor in the choice of tertiary institution and course (or the choice not to attend a tertiary institution) by school leavers (Maxwell, Cooper and Biggs, 2000; Boyd, McDowell and Cooper, 2002; Hipkins and Vaughan, 2002; Leach and Zepke, 2005; Harris, Rainey and Sumner 2006). This comment and others from the interviews in the next section indicate that perhaps the importance of parental guidance applies to non-traditional students as well. Another of the young questionnaire respondents failed to achieve at school (under 50% for all her 5<sup>th</sup> form certificate subjects in 2001) and went on 2 years later to successfully complete a nanny course (level 5). She also completed a transition course at high school and was supporting herself at a young age, "*I couldn't afford to give up work altogether*" (questionnaire).

From the interviews, Kate said that "*the teachers advised me to leave and I got a [named apprenticeship] and I completed the study there*". Kate also struggled academically. She did not put her school achievements in her application to the programme but during her interview, she said that she had passed School C and the 6<sup>th</sup> form despite unhelpful teachers. (Note: Kate is also included in the over 25 section as she had turned 25 by the time of the interview). The fourth young respondent said that she found it "*hard to concentrate on [her] studies*" (questionnaire) and achieved poorly at school in mostly vocational courses in the 6<sup>th</sup> form. She went on to complete level 4 study in both tourism and ECE but realised her strengths lay in working with children. The final young respondent did not enjoy "*being in the classroom working*" (questionnaire) and did not learn anything from school that has helped her in her current roles. There was no one at school or in her family who inspired her. She also went on to complete a level 5 nanny course with a merit pass and stated that the "*classroom atmosphere [at the nanny course] was cool*" (questionnaire). In her application she

stated her school qualifications from 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> form and these were C, D and E passes, except in maths where she gained an A and a 4 in School Certificate and Sixth Form Certificate respectively.

These comments were of concern to the researcher as they were comments she expected to hear from the older participants schooled in the 1960s and 1970s rather than from recent school leavers. They indicate that perhaps the current high school system is not working for all of those who attend and this is borne out in the recent statistics for secondary students that showed a marked lowering in the success rates of students. While the media was careful to focus on the low success rate percentages of Māori, all students' percentage rates were lower in 2006 than in the previous years (<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics>). The information regarding the secondary school failure and tertiary success of the majority of the participants in this research may be useful in planning changes to the secondary sector. Indeed as Prebble, Hargraves, Leach, Naidoo, Suddaby and Zepke (2004) found in their review of the literature around student support in the tertiary sector, perhaps the secondary sector also has to "*change their policies and practices to adapt to the cultural capital brought by their diverse students*" (p.x). Prebble et al (2004) put forward 15 propositions to improve student outcomes in tertiary education all of which appear to be relevant to the secondary sector. Good teaching and professional development support for teachers is vital across all sectors while changes to the institutional structures outlined may ensure that all "*students feel valued, fairly treated and safe*" (Prebble et al, 2004, p.54), conditions that are critical to student success.

### **The experiences of the participants aged 25 and over.**

One of the key findings of this research for the over 25s is that the women questioned found their passion later in life or revisited an early passion that someone else, often family, had discouraged them from beginning. Four themes emerged from this finding:

1. Barriers to study
2. The academic ability of the participants
3. Women's role in society at the time the participants were at secondary school
4. Familial cultural capital

Each of these themes will be explored through this section, along with the politics of early childhood education; the participant's aspirations; the timing of the participants' current study and their confidence to undertake the study.

One of the most common barriers for the participants was the cost of studying. One of the questionnaire respondents stated "*When I left school my family wasn't financial enough for me to go away to be trained*" and from the interviews, Marg commented, "*well when you were a teenager and you had to pay to go to university, so it was better for me to go and get work and then I got married and had children*". On the second theme, that of their academic abilities, comments were made by many of the participants including: "*I knew I wasn't brainy*"; "*not having any academic skills*"; "*I'm a bit stupid*" and "*as a barrier, brains*". Throughout the questionnaires and the interviews the third and fourth themes emerged, the expectation from others that a career was pointless for the participants' as they would leave work to have their families and that no one else in the family had participated in higher education. While having a family was considered by others to be the end of a woman's working life, for the participants the passion to become a teacher remained strong.

Harris, Rainey and Sumner (2006) conducted research on the learning pathways of students in Australia. They discovered that the many of the vocational and study changes students made followed a pattern of interest "*where they had free choice, most of the participants were motivated by interest, usually in the vocational context, to undertake a particular field of study*" (p.40). In their research on secondary students and their transition into the work force or tertiary education, Boyd, Chalmers and Kumekawa (2001) discovered that "*students' personal interest were found to be the main motivator behind their career decisions*" (p.45). This is also true of those interviewed for this research. Although for many their passion or interest began at a young age, for others the interest developed when they had children and became involved in their children's education in some way, for example through Playcentre.

From the questionnaires one of the participants commented that she "*had children and realised my interests lay in other fields*" and "*I realised that tourism wasn't for me, that I really wanted to work with children*". From the interviews Sandra commented that "*I had never considered early childhood education before being at Playcentre [with my*

children]” and from Danielle “it’s taken me till 40 to realise what I want to do in life”. For all of the participants, their early passion or their later interest lead them to undertake this three year full time programme of study.

Apart from having an interest, the respondents were often encouraged by people in the teaching profession who saw their potential and encouraged them to become qualified. Despite the participants’ reservations about their academic abilities, encouragement from others was a key factor in them undertaking this course of study. From the questionnaires “the administrator at [named centre].....strongly encouraged me to study. She helped me believe that I had skills and could do it” and “my teachers [at work] as they thought I was good at what I did” and “[the] head teacher at preschool gave me employment and support”. The interviewees tell the same story: “the other staff members there [at the centre] who are going through their training or just finished it” (Lucy); from Dell “the teachers I worked with could see how I interacted with children and how they responded to me. They encouraged me and said I always should have been a teacher” and from Petra “the boss [from named early childhood centre] strongly recommended I get trained. If she hadn’t encouraged me I probably wouldn’t have done it”. This encouragement appears to be ongoing, perhaps due to the current political climate in early childhood education (ECE).

### **The politics and aspirations**

There have been major changes in the ECE sector over the past 25 years, mirroring major changes in society. When childcare and kindergarten were both placed under the umbrella of the Education Department in 1986, the acknowledgement of early childhood education as education rather than care was the catalyst for major reforms within the sector. In 1996 the current version Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996) was introduced and forms the basis of programmes in early childhood education settings today (May, 1997). Latterly in the 10 year strategic plan for ECE, Pathways to the Future, the Ministry of Education (2002) states that “many ECE teachers in New Zealand are not qualified, yet there is a strong correlation between quality ECE and teacher qualifications” (p.6). Within the strategic plan, the Government requirement that all teachers are qualified and registered by 2012 has meant that unqualified teachers currently employed must undertake study or risk losing their jobs.

Adding to this, the aim of increased participation of children in quality early childhood education inherent in the strategic plan, the importance of those already working in the field of ECE undertaking qualifications is further indicated. The Ministry of Education has recently implemented an initiative of 20 free hours for three and four year olds throughout New Zealand putting pressure on an already stressed sector battling low status, low pay and low levels of qualifications.

