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**Success stories: Experiences of
non-English speaking background students
in an English-medium tertiary programme**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Education
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Abstract

Increasing numbers of non-English speaking background (NESB) students are enrolling in English-medium education programmes. The fact that these students are generally successful in their studies is seldom mentioned in academic literature. It is hoped that information from this study will fill a gap in recent literature on this topic.

This study investigates and celebrates the experiences of four NESB students who have successfully graduated from an English-medium programme which delivers the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education). The key question investigated is – what enabled these students to achieve in an education setting so different from their home language, culture and philosophy? Factors such as motivation and support structures were also investigated.

Within a qualitative approach, narratives were used to record and retell participants' stories. A credit approach was also employed. This fits in with sociocultural theory, which values a student's contribution to the learning experience. Contextual features also had a role to play in participants' success, so links to ecological theoretical perspectives are made. The influence of motivation in success, as acknowledged in social cognitive theory, is also discussed.

Participants were clear about the role of motivation in their academic success. Intrinsic motivation was found to be particularly important; being influenced by a range of factors. The factors identified included the funds of knowledge participants brought to their study, their development of self-efficacy, a sense of agency and self-regulatory practices. It is proposed that these factors have fundamental relationships with each other by influencing achievement and mastery in the other factors.

Support systems were found to play a crucial role in participants' success. These support systems were found to be the family, the institution, colleagues and classmates. Governmental agencies also were accessed to provide financial support. Recommendations and implications from the study affirm the importance of professional development for teachers of NESB students. In particular, understanding topics relating to funds of knowledge, self-efficacy, agency and self-directed learning were noted as relevant for teachers of NESB students.

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Chapter One: Setting the Scene

1.1 Introduction

This study investigates the experiences of non-English speaking adult women students participating in an English-medium tertiary institution in Aotearoa New Zealand. The institution delivers the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education).

The journey of the participants in this study is epitomized by a time when I was present at the graduation of one, Mariana. When her name was announced the auditorium erupted in jubilant applause. Mariana rose and moved gracefully across the stage, silver streaks in her hair softly framing her glowing face, eyes sparkling with excitement. As a proud observer of Mariana's achievement, I applauded enthusiastically also, and reflected on the years of struggle and hard work she had completed to attain this goal; the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education). But this was a moment for celebrating, not reflecting, and I joined in the applause once more as her family came forward to bestow gifts and honour their mother and wife.

That day, for the graduate mentioned above and others from a non-English speaking background, this moment of celebration was the culmination of years of diligence and persistence in overcoming numerous challenges. Their journey had been fraught with barriers, misunderstandings, frustrations and disappointments. The new life they had dreamt of before immigrating to Aotearoa New Zealand had not always been realized. In research carried out by White, Watts and Trlin (2002) on the experiences of NESB immigrants it was noted that “despite the relatively high proportion with a tertiary qualification,

only 25% were in paid work at the time of the survey” (p. 150). To gain employment in this country often means new qualifications that are likely to be accepted here have to be acquired. This often results in the necessity of studying in a language and culture quite different to the one of their birth (White et al., 2002).

1.2 Aims of the study

The aim of this study is to record the stories of NESB graduates from a field-based tertiary provider delivering the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) to investigate the intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors that enabled them to achieve academically within the New Zealand context. These students tend to be mature-age women who have chosen a career change on arrival in this country. A central tenet of the study is a belief that looking at success factors rather than investigating from a deficit perspective honours these students’ achievements. This sociocultural perspective proposes that learning occurs during the interactions between the historical, social and cultural contexts that an individual exists in (Vygotsky, 1986). An ecological model also acknowledges that external factors impact on students’ participation and success in their study (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Background to the study

Increasing numbers of NESB students can pose challenges for teachers, particularly for those without qualifications in supporting language learners. Teachers usually have strong expertise in their own field but may not have had opportunity to develop specific skills relating to language learners, or understanding about language acquisition. In regards to professional development for teachers of NESB students, Gándara and Maxwell-Jolly (2006) found that generally little provision

for this was made. However, pre-service teaching programmes should prepare teachers for working with NESB students according to Waxman, Tellez and Walberg (2006). Topics such as “understanding first and second language acquisition, strong content mastery, cross-cultural understanding, acknowledgment of differences, and collaborative skills” (p. 192) were suggested by these authors. Affective issues could also be studied by teachers so they have the opportunity to develop compassion, value their student’s languages, and examine their own attitudes to other cultures (Waxman et al., 2006). This research aims to provide information that will enable teachers in Aotearoa to understand some of the challenges NESB students face, and support teachers in developing skills that will help them in their work with this group.

Teachers are also expected to comply with the *Graduating teacher standards: Aotearoa New Zealand* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007). These give specific requirements for teachers such as having “content and pedagogical knowledge for supporting English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners to succeed in the curriculum” (NZTC, 2007, n. p.). The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2003) suggests that the “high achievement for diverse groups of learners is an outcome of the skilled and cumulative pedagogical actions of a teacher in creating and optimizing an effective learning environment” (p. 1). While this study does not dispute this suggestion, it may be that the student also brings something vital to the learning experience.

Given that it can be difficult to complete a Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) in its own right, the challenge this poses for NESB students is great. They are studying in a culture and language that they may not be fully conversant with and concepts they are exposed to are often unfamiliar. Methods and expectations of study

may also be new to these students, requiring them to engage in paradigm shifts as they accommodate different ideas. These are all issues that should concern their teachers, particularly those who belong to the dominant culture, and whose taken-for-granted norms underpin classroom practices (Cannella, 1997).

1.3 Justification of the study

In the International Forward to *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration*, Earl (2007) suggests that “teachers’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions have direct and serious implications for the students they teach” (cited in Timperley et al., 2007, p. vii). It is hoped this study will provide insight that will enable teacher educators of NESB students to have a greater understanding and empathy towards the unique and often complex backgrounds of these students. Continuing to provide opportunities for teachers to up-skill themselves and develop deeper understandings of their teaching practice is a way for education providers (and at a macro level, the government) to ensure “that the teaching and learning in our schools is up to date and effective” (Earl, 2007, cited in Timperley et al., 2007, p. vii).

Because of the trend of increasing numbers of NESB students, Elgort, Marshall, and Mitchell (2003) suggest that tertiary providers “collect and analyze data on attitudes and perceptions of this group of learners, and ensure that their learning needs, perceptions and preferences are considered when new teaching and learning approaches are introduced” (p. 2). To date there is minimal research in the New Zealand context regarding NESB adult students participating in English-medium programmes. It is hoped that this research will provide useful qualitative data that will add to the knowledge base.

The researcher's experience of working with NESB students gave her the opportunity to observe that these students did not easily give up or drop-out. Wondering why this was, and pondering on what was it that enabled these students, often with the additional responsibilities of dependent family members, to continue in the face of such difficulties, became a personal catalyst for this research. Bretag, Horrocks and Smith (2002) note that many NESB students do complete their academic study successfully.

The wider motivation for this study also lies in the changing face of New Zealand society. The ethnic and cultural mix of Aotearoa is becoming increasingly diverse. During 2008 over 87,000 permanent or long term immigrants arrived in the country (Statistics New Zealand, 2009). This has led to increasing numbers of international students enrolling in tertiary institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand. Statistics from 2007 indicate that in 2004 just over 20% of all enrolments in tertiary education were international students (Institute of International Education, 2008). This number does not include immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds who have permanent residency. This group is also increasing and is made up of refugees, and immigrants under the specified criteria permitted by the New Zealand government, such as family reunification, refugee and humanitarian reasons (White et al., 2002).

A key motivation for becoming a teacher is to make a positive difference to learners' lives; however it can be frustrating if teachers lack the necessary tools, support or knowledge to do this effectively (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007). Teachers have a range of tasks to complete so require skills in many areas. For example, they need to prepare and assess coursework, motivate students, and manage a class. It could be challenging to support NESB students to achieve in

a programme delivered in a language and culture they are still becoming competent in.

1.4 Who are NESB Students?

A definition of the term non-English speaking background (NESB) is provided by the Ministry of Education (1999). It refers to “those students who speak a language other than English as their first language. The term is used for students from a wide range of ethnic, cultural, social and economic backgrounds” (p. 7). Numerous life and educational experiences, plus skills and learning needs, may be represented in this group so it is important that they are not considered to be a homogenous group (Ministry of Education, 1999). Many immigrants are also competent in several languages. A distinction is made between this group and those who are identified as English language learners (ELL). NESB learners, like those who took part in this study, are often reasonably competent in the English language although not as fluent as native speakers of English. The participants in this study all immigrated to Aotearoa New Zealand as adults.

1.5 The Institutional Context

The institution in question delivers the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) over three years. It is field-based, meaning students attend class one full day a week, and work in an early childhood centre (sometimes voluntarily) for a minimum of fifteen hours a week (many students work more hours than this). This means that they are in the roles of both teacher and student themselves. Weekly tasks are completed in their centre, and during each term they complete a set of journals, and two major assignments which frequently take the form of essays or reports. A high standard of

academic work is required. The programme sits on levels six and seven of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. A three or four week practicum experience in another centre occurs once a year, and their teaching practice is assessed either in this centre or their home centre each term by a representative of the institution.

Entry into the programme is rigorous, and graduates have to demonstrate ability to read and write to a standard of English deemed appropriate for the programme. However, the institution does not require a specific level of English prior to acceptance on the programme, such as an International English Language Testing System Score (IELTS). Study skills support is available for students identified as requiring additional academic writing support. To gain entry, however, the students would have participated in both a group and individual interview, and gained industry endorsement from the early childhood service they are working or volunteering in. The early childhood service also provided affirmation that they would provide support to the student during the course of their training. This comes primarily in the form of a liaison teacher, whose role is to oversee the student's work in the centre, and provide guidance and feedback on any centre tasks the student is required to complete.

1.6 Summary

It is evident that the population of Aotearoa is becoming more culturally diverse and migrants choose to settle here for many different reasons. This diversity is well represented within teacher education classes. Numerous challenges occur for students from a non-English speaking background, yet many succeed in completing the requirements. This study will investigate the factors that have contributed to the success of four graduates, and add to the knowledge

available for those planning and delivering teacher education programmes. The following section discusses the current literature available in relating to the success of NESB students within tertiary programmes.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review will investigate the experiences of adult NESB students and their teachers in Aotearoa. Investigating research relating to adult NESB students in English-medium institutions within New Zealand poses challenges due to the limited amount of research on this topic that exists. To provide additional pertinent information several studies from overseas will also be referred to. Throughout New Zealand there are increasing numbers of NESB students attending English-medium classes (Franken & McComish, 2003; Stanton, 2007). These statistics are also reflected in the increasing diversity represented in early childhood settings. Statistics indicate that over six percent of children enrolled in early childhood services come from Pasifika, Asian or 'other' diverse cultural backgrounds (Education Counts, 2009a). Haworth (2005) notes there are limited studies focusing on the experiences of NESB students in Aotearoa, particularly in settings where they make up a small percentage of the class.

