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**DEVELOPING PRAXIS FOR A FEW
NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND
STUDENTS IN THE CLASS**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Massey University**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how teachers develop working theories and practices for small numbers of non-English speaking background (NESB) students in mainstream classes. The investigation included eight class teachers and four different school settings. A pilot phase was conducted in one school at the end of 2000. The major phase of the study was carried out in 2002. In each of the four terms that year, a different school became the context for the study and the focus was placed on a year 1-2 class teacher and a year 5-6 class teacher in that school.

The study employed a qualitative ethnographic approach. Information was collected about each class teacher's experience, knowledge, confidence, teaching strategies, the degree of stress experienced when teaching NESB students in various class groupings, and the way in which individual and class needs were balanced. An initial intensive interview with each class teacher was followed by in-class observations. These observations were interspersed by two reflective discussions which took place in the middle and at the end of the school term. Discussions took a reflective problem-solving approach that made use of a write-down, think-aloud technique, and focused on critical learning and teaching episodes from the class. In addition, a reflective journal was kept, and semi-structured interviews were carried out with teachers responsible for the English for Speakers of Other Languages programme in the school.

The results of the inquiry led to the development of a theoretical model which illustrated how the evolution of teachers' praxis was influenced by dynamic interactions within and across three contextual layers: the educational community, the classroom, and the reflective practitioner. Each teacher's professional knowledge was informed by a unique background of experience and the nature of the collaboration that occurred with colleagues and parents. In turn, these factors impacted on the formation of pedagogic beliefs, perceived efficacy, and the evolution, selection and implementation of particular teaching roles and strategies.

The study culminated with a number of recommendations being made for the enhancement of professional development initiatives, as well as for school and educational policies. In particular, these recommendations highlight the need for taking a broad ecological approach to addressing the professional needs of class teachers working with small numbers of NESB students.

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