While political conditions may have motivated those who enjoyed working in ECE, those who had past aspirations to be a teacher had more personal reasons, for example Petra *"I wanted to do it when I was younger but didn't get accepted. I applied when I was a school leaver and didn't get in, then I started to earn money and that was it"*; from Dell *"that was my goal as a child [teaching]....not particularly early childhood, just teaching. I didn't have a particular age group"*; from Rose *"yes, when I first left school. Then I decided that I wanted to get a job to earn money so I could leave home rather than go to kindergarten college. It was more important to leave home and have money"* and finally from Lucy *"when I was younger I wanted to be a primary school teacher but you had to leave home and travel, which put me off. So I worked in the [named bank]"*. When Lucy was questioned further about undertaking early childhood teaching education not primary, she went on to say *"I like the idea of day care.....in primary you've got work that you've got to do afterwards"*.

In the research by Harris et al (2006), people who had to train to keep up with professional requirements were described as forced learners. Their changing work environment forced these people to undertake professional development. Although the participants in this research had this element as part of their motivation, it was not the only motivation for undertaking study. Forty seven percent of the participants stated that training to keep their job was either relevant or very relevant while other factors such as career satisfaction (84%); the need to change careers due to circumstances, called two-tracking in the study by Harris et al (2006); and personal fulfilment rated highly in the questionnaire and interview layers. Murphy, Edlin, McClew, Everiss, Margrain and Mead (2006) also found that while the *"students' reasons for study were influenced by changes in government regulations, [but] their primary motivation was interest in early childhood education as a career"* (p.28).

This is further evidenced by the fact that 90% of those who indicated they would like to be interviewed are still studying and overall completion rates for this programme are between 85 and 95% (The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, 2002; Murphy et al, 2006). One of the participants has ended her study in the diploma programme but has continued study in the Open Polytechnic's Teacher Aid Certificate due to health issues. One of the respondents is considering stopping her study due to a significant life change. As she has almost finished her study, she is carefully considering her options before taking this major step. During her interview she commented on her motivation to complete her diploma *"People are encouraging me not to stop now but I'm considering it....Interesting, something about the importance of children's early childhood. It was something worthwhile. If I had to work I wanted to do something worthwhile. I wanted to make a difference in children's lives not shuffle paper, been there done that"*.

As Harris et al (2006) discovered, there are multiple reasons for people to consider taking up study and making changes in their study and vocations *"additional [to vocational and reasons of interest] influences included being required to make the study move by an employer, location and reputation of the institution, course reputation, institutional flexibility, encouragement from friends and family"*. These influences were mirrored in the interviews with the participants of this research stating their reasons as being able to work and maintain their income while studying; the convenience and flexibility of being able to study in their own time; encouragement of other teachers who were work colleagues; encouragement from family; the fit with family and other commitments; and the continuation of previous study. The key reason for many of the questionnaire respondents was the ability to work and earn while studying. Some of their comments included *"because its flexible I can still work every day"* and *"flexibility as I am still working and supporting three teenagers"*. From the interviews Marg commented that *"I could have an income because I could work and study"* and from Danielle *"the opportunity to work and study....I've got nothing to lose, working getting paid and she [the boss] pays for the fees"*.

The main reasons for beginning study the participants stated in layers two and three of my research mirrored those stated in the research from Murphy et al (2006), personal achievement followed by the love of working with children. In the Murphy et al (2006) study 91% of the participants cited personal reasons with 50-60 % stating the changes

to government regulations changing as a key reason. In this research 100% of the participants stated that working with children and being a better teacher was very relevant or relevant to their decision to study whereas 47% indicated that the change to government regulations and 48% that they are required by their employer to study as being very relevant or relevant.

The barriers to study identified are also similar as Harris et al (2006) identified "*financial issue, such as having to work to afford study, transport, location of the institution, issues relating to juggling work, family and study, ....inadequate information, ....and personal issues, for example, lack of confidence*" (p.10). Although some of these barriers at first sight would appear more linked to studying at a face to face institution, the participant who dropped out from her study cited transport to a weekend workshop as a major reason to withdraw from the course. Barriers identified by the interview participants include financial, organisational issues confidence in general and in particular of academic ability; time management with juggling family, work and study; procrastination; giving up their sport and social life; and isolation. These are common themes with distance learners and are also reflected in the study by Murphy et al (2006).

### **Timing and confidence**

During the researchers earliest thoughts about researching in the area of adult education, particularly adults returning after previous failures in the formal education system, she reflected on the notion of the time in which study is situated in a person's life, looking at this notion through a Pakeha lens. The notion of second chance learners had little resonance with the researcher, as this did not fit with the experiences of the students interviewed when they were undertaking assessment of prior learning (APL) or her own experiences. At the 2005 NZARE conference in Dunedin, Dawn TeHereripine Hill from Te Whare Wananga O Awanuiārangi presented a paper titled *When is late late?*. There were clear links between the student's APL experiences, the findings of this research about what brings adult learners to study at a time seen as non traditional by others and TeHereripene's work.

TeHereripine Hill (2005) spoke about the Māori concept of time *wā* and related that to the views of non traditional learners who are often given labels such as second chance

learners or late starters. She contended that these labels, including the concept of late, have negative connotations that lead to the view of the learner as somehow not as able as the more traditional learner by others and more importantly by the learner themselves. For the participants of this research, a lack of confidence in their ability to study lead to one participant thinking about accessing study for 5 years before beginning and others interviewed commented on confidence to study at this time in their lives as a barrier *"not having academic skills. I left school at 16 about 20 years ago. Confidence is my main barrier"* (Petra) and *"I probably had enough of working with adults who didn't think I was going anywhere, so I thought I'd study"* (Marg); *"before I started I considered that as a barrier, brains"* (Danielle).

After analysing the questionnaires, the researcher realised that confidence, or rather lack of confidence was a factor affecting most of the participants. A question around the interviewee's confidence was discussed during the interviews. Rose commented *"I've become a better parent; helped my confidence as a parent, helped my confidence all round really, not sure about by how much because so many other things have happened. Every time I pass an assessment my confidence goes up"*. When asked how her confidence had improved on a scale of 1-10 Lucy commented *"It's improved to about an 8 now. It started at about three!"* Danielle also believed that she had gained confidence, *"confidence in myself and study, 8 or 9"* as did Sandra *"7 or 8 over study"* and Dell *"I actually have loved using my brain again"* and finally Petra, without allocating a number to her increase in confidence, commented *"yes, I think that's coming. I used to read the assessment page and have no idea how to do it. Now I plan it and find it easier to do, once I know what path the assignment is going to take. I am more confident in finding the information I need to find.....I was confident in my work, but I wasn't in my written work"*.

Other research conducted on vocational versus academic courses in secondary schools indicates that the students' perception of their own ability, reinforced by their parents, has a bearing on their achievement (Hipkins and Vaughan, 2002). If the students were confident in their abilities and were able to enjoy their chosen subjects, they were more likely to become life long learners. All of the interviewees commented that their confidence had increased over their time studying, in all aspects of their lives, as confidence in their own ability to achieve was reinforced by success. A key factor in the

perseverance in study for the women appears to be the fact that they are self motivated, or as Bailey (2002) contends *“Self directed learners are self motivated and have very positive views about being a learner”* (p.10) and they are able to see the benefits of learning in other aspects of their lives, especially after gaining confidence through success.