This review focuses on key themes from the literature that relates either to the teachers of adult NESB students or to the experiences of these students. Research focusing on the experiences, beliefs and attitudes of NESB students will be summarised firstly. This will be followed by an analysis of research based on teachers to identify key concerns and issues for this group. The role of context will also be considered with reference to the ideas of Vygotsky, Bruner and Bandura.

2.2 Experiences and beliefs of NESB students

While the focus of this study is on factors that contributed to student teachers' success, it is necessary to acknowledge the range of challenges that they may have faced. A summary of these challenges reveals they are varied and complex. As well as successfully completing the range of tasks, assessments and activities required in the programme, participants may also have had to deal with cultural differences and experiences, differing educational contexts which included English language idiosyncrasies (the New Zealand version of English) and academic language, their wider home roles, the requirements of work, financial concerns, plus differing values, beliefs, expectations and understandings, particularly in regard to the image of the child/childhood and educational practices. These topics are investigated in this literature review.

Language

The participants in this study did not share a similar root language with English, so it could be that issues arise regarding that. Swan and Smith (2001) explain that the Chinese and English languages belong to two different base families (Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European), and have phonological and structural differences. The participants from India spoke Malayalam, from the independent Dravidian group, or Hindi, derived from Sanskrit. English is used widely across India; although it has many differences from British English (Swan & Smith, 2001). Indonesian language has some similarities with English as it uses the Latin alphabet for writing, with influences from the Dutch, Portuguese and other colonisers of the region. However it also has some roots in Sanskrit. The phonological systems of Indonesia are very different from English (Swan & Smith, 2001). These authors also explain that "a learner's English is ... likely to carry the signature of

his/her mother tongue” (p. xi). This usually occurs in pronunciation, but vocabulary, syntax, discourse, structure and handwriting will also have an overlay of the first language’s signature (Swan & Smith, 2001).

Culture

Belonging to a culture provides people with a sense of purpose and meaning for their lives (Wong, Wong & Scott, 2006). Wong et al. (2006) define culture as “a way of perceiving the world based upon a shared set of social beliefs and values” (p. 1). Moving to a new country and culture where different beliefs and values operate can be traumatic. Whelan Ariza (2006) explains the ‘culture shock’ cycle, saying there are phases an immigrant may go through when transitioning into the new culture. These include; being excited about the new experiences, feeling hostility, frustration, anger and blame. If the immigrant successfully traverses this part of the transition, a period of ‘recovery’ occurs where they begin to make adjustments and accept “the new culture as a way of life” (p. 14). Chen and Starosta (2000) refer to culture as “the beliefs, norms and attitudes that are used to guide our behaviours and solve problems” (p. 25). The impact of cultural change may be relevant to participants in this current study.

If the origins of culture are linked to the fundamental human need to belong, then when an individual’s beliefs are the same as the other people around them, a sense of belonging is more likely (Tweed & Conway, 2006). It is possible that adaptation to the culture of a particular organisation enables individuals to feel connected and perhaps experience success in it. Stanton (2007), in research on NESB students in Otago, suggested that “living and studying in another country requires a considerable amount of tolerance to ambiguity and flexibility” (p. 26).

Research on culturally relevant pedagogy and success indicates that disparity between instructional methods and cultural preferences may result in educational difficulties (McInerney, 2008). A mismatch of cultural values and expectations which impacted on classroom experiences was reported by Kainose (2004). She explained that her professor's "beautiful waves of self-conversations" (p. 116) effectively prevented NESB students like her from participating in class discussions. Furthermore, it is suggested that due to their life experiences non-traditional adult students (such as NESB) may be skilled at hiding "the fear that is in their hearts" (Palmer, 2007, p. 46). Silence or lack of interaction may not indicate ignorance or lack of interest, but could be fearfulness to participate. Rogoff (2003) noted the importance of participation on personal, interpersonal and cultural levels, for an individual's success in learning and development. She explained that previous and current experiences operate together to influence the learner.

Educational context

Developing competence in a second language can be challenging for all ages and occurs over time. This is a unique journey for each learner (Collier, 1998) and students require a range of support systems (Bretag et al., 2002). Investigating the experiences of new arrivals in Aotearoa, White et al. (2002) looked at the way this group accessed and engaged with formal and informal learning experiences. As adult learners they were motivated to achieve greater competence in English in order to gain employment. Issues identified included "the cost of English language classes, the lack of opportunities to speak with native speakers of English ... and the inexperience of New Zealanders in speaking with people of other backgrounds" (White et al., 2002, p. 150). While this group was focused on learning English, their desire for more interaction with competent English speakers may be relevant

to the experiences of the participants in this study. Bretag et al. (2002) identified that there were many learning issues that NESB students had to work through. These included reluctance to participate in class discussions and difficulties with English writing conventions.

Students who are not fully competent in the language of instruction may be selecting from a range of strategies. Chamot (2001) suggested selective attention may occur which includes behaviours such as scanning written material or listening to the teacher for specific information. Note-taking is an activity that often accompanies this. It was suggested by Chamot (2001) that good learners displayed strategies such as asking questions, drawing on prior knowledge, employing memorization techniques and using every opportunity to practice the language in the educational setting. It can be surmised from this that students who have undertaken academic study in their first language will know what they need to know and do in the new language setting. Holmberg and Emmoth (1994) explain that drawing on one's knowledge base is evidence of learner competence.

However, Hughes (2004, cited in Stanton, 2007) warns against making assumptions on a NESB student's ability to cope academically, based on their home-language study results. For example, different understandings of "academic concepts such as plagiarism, criticism of authorities, and argument structure" can occur (Hughes, 2004, n. p., cited in Stanton, 2007, p. 29). Academic language requires a deep level of proficiency in the language of instruction, and while the student may be competent in social use of the language they may be behind their peers academically for several years, and in fact may never catch up (Collier, 1998). It is possible that this would be upsetting for students who have had a history of achieving to a high standard academically in their home country.

In a study completed in Hong Kong on the experiences of students enrolled in non-local programmes run by off shore providers, it was found that mismatches between academic expectations and the experiences encountered in the classroom were the main source of difficulties for international students (Chapman & Pyvis, 2006). While they found that Chinese students preferred to answer questions when asked directly rather than discuss in a group, Chapman and Pyvis (2006) disagreed with the notion of stereotyping Asian students as rote learners. They found that a mixture of individual and collaborative study methods was used. The key issues identified from their participants were; developing a sense of belonging in the learning community, having clear educational goals, having their learning style preferences validated and forming positive relationships with teachers.

The attitudes of NESB students towards collaborative learning were investigated by Hislop (2006). Her research was based in New Zealand and focused on NESB students enrolled in an English for Academic Purposes paper. Like Chapman and Pyvis (2006) she found that NESB students had positive responses to group learning, finding this a useful way of gaining information. These learners also revealed that they had clear ideas about the strategies and activities that were most useful in their learning.

The attitudes and perceptions of NESB students on their learning processes were also investigated in a study conducted by Elgort et al. (2003). This New Zealand based study was completed to provide tertiary education providers with deeper understanding of the attitudes and perceptions of these learners. While this research was based on online models of teaching, rather than the face-to-face model, some of their findings were relevant. It was found that NESB students were critical thinkers “about their learning and looked for ways to improve

this experience” (Elgort et al., 2003, p. 9). They also reported that NESB students were adaptable to various learning contexts, able to evaluate their own progress and identify factors that supported or hindered their learning. This supports the findings of Hislop (2006) where students were seen to reflect on their learning and adapt if necessary. The ability of students to develop independent study skills and set goals to demonstrate competence in organisation of their study relates to Garrison’s (1990) notion of competence which includes the ability to be self-reliant and have strong motivation to succeed (cited in Holmberg & Emmoth, 1994).

Gender issues

It has been suggested that women tend to follow traditional roles due to a perceived belief about their capabilities (Bandura, 1995). Social norms have influenced women’s beliefs about their ability and the suitability (or not) of various roles. The field of early childhood education has been a female dominated sector since Froebel, in the nineteenth century, encouraged women into the role of teachers. He argued that this was a natural place for women to work as it suited their motherly instincts (May, 1997). Whether or not this is true, the facts are clear. Ministry of Education statistics show that in 2009 there were just 285 male teachers compared to 18,112 female teachers in licensed teacher-led early childhood services (Education Counts, 2009b).

Women often have to juggle work, study and family commitments as well as other factors that compete for their attention. This can have a negative impact on their ability to focus on study. Investment in time for study and the need to be flexible in managing this can cause physical and emotional issues for women (Ashton & Elliot, 2007). In a qualitative investigation of three women who had recently graduated

from a teacher education programme, Ellis (2006) found all had triumphed over adversity to achieve success. Her participants came from stressful environments and had identified themselves as having learning difficulties. She interviewed these women to gather their personal stories relating to their academic success and found that self-belief had a huge impact on the choices they made. The ability to rise above adversity and persevere is related to the concept of self-efficacy or an individual's belief in his/her capabilities to achieve desired levels of performance (Bandura, 1994). Bandura (1995) describes self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 2).

While the group Ellis interviewed were not immigrants, and therefore did not have a non-English speaking background, they were women so there could be relevant themes to this study, such as gender, childhood, family experiences, early educational experiences, societal expectations and self-efficacy. Ashton and Elliot (2007) looked at challenges facing women who returned to study while also working. This group also included mothers, with the demands and responsibilities this entailed, and represented "diverse cultural, religious, sociopolitical and socioeconomic backgrounds" (p. 16). Ashton and Elliot's (2007) Australian research indicated that these women worked on average "12 hours per day, seven days per week" (p. 15) plus the requirements of study. The 'work' included employment outside of the home as well as household chores. This shows that a high level of commitment is required for women to maintain the rigors of study as well as attend to the other demands in life.

It was also found by Ashton and Elliot (2007) that a factor influencing these women's success and on-going motivation was the knowledge that they were carrying "the hopes, and aspirations of their families

and communities” (p. 16). Academic success often meant for these women that sacrifices had to be made, though the decision-making process related to this also added to their stress. A limited opportunity for social interaction due to the range of competing priorities was also noted as a stress factor in this research. It was also suggested that mature students lacked academic confidence, and required appropriate, easily accessible support and relevant feedback for success (Ashton & Elliot, 2007). It is possible that mature students who are also studying in a new environment and language may have increased stressors impacting on their learning, and may require additional support.

Differing understandings regarding early childhood pedagogy.

The New Zealand early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā tamariki o Aotearoa* (Ministry of Education, 1996) has a sociocultural lens, with a strong focus on the role of reciprocal relationships in relation to teaching and learning. This bicultural document is not intended to simply focus on school-readiness but to have a holistic approach (Carr, 2005). NESB students may come from philosophical traditions and educational practices that are quite different to the experiences they have within early childhood settings and study in Aotearoa. For example, different beliefs exist within various cultural groups about the importance and relevance of play as a medium for learning (Roopnarine, Lasker, Sacks & Stores, 1998).

Implicit theories individuals have are seldom discussed as they are part of their taken-for-granted ideas about the world (Tweed & Conway, 2006). According to a Foucauldian approach, the more knowledge a learner has the greater their ability to use this to benefit themselves and to understand their world (Foucault, 1995, cited in Ahl, 2006).

The next section will investigate some of the concerns and issues that teachers of NESB students face while they endeavor to support these students to achieve in a new setting. Best practice and suggested strategies for teachers of NESB students will be investigated.

2.3 Concerns and issues for teachers of NESB students

As previously noted, the numbers of NESB students enrolling in tertiary programmes within Aotearoa New Zealand is on the rise. Increasing multiculturalism in society will require changes in “assumption and practices concerned with language as a medium of learning” (Mohan, 2001, p. 107), therefore teachers should be looking for ways to improve their teaching practices and share information with their students (Gibbs, 2005). Growing numbers of NESB students may pose challenges for their teachers, particularly if they do not have qualifications in supporting language learners.

Professional development and diverse learners

Gándara and Maxwell-Jolly (2006) found that little provision was made for professional development for teachers of NESB students. Nevertheless, pre-service teaching programmes should prepare teachers for working with NESB students (Waxman et al., 2006). As already noted in the previous chapter, a range of topics that would support teachers of NESB students could be included in these programmes. Having a strong understanding of the theory behind language acquisition and enculturation would ensure policies for supporting NESB students are relevant and workable (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Ebbeck and Russo (2007) use the term ‘internationalisation’ to describe the process of recruiting and admitting students from overseas

countries. Reporting on the situation in Australia, they explain the number of these students has increased dramatically in recent years. With increased internationalism, providers need to ensure the curriculum is relevant, that it provides for the student's needs and is fair. The implication is that the curriculum will then cater for all students' expectations "regardless of their national, ethnic, cultural, social class/caste or gender identities" (Ebbeck & Russo, 2007, p. 8). These authors point out that developing the appropriate skills required to learn or teach "in a culturally diverse environment ...takes time and effort" (Ebbeck & Russo, 2007, p. 9). They suggest that internationalism should be incorporated throughout every aspect of the programme and the institution. One way of doing this is by ensuring that opportunities to compare the dominant culture with others occur as topics are investigated. By looking at similarities and differences students gain an appreciation of their own and other cultures. However, Brebner (2005) found there was very little contact between the host country students and immigrant students, and suggested this appreciation was minimal.

Along with the increasing numbers of diverse learners, a range of learning styles and learning backgrounds is also represented. Teachers often find that NESB students experience discontinuities between previous learning experiences and the new one in which they find themselves (Hislop, 2006). It is possible therefore that some students could experience cultural identity issues when there is conflict between what is taught in the class, and the beliefs and values the student has grown up with (Dickie, 1998). When teaching is culturally relevant students are able to maintain their own cultural integrity while they work towards academic excellence (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Empowering students to tap into their funds of knowledge and identify continuities between various learning contexts can be a challenge for teachers. This relates to student self-efficacy, an attribute that was found to be of importance in this study. However it is important for teachers to also have a high sense of self-efficacy if they are to impart this to their students (Gibbs, 2006). Bandura (1995) explained that “self-efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act” (p. 2). When students are in a new environment and may not have wide support systems in place, the teacher’s practice can make a difference to their feelings of self-esteem and adequacy (Echevarria & Graves, 2003)

Teachers’ beliefs about their capability to work with NESB students, or their self-efficacy beliefs, will influence how and what they teach, and the range of strategies that they use (Gibbs, 2005; 2006). Haworth (2005) conducted research in four New Zealand schools over a year, a term in each school. While the study related to NESB children, it did focus on teacher perceptions and reflections on their praxis. Some of the findings may be relevant to this study in regard to challenges that teachers faced. Those teachers who had greater confidence and experience in working with NESB students tended to implement “more effective teaching strategies” (Haworth, 2005, p. 32). Teachers often find that NESB students provide a lower academic quality of written work. Bretag et al., (2002) said this could be “difficult to read and mark, largely due to poor grammar” (p. 58). It is possible that this can lead to extra pressure occurring for their teachers.

It is claimed that when teachers have an understanding of effective pedagogy this results in positive outcomes for EAL students (Minaya-Rowe, 2006). Knight and Wiseman (2006) agree that professional development is necessary for teachers so they can increase their

intercultural skills and relevant knowledge for working with “linguistically and culturally diverse students” (p. 72). A number of research findings commented on the need for specific training to be provided for teachers working with NESB students to enable them to develop appropriate teaching strategies and skills (Bretag et al., 2002). As these authors note, “even small changes can have a positive impact” (p. 68).

Best practice was investigated by Franken (2004) in relation to teaching international students at a tertiary level within a New Zealand context. She refers to the document *Quality teaching for diverse students* (Alton-Lee, 2003) which was prepared for schools and includes best evidence synthesis for improving educational outcomes for diverse learners. Franken (2004) notes despite increasing diversity there is no similar document for the tertiary sector. The key principles for best practice noted by Franken (2004) were related to developing academic literacy. These were: giving students the opportunity to understand differences in academic literacy practices, and how these related to epistemological or world views, how they developed over time, and having the opportunity to understand various language forms and conventions. She focused particularly on the teacher’s role of raising students’ meta-awareness of their learning within an academic environment.

The key points that Alton-Lee (2003) made regarding best practice for teaching NESB students included; having effective links between the educational setting and other contexts, ensuring all school practices aligned, providing appropriate and constructive goals and assessment opportunities, pedagogical practices that facilitated inclusiveness, and responsive teaching practices. Ward (2001) was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to investigate the impact international students

have on tertiary providers, other students and what perceptions these international students have of themselves as learners. She noted that often international students reported having negative experiences with local students.

Classroom practices

The literature reviewed in this study suggested that respectful teaching occurs when teachers include aspects of students' culture and language (Echevarria & Graves, 2003; Franken & McComish, 2003; Gibbs, 2006). A warm and welcoming environment is said to foster learning, enhance self-esteem and communicate to the student that they belong. These concepts are echoed in the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), which the participants in this study would be familiar with. This document also affirms suggestions by Franken and McComish (2003) that diversity is a matter for celebration and respect.

A number of strategies to support NESB students were mentioned in the literature in relation to classroom practices. These included the way teachers communicate with NESB students. For example, providing opportunities for students to practice academic language, and using open-ended questions to enable choice in response (Gibbons, 1991). It was suggested that interaction with others is crucial for language learners and providing time for questions and engaging students in relevant discussion were ways teachers could provide for this (Echevarria et al, 2008). It is possible that interactive methods enable students to draw on past learning styles and favoured cultural learning methods such as group learning rather than individual learning (Genesse & Riches, 2006).

In a study of mainstream teachers Frankin and McComish (2003) found that while they made adjustments to their language for NESB students, they “did not use a wide range of teaching techniques to enhance comprehension of student output” (p. 11); instead they tended to rely on more passive teaching methods such as reading aloud together. Chamot (2001) reported on research which indicated if teachers were coached on strategies to support their work with EAL students this had a positive impact on their overall teaching practices.

Online delivery of programmes has been noted as a popular strategy, suggesting that this benefited students as it gave them opportunity to develop the technical skills needed in today’s climate (Elgort et al., 2003). When investigating NESB students’ attitudes and expectations in New Zealand, Elgort et al. (2003) found responses from students regarding online support indicated that this was helpful (particularly the availability of lecture notes before the lecture). Listening to a lecturer and taking notes at the same time was noted as a struggle for NESB students (Elgort et al., 2003). Frankin (2004) posts lecturer notes on the course website after the lecture, enabling students to compare her notes with their own.

Chamot (2001) suggests that if teachers are familiar with learning strategies that students might use, it will enable them to “gain insights into the cognitive, social and affective processes involved in language learning” (p. 25). With this knowledge they may be able to guide less successful students into trying strategies that have supported others to succeed. Teaching strategies employed by teachers do not need to be isolated from course content because using course material and concepts as tools to assist will have a greater impact on students’ learning (Echevarria et al., 2008). Also, as “learning depends on the personal involvement of the learner” (Gibbons, 1991, p. 29), the

suggestion is implied that teachers could investigate ways to engage NESB students so language skills and knowledge can occur together. The literature suggests that it can take time to develop these skills and indicate that teachers' understanding of this would support students' self-efficacy. Berkenkotter and Huckin (1993) explain that "learning the genres of disciplinary or professional discourse would be similar to second language acquisition, requiring immersion into the culture, and a lengthy period of apprenticeship and enculturation" (p. 487). It seems to be important that teachers are clear about this process so they are not expecting immediate proficiency.

2.4 The Role of Context

Learning does not happen in isolation and, for NESB students, the interactions they have with more experienced others may provide guidelines, feedback and support. The ideas of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and the American Jerome Bruner underpin this concept well. Students also belong to communities and have a range of networks and connections important to their study and overall wellbeing. Uri Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is useful to illustrate this. Social cognitive theory as proposed by Albert Bandura may account for the agentive activity that students engage in.

Theories have been defined as "a plan or set of guiding principles that provide an explanation about human intentions" (Rieber, 2004, p. 1). Referring to the ideas of Vygotsky, Rieber (2004) observes that theories come from the multiple interactions humans have with each other, the environment and with everything that is in an individual's life, including their own thinking processes. No-one can be separated from the relationships they have with the environment and other people – all are interacting on each other and influencing thinking. The purpose

when theorizing is to look for the interconnections – “to see how it all fits into the total pattern of things” (Rieber, 2004, p. 2).

Sociocultural perspective

Relationship building is seen as a critical activity for turning a classroom of students into a community of learners. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory suggests that personally meaningful learning occurs best when reciprocal relationships with others are formed. Socio-cultural theories propose that the social context and more experienced cultural members are necessary to the development and enculturation of less experienced members of the group (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986). A key point about sociocultural theory is that the learner is seen as an active agent in their learning, rather than a passive recipient (Cullen, 2001).