One of TeHereripine Hill’s (2005) key points was that people come to learning in good time mā te wā. She outlined how each individual comes to learning when the time is right and that the right time could be at any life stage. For many of those interviewed the right life stage was when they had gained enough confidence through the encouragement of others to apply for a programme of study. It is important to allow time for individuals to achieve within their own time and institutional culture needs to accommodate this. Prebble, Hargraves, Leach, Naidoo, Suddaby and Zepke (2004) also found this in their study and they outlined the need for the institutional structures to fit the student’s cultural capital. In their later dissemination of the 2004 findings, Zepke and Leach (2005) state that *“where this [cultural capital] is valued and fits with the existing institutional culture they are more likely to be a ‘fish in water’ (Thomas, 2002, p.431) and to achieve”* (p.8). This is true for the participants of this study.

From his research into unemployed single mothers as learners, Bailey (2002) contended that the *“recognition of the value of what is described as informal learning is important to analysing learner developmental needs as well as critical to facilitating participation and retention in formal learning processes, such as courses and qualifications”* (p.1). He goes on to say that formal and informal learning are inextricably linked for adult learners. Sinner (2003) in her research into women learners contends that women’s ways of knowing must be given voice in the classroom while TeHereripine Hill (2005) outlines the importance of valuing ways of knowing. She sees these as being integral to acknowledging the living learning journeys of adult students.

TeHereripine Hill (2005) also outlined that if learning is life long, there is no such thing as late. Time constraints are socially rather than personally constructed. The rhythm of life can be interrupted at any time by any number of life’s moments, causing an imbalance that may impact on education as well as on other aspects of life. This is evidenced by some of the participants in this study waiting until they have raised their families before

beginning on a course of study. For Dell, this was her time to study. She said that *"it's [studying at this time in my life] actually quite lovely"*. Dell went on to say that this was the perfect time for her to study because of her family and work commitments. One of those interviewed gave up her study because of timing, specifically having a baby at this time in her life *"it takes a lot of time more time than I thought it would.....that was one of the things I worried about was getting time if I had children. It might be OK if they were older but new babies are a lot of work.....obviously just starting a family, I will stay at home with the kids for a while"* (Jenny).

There were challenges for the individuals in this research in maintaining balance in their personal, work and study contexts. The respondents often talked about how they struggle to manage their time efficiently; hand in assessments on time and spend time doing the things they choose to do. One of the challenges for Danielle was giving up her sport and by extension of this, her social life *"I have given up my recreational sport I used to play because I had to give up something so I could work in the evenings"*. She went on to say that one of her aspirations was to *"get back my social life, the pre study one"* showing that she saw her study as time situated, something to complete then go back and re-establish her connections with others. The Open Polytechnic (2005) also recognises that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century *"lifelong learners will demand access to more personalised forms of learning, delivered when, where, how, at a level and in the ways they need as they move through the different stages of their lives"* (p.2).

### **Changes to the programme structure**

Interestingly at the time this cohort began their study, the structure of The Open Polytechnic Diploma of Teaching (ECE) allowed for personalised learning. Students were able to complete their study at their own pace provided it was completed by the end of each semester and this was commented on as a factor by all of those interviewed at some time during the interview. Danielle commented *"the structure meant I could do it, it was achievable"*. Sandra commented that *"I knew I wanted to do it but I didn't want to go to classes every week"* and Lucy commented that *"I was told it was flexible and you can study at your own time to suit yourself with your study plan – as long as it's done in six years"*.

Since this cohort began their study the parameters around the programme have changed through redevelopment, including the addition of due dates and courses being partly assessed at the weekend workshops. This transition was commented on negatively by most of those interviewed. Marg outlined her problems with the administration of the new course *"at the beginning of the year the administration problems at the Open Polytech were horrendous....we wondered whether we should transfer to another provider. It was a nightmare trying to get into our papers and all this rubbish was happening.....trying to work out which papers I should be doing was a minefield.....[named lecturer] was excellent. She had it all organised"*. Danielle commented on the peer assessment required at workshops in the new course. Her final comments on this topic were *"We want everyone to pass but there has to be an acceptable level with constructive criticism without being personal and hurting people. We are not trained for this"*. Kate commented on the changes that *"due dates suck. I had two assignments to get in, in two weeks. We had just got back from [travelling] and I didn't realise I had to get it in. It's not very good for my health, the stress is not good. My grades dropped. The one I've got back was only 51% disappointing. I was doing really well. It was really busy, I've got to get it done in one week, so it was really rushed"*.

### **Sociology of education and family**

Another key finding from the interviews was that the impact of familial factors such as parental education, occupation and income, is not stable over time. Leach and Zepke (2005) found in their review of the literature on student decision making that *"Socio-economic status (SES) is the strongest predictor of tertiary study"* (p.17). The research reviewed by Leach and Zepke (2005) identified three forms of SES indicators, parental education, occupation and income and they went on to state that *"these produce social capital (resources available because of connections to others) and cultural capital (non-economic assets that come from high levels of education and exposure to middle and upper class values and attitudes)"* (p.17). Fergusson and Woodward (2000 cited in Boyd, Chalmers and Kumakawa, 2001) found in their 21 year longitudinal study that SES at birth predicted student's entry into university. They found that *"able children from professional or managerial family backgrounds were about one and a half times more likely to go to university than children of similar ability from low SES families"* (p.2). While many studies have found that this is certainly true of school leavers and their transition

into work or tertiary education (Lauder and Hughes, 1990; Boyd, Chalmers and Kumakawa, 2001; Hipkins and Vaughan, 2002; Boyd, McDowell and Cooper, 2002) this research has suggested that this indicator is not always true of adult students.

Danielle came from a family who valued a trade qualification, but only for the males in the family. She commented that *"when I went to school uni was never pushed to us at school. I don't remember people going off to uni. Maybe I was in the wrong circle, just wasn't something you worked to"*. She went on to say of her schooling that *"they thought I would go nowhere and do nothing" and "I hated high school except the social side"*; of her teachers that *"he told me that if a job comes up I should take it"* and of her family *"probably an expectation for me to get married and have children.....no expectations for me...never any direction, not that I can remember"*. She qualified this with the comment that she had a wonderful childhood. Although this may have been situated in the time in history Danielle was attending high school, other participants from other eras told similar stories.

Sandra also came from a family with no university education. When describing her parents she states that *"they came from the 'get a job when you leave school and stay there' generation. There was no contemplation of me going further than [reception work]. They expected me to get married and have kids" and "mum tries to be supportive but doesn't get it and I don't tell my dad anything"*. When describing her schooling *"I enjoyed my primary school years.....I was only staying until I got a job....I applied for some and wasn't allowed to leave until I got a job.....I did alright, definitely average, but I never tried hard and didn't do homework. I had no real ambition....it wasn't important so I didn't worry about it as long as I did good enough to get a job"*. Sandra shared that she has a difficult relationship with her father and he struggles with her working and with her studying for a qualification at this time in her life.