Bruner (1996) describes agency as the belief that “one can initiate and carry out activities on one’s own” (p. 35). Intentionality in actions, beliefs, and emotions is the outcome of human agency (Gibbs, 2006). However beliefs develop through the successes and failures encountered, and often it is the educational setting that determines these. Individuals then evaluate themselves against the responses of others. Bruner (1996) calls the mix of agentive efficacy and self-evaluation – self-esteem. He says this combines the feelings of what learners think they can do and what they are afraid to do. The culture and the setting learners are in will affect the way their self-esteem is expressed. The way the individual is supported by others will also have an impact on self-esteem.

Relationships and interactions between learners and mentors allow intersubjectivity to occur; that is, a common understanding through cooperation and interaction. Bruner (1996) refers to intersubjectivity as

“how humans come to know “each other’s minds”” (p. 12). Within this ‘getting to know each other’ there comes an understanding that the ‘other’ has a different opinion or perspective, and there are reasons for this (Bruner, 1996). Vygotsky, according to Reiber (2004), considered intentionality to be “the “springs of action” or the motivating forces of life” (p. 6) but felt they also required certain circumstances or conditions to see them into fruition. Reiber (2004) explains that these intentions may be conscious or unconscious, and can impact on the types of relationships an individual fosters.

Bruner (1996) proposes that education is a mutual learning community where scaffolding occurs among individuals as they interact. Within this framework learners are supported (scaffolded) to move to a higher level of understanding. This relates to Vygotsky’s (1986) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners achieve at a higher level with the support of a more experienced other. It is suggested that this support or scaffolding, should be both authentic and cognitively challenging, and is a key to successful learning (Vygotsky, 1986).

Mentors can support the learner to reflect on their developing knowledge and understandings – to develop their own meaning-making processes with the support of others who share the same passions and interests (Conroy, 2009). Bruner (1996) also suggests that the process of meaning-making provides “a basis for cultural exchange” (p. 3). Joint participation with others seems to foster meaningful learning (Cullen, 2001). The participants in this study were working and studying alongside others who were skilled in early childhood education practices and had knowledge of academic requirements in this country. Vygotsky (1978) proposes that the historical, cultural and institutional context that an individual is

exposed to has a role in shaping their understanding of the world. This could have an impact on participants as they began to understand cultural world views from a New Zealand perspective and make adjustments to their own way of thinking.

Ecological perspective

An ecological model is seen as relevant in this study as it recognises that the learning environment is affected by other settings and the relationships that occur between these settings (Ministry of Education, 1996). The immediate setting is known as the microsystem, and the various interrelationships within it will have an impact on the developing person. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains this microsystem includes patterns “of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting” (p. 22). Bronfenbrenner describes a role as “a set of activities and relations expected of a person occupying a particular position in society” (p. 85). These roles are established by the culture or subculture and the societal expectations the individual subscribes to. Changes in roles may alter the way the person is treated by others (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

A number of microsystems are created as the individual moves from one setting to another. There can be a number of interconnections and often there will be individuals who are involved in both settings, creating “formal and informal communications among settings” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). The mesosystem “comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). The exosystem is “one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). The macrosystem is

the term often used to refer to those belief systems which influence various settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

For example, in Western society today it is understood that learning is life-long and begins before formal education. Participants' involvement in higher education may indicate they have been influenced by this concept. Bronfenbrenner (1979) further considered the impact of government policies on individuals and how this had implications for those who advocate for their fellow humans. The exo and macro settings are likely to have had an impact on participants in many ways such as immigration to this country and application for student loans.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) also identified the resilience of human beings as a key component of ecological theory as they adapt to each new context they find themselves in. This resiliency is linked to the way individuals adapt to new roles, relationships and responsibilities that occur, and provides a blueprint for their future relationships and responsibilities. Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that the close relationships an individual has are important to their development and growth. The interrelationships that occur for individuals between settings are also important to Bronfenbrenner. He suggested that events in one setting will have a profound effect on the individual in another setting. Therefore, when the two settings are dissimilar, the transition between the two could become problematic for those involved. This would imply that the more information an individual has about other possible settings, the smoother the transition and the greater the learning opportunities. Bronfenbrenner (1979) also noted that, within a culture, many of the settings have strong similarities to each other, "whereas between cultures they are distinctly different" (p. 4). As immigrants to New Zealand the four participants in this study came from very different contexts. To complete the requirements of the

programme they became immersed in the context of early childhood education, as practiced in this country.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that development is an individual's "growing capacity to discover, sustain, or alter" (p. 9) their perception of the context in which they find themselves. Experiences such as "joint participation, communication, and the existence of information in each setting" (p. 6) would also have a role to play. Shifts in role or settings are called ecological transitions. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that "every ecological transition is both a consequence and an instigator of developmental processes" (p. 27). So each setting the individual finds themselves in is likely to result in developmental change in some area for them. For example, becoming a student and completing a programme involve ecological transitions.

As individuals move between settings, they may take with them funds of knowledge that would impact on what they expect and how they respond to others. Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) define 'funds of knowledge' as "People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge" (p. ix). In other words, learners are viewed with a credit focus; acknowledging the skills and attributes each brings to a setting. It is suggested that when teachers tap into the students' funds of knowledge from their previous settings it will facilitate the sharing of skills and knowledge, as well as enabling the smooth transmission of additional information (Gonzalez, et al., 2005). Participants in this study have experienced a range of previous educational settings so may demonstrate this transmission of knowledge.

Social cognitive perspective

A social cognitive perspective refers to experiences where learners are motivated to make some particular response (Bandura, 1986; 1997). Beliefs about self-efficacy in relation to the learner's motivation and their ability to regulate or take some control over their learning may also be associated with this theory (Cullen, 2001). Self-efficacy is the individual's belief in their "capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). It is suggested that when people feel that have some control over what occurs in their life they feel more secure and confident. This would lead to an increasing ability to make the choices they want and greater motivation to set and achieve their goals. Therefore belief in personal efficacy "is a major basis of action" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3), which can affect choices, effort, perseverance, resiliency, and level of skill achieved. Bandura (1997) suggests that "striving for control over life circumstance permeates almost everything people do throughout the life course because it provides innumerable personal and social benefits" (pp. 1-2). This implies that having a strong sense of purpose, or agency, enables individuals to persevere when difficulties arise (Bandura, 1995). These ideas relate to the concept of dispositions for learning which will be discussed after this section.

It seems that what humans believe is often more powerful than the reality of a situation. Bandura (1995) says, "People's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively the case" (p. 2). According to Bandura (1995), it is important for teachers to empower students to have a high sense of their own value and acknowledge that each person is important, whatever their ability or skill. Bandura (1995) suggests "a major goal of formal education should be to equip students

with the intellectual tools, efficacy beliefs, and intrinsic interests to educate themselves throughout their lifetime” (p. 17).

Bandura (1995) uses the term ‘personal agency’ to explain how “efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act” (p. 2). Efficacy beliefs are carried out through motivational, cognitive, affective and selection processes. He suggests that those with a high sense of self-efficacy see challenges to be met and mastered. They would become engrossed in activities, set challenging goals and have a strong sense of commitment to achieving them. After a setback they would be quick to recover belief in themselves. An optimistic outlook is also important, and this comes through having a high self-efficacy belief system (Bandura, 1995). Referring to migrants, it is suggested that those “with a high sense of efficacy adapt more successfully to their new environments than those of lower perceived efficacy” (Jerusalem & Mittag, 1995, cited in Bandura, 1995, p. 16).

Within the educational setting Bandura (1995) says teachers have an important role in creating the type of environment that fosters a sense of positive self-efficacy in students and he relates this to the teachers’ own sense of self-efficacy. Teachers’ level of self-efficacy also determines the teaching style they favour. When their self-efficacy is low teachers tend to use extrinsic motivators and a custodial approach. With a high level of self-efficacy teachers tend to appeal to students’ “intrinsic interests and academic self-directedness” (Bandura, 1995, p. 20). The atmosphere fostered within a school also seems to have an impact on students’ success. A positive atmosphere results in high achievement by students and comes about through the teachers’ attitude that they are all “capable of promoting academic success” (Bandura, 1995, p. 20).

Gibbs (2006) suggests that there will be some learning experiences that have a higher motivational factor than others. Intrinsic motivation is described by him as “motivation that is provoked by internal circumstances (such as personal interest, satisfaction, enjoyment, curiosity)” (Gibbs, 2006, p. 53), while extrinsic motivation “is provoked by external circumstances (such as a reward to avoid punishment)” (Gibbs, 2006, p. 52). According to Bandura (1995) “most human motivation is cognitively generated” (p. 6); that is, actions occur through planning and forethought. People develop “beliefs about what they can do...[and]...anticipate likely outcomes” (Bandura, 1995, p. 6). This leads to goal setting to achieve what they want. Setting goals results in personal influence, deliberate action and taking responsibility for their own behaviour. This often results in the goal-setter becoming more aware of their own behaviour and recognising which actions will result in the goal being met (Bandura, 1995).

The link to self-efficacy is strong. The stronger self-efficacy the individual has, the greater the motivation to succeed in the set goals. This will determine which goals are set, how much effort is put into them, and the amount of perseverance expended (Bandura, 1995). It can be surmised from this that the types of goals people set and the amount of commitment they have towards them relates directly to the beliefs they have about themselves.

Usually when setting goals for themselves individuals develop a personal standard that they want to achieve. Self-satisfaction is then dependent upon reaching this standard, which provides motivation to act in the direction that will enable success. Knowledge of one’s ability is crucial, and the goal must be achievable; this increases their motivation to succeed. Goals may change as they are achieved or

when they are perceived as impossible, or perhaps become unnecessary. This pattern of setting and achieving goals develops a person's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) suggests that the most useful goals are specific, include an element of challenge, and are set within a realistic time frame. However, he notes that it is not just the attainment of the future goal that motivates the individual; the sense of mastery that occurs along the journey is an on-going reward.

Dispositions for learning

In addition to individual factors such as self-efficacy, current theories of learning within early childhood education include an understanding of the role dispositions for learning have. These have been described by Claxton and Carr (2004) as attributes, inclinations, or habits of mind. They suggest that an inclination for learning is associated with the learner's image of themselves as a learner, the schema they have about the learning process and the possibilities they consider available for themselves. Ritchhart (2002) says "intelligent performance is not just an exercise of ability. It is more dispositional in nature in that we must activate our abilities and set them into motion" (p. 18). Claxton and Carr (2004) suggest that those dispositions for learning which are valued in any given group will be culturally mediated. If participants in this study demonstrate similar dispositions for learning, then it is possible that some of these dispositions could be visible and valued across cultures and settings. If dispositions, such as persistence and curiosity, are not innate (Claxton & Carr, 2004), then they could be attributes or habits of mind that are developed over time. Therefore early formative experiences will contribute to the development of learning dispositions (which explains why they are such an important focus for early childhood educators).

2.5 Summary

Looking at research from Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas, it has been shown that there are many potential challenges for NESB students as they begin to study in a new culture and language. An initial experience of culture shock may later change to a feeling of belonging in the new setting (Whelan Ariza, 2006). Having the opportunity to participate in class in different ways and to draw on past learning experiences may be helpful in working through this change (Holmberg & Emmoth, 1994; Hislop, 2006; Chamot, 2001). Previous strategies that had been successful in past contexts, however, may not always match the new context, as different understandings of academic concepts could occur (Hughes, 2004, cited in Stanton, 2007). After academic success in their home country, NESB students could feel overwhelmed and experience fear of failure in a new setting.

NESB students have been found to employ metacognitive skills related to their learning style (Hislop, 2006; Elgort, et al., 2003). In addition, work/life balance can be particularly problematic for women (Ellis, 2006). Also, studying in a new culture and language can result in physical and emotional stress (Ashton & Elliot, 2007). However, support systems can be useful if they are culturally appropriate. Belief systems adopted by an individual may also have an impact on their ability to achieve in a new setting (Ahl, 2006; Tweed & Conway, 2006), and a strong sense of self-efficacy can enable individuals to persevere (Bandura, 1994).

It is clear that teachers have an important role in supporting and facilitating the learning of NESB students. Despite this, it was identified that no best evidence synthesis exists for supporting teachers of NESB students at a tertiary level (Franken, 2004). The number of

NESB students is growing in Aotearoa, and this is observable in tertiary student populations. If it is true that learning institutions are obliged to provide appropriate support to enable students to achieve in an unfamiliar setting and language, then teachers require the knowledge and skills to ensure that this occurs (Bretag et al., 2002; Waxman et al., 2006). Well-informed policy will ensure that best practice occurs (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about their work with NESB students could influence the way they teach and interact with these students (Gibbs, 2005; 2006). It has been suggested that when programmes are inclusive and identify dominant cultural beliefs (Ebbeck & Russo, 2007), students could be empowered to draw on their funds of knowledge. This would support students' self-efficacy and sense of adequacy (Gibbs, 2006; Echevarria & Graves, 2003). A number of practical factors were found to facilitate learning for NESB students.

It has been suggested that skilled partners in learning can enable others to develop and grow. Reciprocal relationships occur as individuals interact with each other and the larger issues of their world. Motivation to achieve tasks may be expressed in agentive behaviour such as goal setting (Bandura, 1995; 1997). Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that humans are all products of the wider events occurring around them, and any decisions made will reflect this.

The broad research questions which emerged from the literature reviewed for this study will be provided in the next chapter. The methods employed in this study, ethical processes that were followed and an introduction of the participants will also be covered in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In 2009, I took advantage of a window of opportunity to visit the Monet exhibition at Te Papa museum. We had a short time to view the host of amazing artworks, but paused in awe at each painting. The vivid colours and bold strokes seemed just as fresh as the day they had been created over a hundred years ago. Absorbing the sights, I discovered a magical quality in a set of paintings depicting water lilies, gardens and a cathedral. They stretched along a wall, placed to complement each other. As I turned and faced the paintings from the end of the gallery, the perspective changed. They burst into life, and I felt I could walk into the world Monet had captured. Amazingly from each angle, left, right and standing in front, the paintings had quite different perspectives. But it was from the right that they surprised the viewer with stunning vision, clarity and depth. It was obvious Monet understood the nature of light, its translucence and transforming quality. House (1985) explains that Monet was also a painter on the edge of tradition, pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable in choice of subject, often returning to the same theme, investigating it in greater detail and in different lights.

So it is with research. What may seem mundane or ordinary when viewed by one perspective, when captured within another framework, may have a fresh and surprising quality, offering new possibilities. However there is a mystery about what may be found on the way. What surprising perspectives may be discovered, if one only knows how and which way to look.

This chapter will introduce the questions which frame this research. It will also discuss the considerations applied to selecting the method followed in this study with an explanation of why a qualitative narrative approach was used. The ethical processes which were followed and the key principles that guided collection of data are discussed. The researcher's position is identified and the cross-cultural aspects of this research are acknowledged. The participant sample is briefly introduced and the criteria for their selection explained. Data collection, which occurred through the use of semi-structured interviews, will be explained. The pilot interviews and subsequent changes to the interview procedure are also noted.

3.2 Research questions

The research questions were designed to be broad, open-ended and flexible to enable rich insights to be gain into participants' stories. The three broad questions that emerged from the literature review and which frame this research are:

1. How do NESB students overcome the discontinuities between former educational experiences and English-medium educational settings to achieve their academic goals?
2. What are the factors, intrinsic and extrinsic, that influence the motivation of NESB students in an English-medium educational setting?
3. What support systems are necessary for NESB students to succeed in English-medium educational settings?

3.3 The Qualitative Approach

This study investigated the experiences of a small group of NESB students, so a “descriptive and exploratory mode of research (i.e. qualitative research) is preferable” (Higgs & Cant, 1998, p. 4). Allowing participants to share their stories is a useful method to tentatively explore perceptions and beliefs (Higgs & Cant, 1998), therefore a narrative approach was followed. Semi-structured interviews were considered to be the most useful way to gather rich data. McIntyre (1998) argues that within qualitative research there is an understanding that multiple perspectives exist and that there are differing perceptions of reality. In this study interviews provided the opportunity for these perspectives to be visible.

McIntyre (1998) refers to the work of Sartre (n. d.) and his belief that our consciousness is always related to the consciousness of others, so when we try to understand another person there develops a linking of experiences. This opens the possibility of the voice or experience of the ‘Other’ being implied in qualitative research. Indeed, to engage in research is to discover and to create knowledge through collaboration of all those involved (Rolfe & Mac Naughton, 2001). During the interviews the researcher reframed questions and clarified understanding with participants when uncertainty arose.

From these ideas it is evident that understanding what reality is for other human beings concerns qualitative researchers. In this process there is an attempt to avoid assumptions and to not take anything for granted. Questions are a tool used to discover representations of reality, however it is accepted that there may not be one truth that fits everyone, and the researcher understands this (Woods, 2006). The researcher in this study discovered that a range of interviewing

techniques were useful. For example, open-ended questions and reflective statements enabled participants to provide thoughtful responses.

Following a qualitative paradigm the researcher “seeks to discover the meanings that participants attach to their behaviour, how they interpret situations and what their perspectives are on particular issues” (Woods, 2006, p. 3). For example, in this study questions such as “how did you feel about that?” enabled participants to share their views. Also in narrative research there is the opportunity for the researcher’s own personal interest in the significance of the topic to be just as valid as the wider concerns of others in the community (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As the interviews in this study were semi-structured this allowed for digression when relevant topics arose.

3.4 Why Narrative?

Narrative research is described by Etherington (2004) as a method based on “collecting, analysing, and re-presenting people’s stories as told by them” (p. 75). This method often corresponds with the view that all knowledge is socially constructed and is influenced by culture and positioning in history. Narrative research is considered useful for discovering how individuals feel about an experience and their role in it (Etherington, 2004).

Usually narrative enquiry starts with an interest in something, a phenomenon, which develops into “a shared narrative construction” (Goodfellow, 1998a, p. 105) between researcher and participants. So a narrative approach requires co-construction, as the stories unfold and blend and are retold, in a form of reconstruction. This allows for reflection and an opportunity to come to shared understanding and

interpretation. This is also a retrospective perspective as participants reflect on their past experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In this study participants had the opportunity to recall past events as related to their educational journey. The researcher's task was to facilitate this remembering and tease out the issues most relevant to the research questions. It has been suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) that it is in the retelling and reliving of stories/narratives that meaningful learning about the participant's experiences occurs. In narrative research there is strong dependence on interpretation. In this study the researcher endeavored to clarify interpretation during interviews. Questions such as "Do you mean...?" facilitated this. Goodfellow (1998a) explains that interpretation brings together the relevance of the context, the meaning and how those meanings are expressed or understood. After all, the goal of research is to create an understanding of the socially constructed beliefs of the participants (Ellis, 2006).

It has also been suggested that "to construct a narrative is to engage in a process of organising interpretive accounts of experience into a meaningful whole while at the same time honouring the unique contribution made by individuals to that whole" (Goodfellow, 1998b, p. 175). This study aims to affirm the participants' success in academic study.

3.5 Investigative procedure

Procedure

Individual interviews were the key research tool, with three semi-structured interviews occurring for each participant. Individual interviews were carried out at intervals of no less than one week and no

more than three weeks. Each interview took up to one hour to complete. Interviews were arranged around the participants' availability, and confirmed with phone calls to them prior to the meeting. An interview schedule was compiled to provide structure (see Appendix A), and was provided to participants before and during the interviews. Denscombe (2003) warns that the "superficial similarity between an interview and a conversation can generate an illusion of simplicity" (p. 164), but it is necessary to be properly prepared beforehand. A key topic was created for each of the three interviews, with a suggested list of prompts, to cover the range of issues and information that was being sought. Brief notes were made during the interviews to prompt the researcher with further questions and to support the follow-up of particular topics that participants raised.

The participants

Four graduates from the institution were invited to participate and share the unique journey they had undertaken throughout the three years of their study. Those invited were selected due to their non-English speaking background, their closeness of location to the researcher, plus their availability and willingness to participate. While all had a non-English speaking background, they were also proficient in English. All were women which is representative of the higher ratios of women to men within early childhood education (Education Counts, 2009b). Below is a brief introduction to each of the participants, using the pseudonyms they were assigned.

Li-An: a single parent of one child from Mainland China. She came alone to New Zealand in 2001, aged 32. Her preschooler stayed with grandparents in China until her final year of study. She completed the programme in three years.

Laxmi: married with one child, from Southern India. She arrived in New Zealand with her ten year old son to join her husband in 2004, aged 34. She completed the programme in three years.

Bobby: married with two preschoolers (one physically disabled), from Northern India. She arrived in New Zealand with her children to join her husband in 2002, aged 30. She completed the programme in three years.

Mariana: married with two teenage children, from Indonesia. Arrived in New Zealand with her daughter to join her husband and son in 2003, aged 48. She completed the programme in three and a half years.

Pilot interviews

Two pilot interviews were conducted several weeks prior to the research commencing and these were found to be useful as a reminder of the focus and to ensure questions were specific, so relevant data would be gathered. They were conducted with two NESB graduates from the institution who were informed that they were participating in a pilot study for this research. Consent for recording conversations was obtained, however this data was not included in the final data set. The pilot interviews also served to develop the necessary skill of using the digital recording device. Key points emerging from the pilot interviews included:

1. Stay focused; active listening has a number of tools which can be drawn on e.g. minimal encouragers.
2. Be alert to misinterpretations; terms may need to be clarified. Idioms seem to be an issue. Check for understanding.