Dell comes from a family where a trade was valued and her brother completed only one year of university straight from school. Her father had a variety of jobs, including professional positions later in his life. Dell's parents are encouraging of her study now *"they're absolutely tickled pink"* and encouraged her at school. Her social life interfered with her schooling *"I knew I'd mucked around. I knew I wasn't brainy but I knew I could*

*do it. It was just time to have fun” and “I was working when I was not quite 16 when I started the apprenticeship”.*

Petra was also the only person in her family to enter tertiary study *“I’m the only one in my family to do this”*. Her parents have provided practical support while Petra has been studying. She attended a girls’ school and left at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> form to go to a job she got in the holidays *“school was pretty easy because I didn’t have anything else to do”*. She was not encouraged to go further in her schooling *“mum always said ‘it’s up to you”*”.

Avril is also the only one from her generation and her parent’s generation to study, although her niece has a BCom. Avril enjoyed high school *“best time of my life at high.....I didn’t like the school itself, it was the social side of it....I didn’t get UE accredited because I’d been pissing around...so I went back hoping I’d get it accredited the second year. Then they asked me to go. They don’t like you to stay when you are pregnant”*.

Jenny’s experiences of familial education come from her English heritage as she is a recent immigrant to New Zealand. In her opinion of a university education in England she said *“Back in England apprenticeships are more the focus. University is not popular because it’s too expensive. You can only go if you can afford it and the working class can’t afford to do it”*. She went on to state that her family who were from the working class north of England had no tertiary education. Jenny went on to say that *“they are all big schools in England. I hated school..... It’s interesting to go back to study now as I hated it when I was at school. It didn’t click really. I enjoyed home economics which was childcare and cooking. I didn’t understand the other subjects and the teachers were not very nice.....one teacher encouraged me, my child care teacher. Funny how I did well in that subject with encouragement”*.

Jenny and Kate are from a younger generation than Avril, Dell, Petra, Sandra and Danielle. Kate also comes from a family with no tertiary qualifications. She outlined in her interview how her family were not tertiary trained at all *“no, not my mum or dad. Dad’s a [named trade] by trade, my brother’s a [tradesman] and my mum is mum. She worked in car yards now in the supermarket”*. Kate went on to describe her schooling as *“more about social life and sport and not academics. So I was in sports teams and had*

*lots of friends, fun rather than working. I hated high school really. I hated the teachers. In the 3<sup>d</sup> form I suppose I was a monster really ..... I passed School C and 6<sup>th</sup> form and went back to the 7<sup>th</sup> form. I wasn't allowed to leave without a job. The teachers advised me to leave and I got a [named] apprenticeship and I completed the study there".*

Of those interviewed only Rose and Marg came from families who had a tertiary education background. Marg's father had an agriculture degree and Rose's brother went to university, in Rose's words "Yes, my brother. He went from school to uni, dad encouraged him because he was the bright one, you know how we all have roles in our family". Marg goes on to say that her father "instilled in my children to get themselves qualified – not necessarily a degree.....but perhaps have a trade behind them". Marg wanted to go to university and do a named course of study but never did. When the interviewer asked her why she didn't do this she replied "don't know. Sort of like, well when you were a teenager and you had to pay to go university, so it was better for me to go and get work and then I got married and had children". When the interviewer asked if her father had talked to her about university, she replied "No. My sister wanted to be a hairdresser but she did what I did, she worked for businesses, which wasn't something that we wanted to do but here we are encouraging our children and our grandchild to do what they want to do". It is interesting to note here that Marg's mother also worked in businesses.

Rose's comment about the roles in families was explored later in her interview. She commented that she was never expected to succeed "oh, I was the girl, not encouraged to go and do study. The attitude was, what is the point you are only going to get married and have children". For Rose and others in this research the "traditional patriarchal family structures can nurture different aspirations for sons as opposed to daughters" (Adams et al, 2000, p.273). When asked about her schooling Rose commented that she "hated primary, didn't fit, had no confidence, was sent to [named girls school] and I thought it was stuck up and not my fit at all. My parents were narrow minded and the school perpetuated this". Consequently Rose took the opportunity to leave as soon as she could and go out working "I left school at 17 second year 6<sup>th</sup>. I got UE accredited and went to a job in a [named bank]". Rose's experience of low expectations continued into her working life where she "left because I wasn't getting promoted because the

*expectation was, once again, that I would leave and have children*" a situation that did not arise at that time for Rose.

### **The time in history**

After these comments by the participants, it is perhaps time to explore the time in history that 26% out of the cohort researched, 53% of those who returned questionnaires and 60% of those who were interviewed were raised and schooled. Born in the 1950s and 1960s, the respondents were raised in a post depression environment where the ability to earn was highly valued and seen as a necessity, especially by those who had been hit hard by the depression then having lived through the realities of war. As King (2003) outlines "*Just how bad did living conditions become over this period? Tony Simpson has described the Depression as 'a grey and ill-defined monster, an unspeakable disaster' that 'cast a long shadow, a blight on everything it touched'"* (p.349) and he goes on to say that "*life was difficult for dependants living on reduced incomes....improvising..... trying to feed their families, scrounging and begging"* (p.350).

Many of the men who were fathers in the era the research participants were raised, had little or no role modelling on how to be a father as their fathers were at war and may have been killed or returned physically and psychologically damaged. Again a comment from King (2003) about this time in our history when the soldiers were returning home to New Zealand describing the people involved as "*tired men and women, spiritually and physically spent after six years of depravation and sacrifice"* (p. 408). The research carried out on the child rearing practices of New Zealand families in the 1960s by James and Jenny Ritchie and replicated in the late 1970s gives some interesting insights into the families of these times. "*The family is widely and generally considered to be the basic unit in modern society*" and "*from the data which we have it seems that the New Zealand family is a very tight, highly stable part of the social system and that a great deal of effort goes into keeping it so.....almost to the point of rigidity*" (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1970, p.23). In later research, the Ritchie's revisited their earlier data to find that the size of the family in the 1960's averaged 3.5 children compared to the more liberal 1970s where the average was 2.5 children. They also discuss the role of Plunket in reducing child mortality while instituting "*a rigid regime that dominated the practice of motherhood*" (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1997, p.15) and kept mothers in a state of guilt

through the publication of ethnological research on the critical and potentially damaging importance of bonding or as the Ritchie's contended "*the bondage of bonding*" (1997, p. 68).

Another historic factor that became part of the discussion on cost as a barrier was the structure of early childhood education initial teacher education during the time many of the participants could have trained. The course of study was conducted in a kindergarten colleges situated in cities, such as Wellington, and took two years to complete. The course was free. There was a living allowance for teachers in training and a bonding system that meant newly trained teachers had paid employment at the end of their study. For students from the country, suitable accommodation was found, usually with a family. When the comments from participants include that their family wasn't able to afford for them to go away to be trained and as, Marg commented, "*well when you were a teenager and you had to pay to go to university*" which was also free, the researcher was left wondering who the participants had consulted about their aspirations and why they were told that the family couldn't afford them to train. The researcher had a similar experience in her teens when she enquired about teaching within her family. It was not until a chance conversation when working in a kindergarten in 1995 that she discovered that it would have indeed been possible for her to enter initial teacher education as a school leaver.