3. Ensure a clear introduction is provided before the first interview. Explain the ethical processes, the purpose of the research and the use of the audio recorder.
4. Keep the key research questions in mind throughout each interview. Keep a copy of these handy to refer to.
5. Write down the main points that participants make so they can be referred to during the interview and make connections.
6. Celebrate participants' success with them.

The interviews

The choice of venue for interviews was negotiated with each participant, and was selected on the basis of comfort, privacy and accessibility. This was an important process to ensure that the participants had some control and autonomy over the interview process (Denscombe, 2003).

Interview one investigated background information to set the scene. Prompts for this interview focused on previous education and qualifications, reasons for immigrating to New Zealand and the support systems the participant had in place prior to commencing study. It also served to introduce the participant to the interview process and to ensure that they were comfortable with this. The ethical processes were revisited at the start, and pseudonyms discussed.

Interview two looked at the process participants went through as they commenced study. Motivation factors relating to beginning study and for continuing this were discussed. Definitions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were provided to participants to assist in this part of the interview. Prompts were related to the impact study had on their family and lifestyle, goal setting and reasons for their success.

Opportunity was provided to revisit topics discussed in the first interview. Pseudonyms were agreed upon.

The third interview summarised and clarified previous information, and invited participants to consider future plans and goals. Participants were also invited to provide suggestions that could guide teachers working with NESB students in the future. They also had the opportunity to ask any further questions about the study.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Three principles followed throughout the research relate to moral beliefs: to respect the right and dignity of all participants; to ensure no harm comes to any participants; and to maintain honesty and integrity at all times (Denscombe, 2003). As participants were already known to the researcher they were contacted by a third party (a colleague of the researcher) to avoid feelings of obligation or pressure to commit to this research. Full information, including an explanation of the purpose of the research, was given to participants (see Appendix B). Written consent was obtained prior to beginning the research (see Appendix C).

Two sets of ethical approval were sought, one from Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) the supervisory body overseeing the research, (MUHEC Approval Number: 09/67) and the other from the institution that the participants had graduated from (see Appendix D). In the interests of maintaining transparency and being ethically responsible, the institution had access to relevant information about the research during the proposal and ethics approval process (see Appendix E). The institution was assured that confidentiality regarding the programme would be maintained, though it was made clear that given the small nature of providers delivering the Diploma of

Education (ECE) within Aotearoa New Zealand, it is possible that some conjecture could be made regarding the institution's identity.

Confidentiality of participants was assured by using pseudonyms. These were chosen by participants or the researcher (with the participants' agreement) in the early stages of the study.

To ensure validity and transparency of this research, transcribed data was returned to participants to review, change and/or make comment. This was to ensure that their voices were not lost behind the researcher's voice. Three of the four participants requested time to do this. After reviewing the transcribed data no changes were requested by participants.

Each of the participants signed the Authority for the release of transcripts (see Appendix F). This was to provide for future reports and publications that may arise from the research. Provision was made for the safe storage of data, including the recorded conversations. The ethics committees overseeing this work required that the raw data be destroyed after five years.

3.7 Data Analysis

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that all data collected in narrative research is an interpretation and relates to the way the researcher relates to others within the study. What is recorded, and later analyzed, is influenced by what the researcher shows interest in. Vygotsky (1986) proposed that thoughts are not always visible through what is heard. So when interpreting the spoken word the researcher should consider underlying intentions and desires. The context and intent is crucial.

The researcher transcribed the interviews as the participants had strongly accented English. It was felt this could prove challenging and be time consuming for a transcriber who had not had the opportunity to develop a relationship with participants and so gain an understanding of their unique speech characteristics. By taking personal responsibility for transcribing the interviews the researcher maintained confidentiality for all participants. This familiarity also enabled inclusion of meaningful pauses, non-verbal communication, such as laughter, and particular emphasis in the transcribed data.

To facilitate analysis of the data the transcripts were printed out and colour coding was used to identify key words and quotes that related to the three overarching questions. An example of a transcript is provided (see Appendix G).

During the analysis of the transcripts key themes relating to the participants' experiences emerged. These were first arranged under the three questions, with a range of subheadings relevant to each participant's response. In order to facilitate the discussion these subheadings were then widened in scope which enabled the categories to become more inclusive of all the participants. Rethinking the categories enabled a better 'fit' for the issues and factors drawn from the data. This analysis created rich material to support the later discussion of the key themes.

3.8 Researcher position

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that both the researcher and participant are affected by the process of research, and interdependence can occur between the two. Qualitative research aims to discover or understand the meanings ascribed to particular events,

situations or experiences. It sees control of these of lesser importance than the understanding and explanation. A key aspect of qualitative research is that the values of the researcher and participant are recognised as a factor in the process (Higgs & Cant, 1998).

A distinctive attribute of qualitative research is the way data is collected and analyzed. The researcher is never far from the data; indeed their views, beliefs, identity and values have an integral part to play in the collection and interpretation. It is this process of interpretation that actually creates the data. This is why the researcher must be acknowledged and their own unique position noted (Denscombe, 2003). Tensions can exist for researchers when boundaries of understanding are crossed. These can include attitudes, or responses that may not fit in with the researcher's beliefs. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest researchers ensure that they are aware of their own belief systems and what has formed their ideas about inquiry in order to recognise possible tensions.

Also, in this study the researcher's responses to the participants' comments were based on the interpretations and meanings she ascribed to them, the level of concentration applied, and the negotiations made as understanding was queried and confirmed. Before the interviews commenced the researcher was aware that arriving at intersubjectivity could take time and patience, as thoughts and interpretations were shared.

One area of potential concern for the researcher was the fact that the participants knew her. Therefore, it was necessary to keep in mind that participants' perception of the researcher's role could also affect the findings. Researchers need to be aware of unequal power relationships between them and participants as discourse shapes perceptions,

understandings and assumptions (Fairclough & Wodak, 2004). Stronach and McLure (1997) suggest “the issue of control and who ‘has’ it – researcher or subject- is a complex one” (p. 85).

As well as assuring the two ethics committees that any potential role conflicts would not affect the research, the researcher had to take care during interactions with the participants and not make assumptions about their availability or eagerness to take part. It was explained to them that they were not obligated to participate. While warm relationships had previously been developed with the participants, it was not known how they would respond to the questions posed to them, and the researcher attempted to have no preconceived ideas about their responses.

The researcher also had the role of ‘insider’, being privy to some information regarding the programme the participants had graduated from, but believes this knowledge helped to develop a deeper understanding of the issues discussed. This knowledge and the similarities between us as women, mothers, early childhood practitioners and adult students, relates to Gergen’s (1992) discussion of the importance of the relationship between participants and researcher. He said that significantly more data will be disclosed if there are meaningful similarities in the relationship.

The researcher believed that this relationship, which was grounded on trust and respect, was a positive factor in the research and enabled honest and frank discussions to occur. This resulted in some personal information being shared, but in the interests of confidentiality and ethical practices this was not included in the findings or discussion. Although the impact of these personal issues on the graduates’ educational journey has been alluded to, no details have been provided.

The warm relationships already existing between the researcher and participants also resulted in conversations that were full of humor and sometimes laughter.

Cross-cultural interactions added another layer to the complexities of this research. As a European and a native English speaker the researcher did not share the same cultural identities of the participants. We each entered discussions through our own cultural lens and it was the researcher's responsibility to be aware of this. Gibbs (2006) explains that one of the attributes of being culturally responsive is to "identify attitudes and behaviours which reflect ethnocentrism" (p. 191), that is, assumptions about the superiority of one's own culture. As a member of the dominant culture in New Zealand the researcher had to keep in mind that this could result in an imbalance of power (Cannella, 1997). The researcher aimed to resist this imbalance and ensure equitable practices were followed throughout the discussions. Also, while ethnicity and culture were raised in the interviews, no attempt has been made to generalize the findings against these. The researcher believes it is important to respect participants as individuals and not as "exemplars of formal categories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 141).

The concept of sitting with an individual, asking them questions about their lives and recording their comments is very much placed in a particular cultural context – Western academic society. Western thinking encourages individuals to see themselves as autonomous beings, so reflecting on one's own individual past is a Western construct. Going into this research the researcher had to bear in mind that asking someone about their identity as a student and how this may have changed may be challenging for some participants. The use of this form of questioning also identified the researcher as a product of

Western thinking (Andrews, 2007). However it is true that cultures are not homogenous and it could be that the relationships formed have a greater impact on the depth of responses gained.

3.9 Summary

The procedures used to complete this study have been explained in this chapter. An explanation of why the researcher chose a qualitative narrative approach has been given. The ethical considerations followed and a brief summary of the researcher's positioning in this study is also provided. Specific information has been included relating to validity, the sample and storage of data. An explanation of the procedure that was followed, including the interviews and the analysis and how these related to the research questions, is given. The following chapter will provide the narrative results created for each participant's story.

Chapter Four: Narrative Results

4.1 Introduction

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggest interpretive researchers “begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them” (p. 22). This research has endeavored to do this, having gathered approximately twelve hours of rich and interesting data from the four participants in face-to-face interviews. The literature review previously carried out provided the researcher with thoughts about possible motivational factors, support systems, continuities and discontinuities that could arise. The overarching questions that drove the research emerged from this review. A series of open-ended questions also provided structure and served as a prompt to ensure the focus was maintained.

During the interpretation and analysis of participants’ responses the researcher remained aware that anticipation of the interpretation could shape it. When participants made comments such as “this really motivated me” or “this was a huge support” then the researcher could be quite sure of the correct interpretation. Other responses were not always so specific and the researcher had to rely more on ‘how’ participants shared the information, rather than the ‘what’ (Ochberg, 2003).

This chapter reports on the findings from the study. Within narrative tradition summaries of the participants’ stories are usually provided, and so these are included in this chapter. Each narrative is a chronicled account of the experiences participants went through. This includes previous educational experiences they had encountered in their own country. The researcher believes participants’ unique characteristics are evident in these narratives and the way they responded to the

challenges that occurred as they tackled study in an English language setting. Throughout, phrases from the participants' interviews are included so their voices are not lost. These narratives will support the discussion of key themes relating to the overarching questions of this study. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) acknowledge, narrative enquiry is not simply a "process of telling and writing down a story with perhaps some reflective comment" (p. 131). The "patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual's experience" (p. 132) are all considered. It is the participants' stories that are unique and offer differing perceptions of their study and progress through this.

The researcher needed to be mindful that this was the participants' journey and that their understandings and memories are valid. Participants were asked to recall events from their past, and the researcher had to keep in mind the guidance offered by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) regarding memory. They said "memory is selective, shaped and retold in the continuum of one's experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 142). Therefore memories can be reformed as they are captured and retold. There is the possibility that remembered truth can be cannibalised as it is replaced with new truths. Memories create the idea of who we are - our identity – or who we see ourselves as. This is an ongoing journey, not an arriving but always a traveling or a becoming.

We are all in the midst of our own stories, each experience impacts on everything else encountered. This relates well to Bronfenbrenner's nested relationships as everything is interconnected at some point – whether it is at the macro, exo or micro level, or the interactions in between. The ripple effect between the various relationships and contexts in our lives is powerful.

4.2 Li-An: Summary of findings

Educational discontinuities

Language

In China Li-An had learnt English grammar, writing and spelling, but “not listening and speaking” (I. 3. p. 2), and had forgotten most of this. Using English here was emotional for her, and she said; “I was scared...I think every cell in my body is open up” (I. 1. p. 9). She passed the IELTS test to get permanent residency and enrolled in an English language diploma. Li-An came into study with a positive attitude, seeing this as an opportunity to improve her English. She explains the challenge of living where “language...is a frustration...you can’t really manage this...like your first language”. She said the language was a “barrier....make me very frustrated in many, situations...and will be forever” (I. 3. p. 7).

Academic expectations

Li-An said she felt happy and confident as she began her study, preparing herself “to be a really good student” (I. 2. p. 4). However, as she says “I didn’t really get the idea about assignment yet, so I didn’t know how hard it would be” (I. 2. p. 4). Describing differences in educational experiences she said; “when I was in Chinese university the study was totally different to New Zealand....I realize I need to do lots of readings...The hard part is how...do I organise...arrange, do my assignment” (I. 2. p. 5), or put the ideas into her own words. With an action research project she said “I had no idea how to do the study...the research...the interview” (I. 2. p. 5). Li-An explained that in China students sit and listen, “you write notes, they give you. They give you exam to pass. Here you have to write the assignment...I was trained in memory ...when I was young I was really good at doing exams. But writing the assignment and doing your own research...this

for me is new...put all your ideas into words. That's the main difference" (I. 3. p. 8).

Pedagogy

Although Li-An had a young child she had no experience of working with children. As a volunteer in a childcare centre she did not know what to expect, but "felt... that's a good job because I feel happy" (I. 1. p. 14). This lack of experience impacted on her study as she "didn't know how to put [it] into any words" (I. 2. p. 5). She said; "early education is linked with your ...personal life. When you study...you find that your philosophy...and your study, all conflict...the way I was brought up and the thing I learnt they are all different...which one is right?" (I. 2. p. 7). She could see this conflict had caused her "think in a different way" (I. 2. p. 8). When discussions occurred in class about childhood Li An would think; "when I was little it wasn't like that" (I. 2. p. 8).

Culture and Context

Li-An was keen to learn about Western educational theories, seeing them as "more advanced" (I. 2. p. 6). Her Chinese identity became an issue for her. She said "when I was in China I didn't realize...I am Chinese! I'm just a person. But now, once I came to New Zealand I found out I am Chinese!" (I. 2. p. 9). This resulted in comparisons between her study and life "I always live in two worlds...I always have to find the way to go" (I. 2. p. 9).

Overcoming discontinuities

Practical strategies

Li-An explained that she made use of each term's schedule to focus on study requirements, explaining that she liked to be organised. After receiving a resubmit for an assignment Li-An asked classmates to share

their ideas, and this “just opened it up” for her (I. 2. p. 14). Rather than asking in class Li-An preferred to stay afterwards to speak to the tutor; “if I can’t really understand...I keep quiet...I stay a little bit late...and ask...how to do this” (I. 2. p. 5).

Making connections

Li-An learnt to critically analyze; “I think that one is probably okay. But they think this way. Okay I learn this one” (I. 2. p. 8). She recognised the process she was going through; “I’m learning. I take this new information. It’s kind of learning progress you do... it’s not say I force myself to change...I adjust the information. But it’s a process that’s not easy” (I. 2. p. 8). She talked about the internal fight that can occur as beliefs are changed; “inside, they do fight. This is the new one ... this is my old thing. How do they get mixed up? Become your own belief?” (I. 2. p. 8).

Perseverance

When tired she reminded herself of her goals; “no time for me to take a break now. I need to finish. I can get a full time job...I can bring [son] here. I can settle down...it is hard, but I still have to keep going” (I. 2. p. 7). Li-An gave herself pressure to keep going; “I said no, you can’t have a break. You just keep going. I never think I should have a break ...I never think like that” (I. 2. p. 7). She used self-talk to encourage herself; “I just keep telling myself that you have to keep going” (I. 1. p. 2). Although it was not easy, Li-An’s positive attitude helped her to maintain direction. “If I have some difficulties I will say, okay, it’s just for a short time” (I. 2. p. 1).

Intrinsic motivation

Funds of knowledge

Li-An had proven that she could succeed at a tertiary level in China and thought she would continue with her statistics major, but it was expensive to have her qualifications recognised. She saw further study as something achievable; “I said study is one thing I think I can do. I don’t know what else I can do” (I. 2. p. 2).

Li-An’s interest in early childhood education as a career developed slowly. She thought of volunteering in a childcare centre “to see if I can do it” (I. 1. p. 13). The welcome she received and the enjoyment she experienced encouraged her. She found there was less pressure working with children; this was the “main thing” (I. 1. p. 14). She also wanted to improve her parenting skills; “I think if I know more about children...then maybe I can be a better mum...I need to know about these things” (I. 2. p. 2).

Self-efficacy

Li-An demonstrated a strong sense of self-belief; “I never have any doubt about my ability to finish my study. I never give myself a chance to think, oh you can’t do it” (I. 3. p. 7). She reminded herself that this was not a game, “you are adult, you are not child” (I. 1. p. 10). She was aware of what worked for her saying, “I am really focused person, if I think I need to do this. But I do one thing at a time. I can’t do two...this is the way I take the pressure off” (I. 2. p.16).

Several times Li-An commented that she had been lucky or fate had stepped in. She described coming to New Zealand as her “fate” (I. 1. p, 5) and success with study as “really lucky” (I. 2. p. 11). When queried about this notion of fate and luck Li-An responded with “I think it is my attitude to life...I always think in a positive way” (I. 3. p. 1).

Agency

Li-An had set herself a long-term goal of providing financial security for herself and her son. Gaining a qualification was the way she had identified to reach this. She said “I was happy... I found the way to achieve my goal” (I. 2. p. 3). Referring to her motivating factors of personal interest and a desire for stability, Li-An said “I think these two motivations...they just encourage me to go” (I. 2. p. 3) and complete the programme.

While working with children Li-An soon realized that “if you want to go to another level it means...you have to do some more study. You have to understand ...once you study... [it makes] you think more” (I. 2. p. 11). Learning more about children she found her confidence develop, and she pushed herself even further; “I can do better” (I. 2. p. 11). Li-An feels she is “still like a beginner, not a senior yet...got lots of things to learn” (I. 3. p. 10)...“it’s just the start” (I. 3. p. 14). Her future goals involve taking her knowledge back to China.

Self-regulated learning

Being aware of the internal struggles she was going through helped her to make purposeful decisions; “something I like. Something I don’t like. For this situation I will probably do it another way” (I. 2. p. 8). She recognises the changes that have occurred for her as a result of adopting new ideas; “I do take lots of things. I do change a lot, adopt lots of things. I mix up with Chinese culture now...I become like the middle of Chinese and Western culture, a mixture” (I. 2. p. 10). She laughed as she explained “I am in the middle” (I. 2. p. 10). She was clear about her purpose of coming here, the impact of the different culture, and what she had given up. Gaining a qualification has meant she feels more “confident working in New Zealand now” (I. 3. p. 11).

Extrinsic motivation

Economic

Aware of the cost involved in taking up study in a foreign country, Li-An said, “I don’t want to waste my money” (I. 1. p. 10). As a single parent she knew she would need to provide for her son before he could join her. She said “I have to learn something...get a qualification...can find a job” (I. 1. p. 13), and recognised that study was a viable way for her to achieve this goal.

Support systems

Family

Li-An’s family were doubtful about her traveling to New Zealand. Li-An explained, “I have to get the permission from them. I have to have their support to go, otherwise I can’t [go]” (I. 1. p. 5). Her parents valued education and this was a factor in their approval; “they always want me to study...I got a student visa so I got a really good excuse. I said I am going to study there!” (I. 1. p. 5). Her mother’s support meant Li-An was able to leave her son safely in China for four years until she was able to support him here.

Institution and teacher educators

Li-An was concerned for other students, saying, “if I can tell them ...my stories, it might just help” (I. 1. p.15). She acknowledged that the study was difficult but said there were “other things around [it] that are hard. It means the whole pack is hard” (I. 1. p. 16).

She commented she was “lucky I got [a tutor who] gave me lots of help...even corrected my spelling” (I. 2. p. 5). Li-An stayed behind after class to ask if she “hadn’t got the idea” (I. 2. p. 5). But not all tutors were so supportive, and Li-An recalled one who liked “to give us pressure, stress...you got to learn this” (I. 2. p. 6). The result for Li-

An was “when you do something under pressure, you are ...against it” (I. 2. p. 12). She spoke about tutors who gave her space to do things her way and were “...really sensitive to my feelings” (I. 2. p. 12). It was important to her that tutors understood her and cared about her feelings. This resulted in less stress for her. Li-An suggested that tutors could consider giving students “a little more space...to stay after class...to ask questions...time to think” (I. 3. p.15). She suggested that Chinese students would prefer to do this as it would give them time to frame their questions. She also suggested that pairing NESB students with native English speakers would help them in discussing class topics.

Classmates

Finding the course requirements difficult, Li-An’s first response was to ask classmates; “I remember the first assignment I ring one of my classmates...I said how to do this part?” (I. 2. p. 5). Reflecting back on her study Li-An said “the three years is not easy for everybody. We’ve been through them together. We do help each other” (I. 2. p. 14). Class discussions were also helpful and found the class a “really supportive and friendly environment. I think this is really important” (I. 2. p. 14).

Macro support

Li An’s son came to New Zealand in the final year of her study, so she was eligible for an extra allowance on top of her wages. Li-An explained this support was “really important to help finish the study” (I. 3. p.7).

4.3 Laxmi: Summary of findings

Educational discontinuities

Language

Up until she was sixteen Laxmi was taught in her home language of Malayalam, then had up to three English classes a week. At university she “started learning all the subjects in English” (I. 1. p. 7). She said this did not feel like being in an English class as teachers “explained everything in our mother tongue” (I. 1. p. 7), and students used that language for reading and writing. In New Zealand she found it difficult “to get this accent of English speakers over here” (I. 1. p. 7). She said “I always keep my ears open...what are they saying?” (I. 1. p. 7). In India she “had never used English to speak to others” (I. 1. p. 8) and this made conversations “really hard” (I. 1. p. 8). English was a challenge in her study and she was surprised to find her work marked for grammar; “every full stop and comma...in India we never got such a thing before” (I. 2. p. 9).