### **Cultural capital and family**

If we refer back to Rose's interview, we can see that her family is well situated in this time because of her comments about the roles within the family quoted above. Rose went on to comment when asked about her hopes and dreams for the future that "*I want to be happy with who I am, don't care about being rich or poor. I said that to my mother once and she said: 'what on earth are going to do with your life?' She had greater aspirations for me than my dad. I told her I just wanted to be happy. She said 'don't be ridiculous that's no ambition at all'. I was about 17 at the time.*" She went on to say "*my parents were narrow minded.....no they in my family. We used to go on holidays with my mum. Dad went by himself. Some times dad would take us to the beach. Being from the navy, he loved the sea. He took us on trips to the naval base....boring. We didn't know where we were going, or if we were, we just went where we were taken*".

This seems typical of the times as explained by Sandra when she talked about her father's reaction to her studying and working *"they never ask about it. I don't talk to them about it because of the way my father reacted another time. He had been drinking and got mad"*. Sandra goes on to talk about her internal voice. *"My internal voice is always saying 'you won't do it, you're crap at it' but I don't think it's what I put across though. Others say 'no you're not'".* When asked by the interviewer where this internal voice comes from she replied *"I think it comes from my dad, so I try and not do it to my kids. I hope they'll do better. They're not going to do what I do. They're willing to try new things whereas I'm a bit scared of trying new things. It did take a lot of courage to start it. I was really scared at the start and not sure if I could do it. Even now, I look at the questions and think I don't know it because I'm so stupid. But I think I'm gaining confidence in my knowledge and my career choice. I have more confidence in knowing what I'm talking about"*.

Marg commented on the expectations for her to get married and raise a family and this quote is included earlier in this section. When describing her experiences of leaving home and going out into the wider world she outlines how *"I lived at home and got married from there. A very sheltered country life I had. I was 21 when I got married. I was about 23 when I had my first child"*.

Avril was asked to leave school in the 1970s as a pregnant 17 year old. She raised this child and her second child largely on her own after leaving home when her mother gave her an ultimatum. *"She wanted me to give him up but of course I wouldn't. She said I wouldn't be able to live at home and they were too old, so I moved out. I think she was bluffing but I moved out anyway"*. Avril was careful to stress that she wasn't at all ostracised by her family for her unplanned pregnancy and they still kept in touch.

Dell talks about her parents as being typical of the era and how it was *"a whole different ball game for them...he [her dad] left school at 14 and his father was a [named trade] and even my dad was like that 'you've got to have a trade'"*. She goes on to say *"they [her parents] always encouraged me but if I hadn't had my apprenticeship I wouldn't have been allowed to leave school"*. Her goal to become a teacher was Dell's main reason for returning to school as a 2<sup>nd</sup> year 5<sup>th</sup> former. When asked if her parents were

aware of this she said *"I don't think my parents realised, I don't think we ever discussed it. But that was why I went back.....So looking back I don't think I discussed the teaching"*.

Danielle also talks about parental expectations. *"My dad always said 'New World will always need someone to bag carrots'. It became a family joke, still is. Because I mucked around they thought I would go nowhere and do nothing. I was not ever pressured to do anything. Call someone a clown long enough they ended up being one. I worked at [named store] for many years, never bagged carrots, grated a few for soup though!"* As with Avril, Danielle stressed that she loves her parents. Danielle was discouraged from going out and making her way in the world although there were no problems when her brother went flatting. *"I was told how hard it would be and that I wouldn't cope despite being engaged to be married. They made such a big thing of it"*. When Danielle got married, she moved home despite succeeding at going flatting. *"I came home to get married, to do the old fashioned thing for my mother and leave from home"*. She went on to say that she was married at 19, a mother at 20 and separated at 21. When she was pregnant with her son, she was asked not to be in public view by her boss in the retail company she worked for and soon left work to have her son. *"I had an old fashioned boss. He didn't like the pregnant tummy in public view so put me in the office"*.

Interestingly, and defying much of the literature on family reproduction theory (Adams et al, 2000) and the theory of cultural and social capital, these women have gone on to succeed in tertiary education and the world of work. They also have much higher aspirations for their children than their parents had for them. Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction is interesting when it is applied to the findings of this research. His notion of habitus, described in Adams et al (2000) as *"the system of dispositions he suggests we all have learned as a result of our coming to be a member of a particular society or cultural group, within the context of the family"* (p. 270) applies to the women studied but they have worked to change the existing social structures they are part of by gaining a tertiary qualification despite the fact that this is not part of their families social or cultural capital. Through this it could be contended that they have altered their habitus and that of the future generations of their families. Indeed the lack of confidence that the respondents had regarding their ability to study combined with their negative school experiences, should have prevented them from changing the cultural capital for their

children, and the next generations. Perhaps as Adams et al (2002) go on to say that despite a person's habitus being "*shaped within the family context, [but] it is also affected by the changing nature of the real social conditions in which people live from generation to generation*" (p.271). In this research, the interventions of other people in the lives of the respondents, people such as work colleagues; teaching professionals they have come into contact with later in life; partners; friends; and lecturers, have enabled them to follow their dreams and succeed at their chosen study. They have had the support of others to empower them to succeed. This has been a very powerful theme for those interviewed.

### **Aspirations for their children**

Changing the lives of their children has been a constantly emerging theme through the questionnaire and interview stages of the research and the respondents are passionate about their children having a better life than theirs. The respondents clearly wanted their children have more opportunities than they did. Some examples from the interview are from Petra who wants to "*be here to support them and help them do what they need to do. Hopefully they'll be happy and healthy and doing what they're meant to be doing, including job wise*" while Avril would like her children "*to be happy....I just want them to have a good life. If they want to do something, they can bloody well do it. I want them to dream big*". Rose would like her children to "*be happy with who they are. I want them to do whatever gives them satisfaction; don't give a shit if they are rich or poor*". Sandra was pleased that her children "*enjoy school....I want them to go to university. I talk to them about it, though I'm not sure what they'll do there*".

Dell has changed the dynamics in her family, along with most of those I have interviewed, by encouraging her children to further their education despite that meaning they have to leave the area where she lives. Lucy's aspirations are "*for my children....that they get whatever they wish. That they're happy and healthy and the same for their kids. And not have too hard lives*". When asked about her aspirations for her grandchildren, Lucy commented "*the same for them*". There were times during the interviews when, although the optimism of the respondents came through, the interviewer could hear the pain in the telling of their stories. For Lucy, this was muted but her comment about her children and grandchildren not having too hard a life, signalled to

the interviewer that perhaps she had had a hard life herself. Others interviewed laughed about some of the hardships they talked about while conveying how very real they were for them, for example, the feeling of being out of place in school; the low expectations others had of them and the pressures placed on them by their family and society.

The final word for this section goes to Rose who commented at the end of the interview that:

*“Fairly damaged people move into the compassionate fields, people who have had shit happen to them. If you don’t know about life, then you do things that don’t impact on emotions. You know the sorts of things I mean”.*

## **Summary**

This chapter has outlined the key findings of the research and linked these to a selection of literature. The four key themes; barriers to study; the academic ability of the participants; women’s role in society at the time the participants were at secondary school and familial cultural capital are the focus of much of the interview and questionnaire data gathered. The participants who have children have aspirations for them to succeed and could critically evaluate, in most case, the aspects of their lives that made it difficult for them to succeed. The timing of their current study appears to be the catalyst for their current success. Factors, such as the influence of the family they grew up in, has had less impact on their lives as time passes and they find a strong interest to motivate them to achieve academically. Sinner (2003) contends that *“every woman’s story of learning offers a piece of the greater whole”* (p.119) and this research is honouring that contention. The final chapter draws some possible conclusions and directions for future research in the area of adult education.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

Throughout this thesis, the researcher has endeavoured to answer the questions posed in chapter one:

*What are the stories of the Semester 2 2005 cohort of students of The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand who enrol in the Diploma of Teaching (ECE)?*

*What journeys bring them to enrol in this programme?*

And the subsidiary question:

*How is the cultural capital of learners who come to study later in their lives recognised?*

The threads of data woven through the chapters in this thesis, especially those containing the voices of the participants, have indicated that interesting journeys have brought this cohort to the time in their lives where successful study is possible. These journeys have begun in different places and taken different directions, often due to constraints outside of the participant's control. Rather than being second chance learners, this is their time on their own unique pathway of learning. As Harris, Rainey and Summer (2006) assert, "*not only is a learning pathway universal (whether people recognise it or not), but also it's direction changes. One claimed that it can change from 'time to time', while another that 'it always changes' because the 'path is never straight'*" (p.35). A summary of the previous chapters may be useful at this point.

Chapter one introduced the research and the researcher along with the context of the participants and the institution in which they are studying. Chapter two explored the literature on the topics indicated by the research questions while Chapter three outlined how the data would be gathered and the ethics and limitations inherent in data gathering. Chapter four explored the key data from the application forms, questionnaires and interviews. This data was more fully analysed and related to the literature in Chapter five. Most importantly, in Chapter five the participants told their stories, in their own voices, within the context of their lives; their families; their workplaces; and finally within the political climate in early childhood education in New Zealand today thus honouring the phenomenological methodologies in which the research was conducted.

In this final chapter, the outcomes, recommendations and limitations of this research are outlined and there is also a discussion on further possible research directions within the

themes explored in this research. The chapter has three sections; the key findings, conclusions and recommendations and future directions.

### **Key Findings**

One of the key findings of this research was that the participants had found their passion later in life or revisited an early passion that someone else, often family, had discouraged them from beginning. Four themes emerged from this finding; barriers to study; the academic ability of the participants; women's role in society at the time the participants were at secondary school and familial cultural capital.

The interviewees identified a myriad of barriers, many of them common across the age groupings, to them participating in their Diploma studies. High amongst these was their confidence in their own ability to succeed at tertiary study. This was linked to the second barrier, the academic ability of the participants. Pressure from their high school teachers and family had often undermined their confidence in their academic abilities and lead to many leaving school early to participate in the world of work. Financial barriers were also present for all of the participants.

The other two themes; women's role in society at the time the participants were at secondary school and their familial cultural capital, had the effect of placing restraints on the interviewees as school leavers. The restraints came firstly from within their families and were reinforced through their schooling. There was an expectation from others that a career was pointless for the participants as they would leave work to have their families and that no one else in the family had participated in higher education. For some, studying led to divisions within their family, at the very least, a lack of understanding about why they were studying at this time in their lives. For all of the participants, this was the right time in their lives to undertake study, evidenced by the fact that all of those interviewed are still succeeding in their study.

In the research conducted by the Ministry of Education on low decile schools (Boyd, McDowell and Cooper, 2002) failing students most often came from homes where education is not part of the cultural or social fabric. The data from this research suggests that this situation is not stable over time, that given the right timing and the right

encouragement and support, people from any socio cultural/socio economic environment can succeed in an area where they have a passion. Indeed, despite the negative findings of other researchers in the area of familial success and how this relates to cultural capital (Boyd, Chalmers and Kumakawa, 2001; Hipkins and Vaughan, 2002; Lauder and Hughes, 1990) the findings from this research suggests that this indicator is not always true of adult students. The participants had also mostly come to a time in their lives when they were "*accepting of their learning histories*" (Harris, Rainey and Sumner, 2006, p.39) although, unlike the participants in that research, not all of their learning experiences had been positive ones.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The acknowledgement of the participants as learners within their various contexts, and the experiences that have shaped them as learners returning to education, is a conclusion within itself. The hope of the researcher is that the data shared through these stories will go some way towards explaining the phenomenon of success for a group within the tertiary sector who, according to more traditional views of success, have previously not experienced success. The researcher hopes that reading the stories will motivate others to believe that they too can succeed, whatever their background.

The pathway of open entry to tertiary institutions for adults remains at this point and the latest statistics for adult students indicate that they are an academically successful group within the tertiary sector (Ministry of Education, 2007b). To ensure access to tertiary education for adults, it is imperative that open entry remains. The changes to the tertiary sector funding threatens open entry to some programmes of study. It is important that adult learners have access to their chosen programme of tertiary study. Adult learners are entitled to experience success; success that they may have not been able to achieve earlier in their lives. The stories told in this research has hopefully made adult students more visible as they can be seen as silent within the tertiary sector, a group not openly planned for or supported through their tertiary education experience.

The information regarding the secondary school failure as opposed to the tertiary success of the majority of the participants in this research may be useful in planning changes to the secondary sector. Some of the comments of the participants about their

secondary school experiences, especially in the under 25 age group, were of concern to the researcher. The comments indicate that perhaps the current high school system is not working for some of those who attend and this is borne out in the recent statistics for secondary students that showed a marked lowering in the academic success rates of students. Perhaps the establishment of effective pastoral care within our secondary schools using the propositions suggested by Leach and Zepke (2005) for the tertiary sector may increase secondary student's sense of belonging, arguably the most important factor in success. Indeed as Prebble, Hargraves, Leach, Naidoo, Suddaby and Zepke (2004) suggest, perhaps the secondary sector has to "*change their policies and practices to adapt to the cultural capital brought by their diverse students*" (p.x), because as Zepke and Leach (2005) state that "*where this [cultural capital] is valued and fits with the existing institutional culture they are more likely to be a 'fish in water' (Thomas, 2002, p.431) and to achieve*" (p.8).

### **Future directions**

Looking towards the future, the exciting developments within the New Zealand compulsory sector new curriculum coupled with the education of their mothers may ensure that the next generation of children are life long learners. Second chance education may be a trend of the past as the aim of the current government is that education will be seamless, with learners picking and choosing training and qualifications within their areas of interest, vocational and personal. We can only hope that the compulsory education sector embraces these changes by making changes to the structures within which students learn, learn to succeed and learn to fail.

The main limitation of this research is that it is on a very small scale, one cohort within one programme within one institution. To produce more meaningful findings, a replication of this research on a larger scale would be needed. There is the ability to replicate this research within The Open Polytechnic and within other tertiary institutions. It would be particularly interesting to gain a more comprehensive picture of those participating in teacher education in the early childhood education sector by replicating this research across the providers from this sector. With the implementation of the 20 free hours of early childhood education for three and four year olds, there is a shortage of qualified teachers to fill existing positions in the sector. Places in diploma and degree

programmes related to teaching in early childhood education are in high demand. Will this factor, as well as the governments focus on this sector, increase the quality of those training to be early childhood teachers?

It would also be interesting to see this research replicated in other programmes to give a broader picture of the increasing inclusion of adult students within our student bodies and more particularly, how they are achieving despite often unsuccessful experiences in their secondary schooling. This would be useful research if the need to lobby for the retention of open entry arises.

To replicate this research in other institutions and programmes, a similar analysis of the application forms could be conducted. Demographic data is available, as all students must fill in an applications form to enter their chosen programme of tertiary study. The demographic data could be collated from a variety of different institutions to provide a larger sample of students than this research was able to. Gathering information about students from across tertiary institutions, throughout the country may give a more accurate picture of participation than this small study undertaken in one institution. Collated evidence of New Zealand wide tertiary participation may allow for accurate targeted provision of tertiary education to particular groups as well as indicating to whom tertiary education is accessible. Whilst the questionnaire layer could be omitted in future research, the data gathered in these added to the overall picture of the socio cultural status of the participants for this research.

Interviews of a sample of the cohorts researched would offer data that is more detailed. While interviewing a sample of participants from the institutions would be a major undertaking, the data gathered may be valuable in making social comment about the changing nature of education in New Zealand, across sectors. In particular, it may highlight the importance of open entry for those who had previously little experience of success in the formal education sector. The notion that success at tertiary level later in life is not dependent on secondary success or familial cultural capital may be useful to explore through researching a much larger section of the tertiary student population.

There may be a wider use for the data gathered on the secondary school experiences of the participants. The information regarding the secondary school failure of the majority of

the participants in this research could be useful in planning future changes to the secondary sector. The personalising of a programme of study that fits within the context of the student may be a more effective method of teaching those most at risk of failure in the compulsory sector. This may be another avenue for future research.

There is the ability to extend on this research by conducting a longitudinal study of the children of the participants of this research. Following these children through their primary and secondary schooling to ascertain whether they see tertiary as a viable option would be interesting. Would observing their mother studying and achieving a tertiary qualification increase the cultural capital within their family? Added to this could be a comparative study of children from parents engaged in study at a face to face institution. These avenues of research may further add to the picture of the importance of open entry and its role in the increase of cultural capital within families.

This has been interesting research to conduct and the researcher has been humbled by the open, honest responses of the participants. Her only hope is that she has faithfully represented their stories in this thesis and that the participants will see this as an acknowledgment of them as successful learners. The final quote goes to Sinner (2003)

*“Autobiographical memory is the foundation on which identity and knowledge are defined. Memory ‘is not a record of our inside story, but the pearl (however in the rough) that we fashion from our past on the inside. It is not about existence but about experience’ (Randall, 1997, p.218). Life stories evolve based on ‘what to keep and what to cull, and how to construct what is kept’ (Randall, 1997, p.217).....And it is through such life stories that educators ‘gain insight into the lives of particular students in order to understand them or help them’ (van Manen, 1998, p.71). By sharing experiences, women are, as Riessman states ‘revealing truths’ ” (p.115).*

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 a	Massey University College of Education ethical clearance letter
Appendix 1 b	The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand ethical clearance letter
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## Appendix 1a

Massey University College of Education ethical clearance letter



8 August 2005

Julie Madgwick  
70 Landsdowne Terrace  
Cashmere  
**CHRISTCHURCH**

Dear Julie

**Re: HEC: WGTN Application – 05/30**  
**An educational journey: Stories from students**

Thank you for your letter received 26 July 2005.

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

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

**A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:** *“This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, Wellington Application 05/30. If you have any concerns about the ethics of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: WGTN telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethicswn@massey.ac.nz”.*

Yours sincerely

Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair  
**Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Wellington**

cc A/Prof Nick Zepke & Ms Michele Knight  
Social & Policy Studies in Education  
WELLINGTON

Prof Wayne Edwards, HoD  
Social & Policy Studies in Education  
PN900

Ms Caroline Teague  
Graduate School of Education  
PN900

## Appendix 1 b

The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand ethical clearance letter

86 Wyndrum Avenue  
Lower Hutt, New Zealand  
Telephone 04 913 5300  
Facsimile 04 913 5308  
www.openpolytechnic.ac.nz

Private Bag 31914,   
Lower Hutt, New Zealand



He Wharekura-tini  
Kaihautu o Aotearoa

The  
**Open**  
Polytechnic  
of New Zealand

13 July 2005

The Secretary  
MUHEC: Wellington  
Research Ethics Office, Old Main Building, PN 221  
Turitea  
PALMERSTON NORTH

### To Whom It May Concern

I confirm that Julie Madgwick a staff member in Education Studies at the Open Polytechnic has permission to use the demographic data gained from the Education Studies Diploma of Early Childhood Education applicants for Semester 2 in 2005 to provide the research data for her thesis for a Master of Education (Adult Education).

It is expected that Julie Madgwick will abide by the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand's Code of Ethics for research as well as those of Massey University.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Axel Laurs  
Dean  
School of Information and Social Sciences

*Smith*  
14-7-05

## Appendix 2 a

Questionnaire

**An Educational Journey**  
**Stories from Diploma of Teaching (ECE) students**

**Questionnaire**

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire and to contribute to this research project. Your contribution is much appreciated.

**Lifestyle and Family**

The questions in this section will provide background information about you, your family and your community.

1. What is your age bracket?

- Under 20
- 20-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- over 50

2. Describe the area where you live?

3. Describe your community?

4. Where else have you lived in your life?

5. What special memories of these places you would like to share?
  
6. What (if any) current roles do you have within your community, for example an office holder on a committee, Board of Trustees, sports manager/coach?
  
7. Please outline any community activities you are involved in, for example sports/art group/theatre.
  
8. How would you describe your family/whanau?
  
9. Which ethnic/cultural group/groups do you identify with?
  
10. What does your ethnicity mean to you?
  
11. Do you have any other comments to add to this section?

### **Educational Background**

The questions in this section will provide some background on your previous experiences in the education system.

12. What is your highest school qualification?

13. What are your best memories from your school years?

14. What are your worst memories from your school years?

15. Describe one thing you learnt at school which has helped you in your current home/work/community roles?

16. Were there any people in school who inspired you during your school years? How did they inspire you?

17. Were there any people in your family or community who inspired you during your school years? How did they inspire you?

18. Have you ever undertaken tertiary education before? If the answer is yes , please briefly outline what you have done and whether this is a completed qualification or not. If not, please go on to question 22.

19. What are the best memories you have of your previous tertiary experience?

20. What are the worst memories you have of your previous tertiary experience?

21. Do you have any other comments to add to this section?

## **Employment**

The questions in this section will provide an understanding of your previous employment experiences.

22. Where have you worked since leaving school?

23. What are the best memories you have of your previous employment?

24. What are the worst memories you have of your previous employment?

25. How would describe your current working environment?

26. Is your current employment your first choice of employment? If no, what would your first choice be?

27. Do you have any other comments to add to this section?

## **Current Study**

The questions in this section will provide an understanding of you as a student.

28. Who encouraged you to undertake teacher training? How did they do this?

29. Was teacher training your first choice of tertiary education? If not, please outline your other choice/s.

30. Why did you not continue with these choices?

31. Was The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand your first choice of provider for your teacher training?

32. Why did you choose to study with The Open Polytechnic?

33. Apart from your end qualification, what do you hope to gain from your current study?

34. Please rate each of the following statements on a scale of 1-5: 1 being very relevant and 5 being not so relevant.

Very relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Not relevant	Not at all relevant
1	2	3	4	5

I need to do this to keep my job due to the new government requirements.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy working with children and want to make teaching my career.	1	2	3	4	5
My employer requires me to have a Diploma of Teaching (ECE).	1	2	3	4	5
I want to act as a role model for my children by studying.	1	2	3	4	5
I want to learn more about how children learn to make me a better teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
It has been my life long ambition to be a teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
My home responsibilities have lessened/changed giving me the time/opportunity to study.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a specific career goal in mind.	1	2	3	4	5
I already have some ECE qualifications and I am up grading to my Diploma of Teaching (ECE).	1	2	3	4	5

35. Do you have any further comments you wish to make on any aspect of this questionnaire?

Return of this questionnaire implies consent.

Thank you so much for your participation.

## Appendix 2 b

Information sheet



## *An Educational Journey*

### INFORMATION SHEET

#### **Researcher Introduction**

My name is Julie Madgwick. I am conducting research on the backgrounds of students of The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand who have applied for the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) programme in Semester 2 2005. I am endeavouring to find out why the students come to apply for this programme and their previous educational experiences. This research is for my thesis in the Masters in Education (Adult Education) programme through Massey University College of Education. I am employed by the Open Polytechnic as a Regional Lecturer based in the Christchurch Regional Office.

#### **Participant Recruitment**

My research has three phases. For the first phase of the research I will be gathering demographic information, such as the geographic location, age and educational background, from the application forms sent in by prospective students. This information is gathered with the permission of The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. For the second phase I will be gathering information by questionnaire sent to the entire Semester 2 2005 cohort of students from the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) programme (attached). For the final phase, 10-20 participants will be chosen for a one on one phone interview from volunteers. Selection may be made on the basis of geographic location if oversubscribed. The interview will be taped and later transcribed for analysis. After completing the questionnaire, if you are interested in participating in the interview phase, please fill in your details on the attached form. You can either send this in with your questionnaire or in a separate envelope to maintain confidentiality.

#### **Project Procedures**

The data gathered for my research will be used to write up my thesis and inform future student recruitment, teaching methods and pastoral care at The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. The data will be kept locked file cabinet after collection and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the analysis, in this case after the marking of my thesis. Any identifying details will be removed from the research data before analysis and participants will remain anonymous in the final research report. A summary of the results of my research will be made available to the participants on completion.

#### **Participant involvement**

I invite you to complete the enclosed questionnaire and if you volunteer you may be selected for a phone interview. The questionnaire should take no more than an hour to fill in and the interview should be for around 30 minutes at a time of your choice.

#### **Participant's Rights**

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

- Decline to answer any particular question;
- Withdraw from the study at any time;
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;

- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- Ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- Completion and return of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question.

### **Project Contacts**

Please contact me if you have any questions about any aspect of this research. You can contact me on 03 964 8882 during the day; 03 331 6060 evenings or by email [julie.madgwick@openpolytechnic.ac.nz](mailto:julie.madgwick@openpolytechnic.ac.nz)

### **Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, WGTN Application 05/30. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Wellington, telephone 06 350 5249, email [humanethicswn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicswn@massey.ac.nz)

## Appendix 2 c

Permission form (interviews)

- I will participate in the telephone interview phase of your research.
- I will not participate in the telephone interview phase of your research.

I understand that any answers I give will remain anonymous and confidential. They will be used only for the purpose of the research and writing the subsequent research report. I understand that I may withdraw at any time and the information that I have provided to that point will not be used.

Signed:

Date:

Contact Details

First Name:

Telephone number:  
(please include area code)

Geographic area (please circle)

Northland

Auckland

Central North Island

Southern North Island

Northern South Island

Southern South Island

What is the best time to contact you for a telephone interview lasting approximately 30 minutes? (please circle)

Morning      9-10    10-11    11-12 noon

Afternoon    12-1    1-2    2-3    3-4    4-5

Evening      5-6    6-7    7-8    8-9

Thank you. I look forward to talking to you.

## Appendix 3a

Guiding questions for the interviews

Interviewee:

Date:

*What brings you to study at the Open Polytech in the Diploma of Teaching programme?  
What was your motivation?*

*Are you enjoying your study?*

*What are some of the challenges of studying at this time in your life?*

*What's your end goal from gaining your diploma?*

*Where do you work?*

*Did you consider this as a career when you were young?*

*Did you have any barriers to studying, before starting or after starting?*

*What are some of the disadvantages of studying now?*

*What are some of the positives of studying?*

*Who encouraged you apart from teachers as ESW?*

*Who has encouraged you to continue?*

*Has anyone in your family ever had a university education? Extended or close family?*

*What did your nieces study?*

*What about your husband's family?*

*How do you think life will change after gain the diploma?*

*What has been the impact of you studying on your children?*

*What has been the impact of you studying on your younger children? Have they commented, shown interest?*

*Do they join you when you study?*

*What do your children want to be?*

*Is your partner supportive?*

*Are others in your family supportive?*

*What about your partner's family?*

*Do you think you will go to your graduation?*

*Will all of your family come?*

*What about your children?*

*How will you feel when you have finished?*

*What do you think the implications having a diploma will have on your teaching?*

*Tell me about your schooling. How big was your school? Primary and high schools?*

*How did you go at school? Did you enjoy it?*

*How did you feel about that?*

*What about your parents?*

*Did you live at home?*

*Did you work in this time?*

*Do you still keep in touch with your work mates?*

*Was it a job or career? Did you aspired to do better?*

*Were you still with your partner then?*

*After living in ....., how do you find living in .....*

*Do you feel quite isolated?*

*How would you describe yourself?*

*Do you think you have achieved your goals?*

*How long will you take to complete?*

*On scale 1:10, how has confidence improved over the study so far?*

*So you've got heaps more?*

*What are your hopes and dreams for the future? For yourself? For your children?*

*What about yourself?*

## Appendix 3 b

Permission form for use of interview transcript

*Kia ora*

*It was lovely talking with you on Friday evening. Could you please check that this transcript is a true and correct record of our conversation and sign below:*

*Signed:.....*

*If there are any changes you would like to make to the transcript or if I have recorded something incorrectly, please include these changes under the existing data and sign below:*

*Signed:.....*

*If you have any further comments, please include these below.*

*Please post the signed transcript back to me in the envelope provided as soon as possible so I can begin my analysis. I am hoping that the data you have so generously provided will help inform adult education for future generations and I will send you a copy of my thesis when it is completed...hopefully I will pass!*

*Thank you so much for participating in my research. Good luck with your study.*

*Julie ☺*