Academic expectations

Laxmi said that the Indian educational system was very different to New Zealand, explaining, “when I did my Bachelor of Education I never submitted big assignments like this. They are like more book oriented course back in India. You have to sit the exams. It’s exactly like school structured” (I. 1. p. 10). She had worried about the differences saying; “I don’t know the system and I haven’t done any assignments” (I. 2. p. 3). Like many women her age it had been sometime since she studied; “I left my school ages ago” (I. 2. p. 3).

Complying with academic expectations was new; “I haven’t done any referencing or anything in my work before so I struggled a lot” (I. 1. p. 10). In relation to independent study Laxmi said, “That was the big

challenge. Getting the information from here and there and compiling it. It was a big responsibility for learning” (I. 1. p. 10) and “I never did such research before” (I. 1. p. 10) ...“I have to do quite a lot...on my own” (I. 2. p. 7). Requirements such as writing personal teaching reflections were also new for her; “I never ever did a reflection in my life” (I. 2. p. 9). Being presented with a “huge bundle of work” (I. 2. p. 8) was daunting and made her wonder if she had made a realistic choice. She thought; “I don’t know how I’m going to cope” (I. 2. p. 3). After receiving a resubmit she told her husband the study was too difficult for her; “I’m not going to continue...I can’t handle the stress” (I. 2. p. 9).

Pedagogy

Early childhood was unrelated to her previous academic qualifications. In India she had graduated with both a Bachelor of Science, with mathematics major, and a Bachelor of Education, with a double major of mathematics and physics. Laxmi said the “early childhood curriculum ...is very structured back in India” (I. 1. p. 10) and the focus was more academic from age three where they “learnt to sit and do the things” (I. 3. p. 5), such as reading and writing. In Aotearoa the roles and responsibilities of early childhood teachers include nappy changing which would not be the role of a teacher in India. Laxmi could not tell her family in India that she was working in an early childhood centre. She said “certain things I have to hide” (I. 1. p. 5).

Laxmi enrolled in the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) just “six months after working in the early childhood field” (I. 2. p. 6), mainly as a reliever, so had not had much opportunity to gain an understanding of the pedagogical framework widely accepted in Aotearoa. She explained it as “I never thought that...all these little children could do all these things. But after my studies...I can see that some learning is

going on there. Before...I could not figure out anything...later I learned about the learning and development of the child” (I. 2. p. 13).

Culture and context

Laxmi and her husband followed “the Indian style of living in New Zealand” (I. 2. p. 7). This meant preparing and cooking meals for her family, plus spending time with them. Laxmi said “I have the responsibilities to do all these things, then do my studies...it was really tough for me in the beginning” (I. 2. p. 7). Laxmi had some computer experience, but had not used it for study before. She did not know how to type, and said that her first assignment took her over two and half hours to type after writing it by hand. She said ‘it was so hard for me to find all those letters on the keyboard. It took me **ages** to get it finished” (I. 2. p. 13).

Overcoming discontinuities

Asking for help

Referring to the way she asked for help from tutors she said, “Initially I thought it was not a good thing to approach each and every person” (I. 2. p. 10). But then she began to approach lecturers more and said, “I really troubled them a lot for my first assignment” (I. 2. p. 10). When she asked her family for help on the computer or phone she was told, “No, you have to sit and learn all these things” (I. 2. p. 8). She said proudly “later on I learnt to do it!” (I. 2. p. 9).

Taking time out/affirmations

She said watching Indian movies, going with her family to the beach, gardening and reading fiction “really helped. It gave me a fresh mind” (I. 2. p. 11). Laxmi explained that when she began her study she was scared, and thought “I wouldn’t be able to do it. But then I realized, no, at any age we can study!” (1. 3. p. 10).

Making connections

Referring to the information gained in class she said “when we go back to our practice we can see the same thing happening over there” (I. 2. p. 14). This made her feel “empowered” (I. 2. p. 14) as a teacher. She shared knowledge with her colleagues when they asked her; “what did you come up with today for us to learn?” (I. 2. p. 14).

Intrinsic motivation

Funds of Knowledge

Laxmi had already experienced success in tertiary studies so brought her funds of knowledge related to study to this programme and explained there was a family tradition of teaching – from her great-grandfather down to her father. She identified her desire to be a teacher as a strong motivation. Her previous early childhood teaching experience was limited to relieving in childcare centres in Uganda. Reflecting on those experiences motivated her to consider early childhood in New Zealand. She spoke about her desire to work with young children, “that’s the passion actually, that I just turn my face towards early childhood” (I. 2. p. 6).

Self-efficacy

Laxmi discovered that children learn through play; seeing connections between study and her teaching practice, which empowered her as a teacher. She enjoyed sharing her new knowledge; “I’m learning something now and I’m able to impart it to my colleagues. I felt really proud of myself... and that will give a big impact on the children too” (I. 2. p. 15). She explained that her work with children was satisfying; “I’m feeling more comfortable...more happy...I’m doing something for the children. Yes, quite a lot of changes in me” (I. 3. p. 2). She developed greater confidence to speak to parents when they raised concerns about their children’s learning. She considers this a “great

achievement” (I. 3. p. 4), especially when she speaks to parents from a similar cultural background to herself and can explain what children are learning. In her final words she reaffirmed the enjoyment she now experiences working with children; “it’s a rewarding field actually” (I. 3. p. 10).

Agency

Thinking about the future and gaining a qualification enabled Laxmi to carry on when she was tempted to delay course work. She said “whenever I sit in front of the book and ...sometimes I thought I can do this tomorrow or day after tomorrow. Then my mind says no, you have to do this today” (I. 2. p. 7). She began to take responsibility, thinking; “I can do this. I have to sit and do the things on my own” (I. 2. p. 10).

Self-regulated learning

Laxmi set goals at the beginning of her study, including time management; “because the whole day I am working outside my house” (I. 2. p. 7), and then do housework. Laxmi explained that other goals were “learning to type and learning to use the internet. I ...wanted to learn [about] the library. Plus the other thing was to do my work...come back home, read ...all these things [were] my little goals” (I. 2. p. 10). Laxmi set herself the goal of skim reading. She had been introduced to it on the first day of study, but it was a while before she had the confidence to try it. Laxmi explained that as she developed the skills she had set as goals she became more independent; “It’s only the studies they helped me do that, (I. 2 p. 10)...Now I am quite confident” (I. 2. p. 13).

Extrinsic motivation

Encouragement from centre colleagues and management

Laxmi's centre manager mentored her saying, "its better you go for the training, you get good money and you get more opportunities" (I. 2. p. 3). In response to Laxmi's concern that she would be an adult student and was unfamiliar with the educational system, the centre manager said "don't worry; we are all here to help you" (I. 2. p. 3).

Financial situation

The expense of immigration meant Laxmi needed to contribute to the family's economic situation; "because my husband was doing a part time job at that time, so it was really hard for us" (I. 2. p. 1). Doing a three year course enabled her to continue working. Moving to New Zealand she "realized the value of money" (I. 1. p. 5). About the financial rewards after qualification Laxmi said, "That piece of paper. A big jump in my salary. That's true!" (I. 3. p.7).

Stability for the future

Laxmi said a major motivation was "when I realized that early childhood, they are looking for qualified [teachers], if I don't go for the qualification definitely I wouldn't be stable in this field" (I. 2. p. 6).

Making connections

The knowledge she gained through study made an impact on Laxmi's life, and her role as a teacher. She said "I learnt a lot about the child, child development...stages...now as a teacher I can see that so much of learning is going on there and so much is happening through play" (I. 2. pp. 13-14). When the centre manager commended her use of the early childhood curriculum, *Te whāriki*, in her documentation of children's learning, Laxmi said, "It was such a ...positive encouragement actually for me" (I. 2. p. 16), and she felt like she was

“on the right track. I am a teacher in New Zealand and I can follow the curriculum!” (I. 2. p. 16). Before beginning her studies she had received conflicting information about *Te whāriki* and “was really keen to know...what is in [it]” (I. 2. p. 3).

Support systems

Family

Laxmi commented how helpful and encouraging her family were. “My husband, he was a good supporter. He helped doing the household work...so was my son. Both ... really supported me a lot” (I. 1. p. 10). When Laxmi was anxious about the commitment she was making, her husband encouraged her saying, “think positively. You can do everything. It’s a big change in your life.” As a result Laxmi said, “then I decided to stick out with that” (I. 2. p. 4). When Laxmi’s determination faltered, her husband refused to listen, saying, “you can still do it” (I. 2. p. 8). When she made excuses such as no typing or internet skills, he retorted with “that’s all secondary things. You start studying...we are all here to help you” (I. 2. p. 8). Her son set up a typewriting tutor on the computer for her. When she was scared to make a phone call to order library books she asked her husband to do it for her. Instead he encouraged her, “no, its time for you to learn these things” (I. 2. p. 9).

Teacher educators

At her interview the tutors reassured Laxmi that they would support her when she expressed concern about studying in English. One tutor said “don’t worry we are all here to help you” (I. 1. p. 9). Laxmi said their encouragement “gave me big motivation to go ahead with my studies” (I. 1. p. 9). They also gave guidance with referencing and other academic skills; “I learnt all such things from here” (I. 1. p. 10). She identified the smaller classes as being a factor in this support;

“...[In] a big group I don’t think we would get such support” (I. 2. p. 13), and “whenever we attend the class we get quite a lot of information” (I. 2. p. 14). The relationships built in the class became a source of strength and encouragement. Summarising, Laxmi said, “the teachers were there to help me as well as my colleagues and classmates; otherwise I wouldn’t have been able to do this” (I. 3. p. 1). She acknowledged that she had been “so scared when I went for my studies. I thought I wouldn’t be able to do it...To be honest, the lecturers are so helpful” (I. 3. p. 10).

Colleagues

Laxmi explained that her colleagues supported her saying, “we all went through this journey. Now we are here to support you” (I. 2. p. 12), and “the centre manager helped me a lot” (L. 1. p. 11), providing practical advice and study skills. After Laxmi had gathered the information, the manager went through the assignment guidelines with her. This person also demonstrated belief in Laxmi, by employing her with no qualifications or New Zealand experience and encouraging her throughout her studies. Laxmi said the manager had given her “a great opportunity. I never ever forget her in my life” (I. 2. p. 3).

Macro support

Laxmi was eligible to get a student loan to pay for her fees, and was grateful to receive this; “still I am paying it off. But that’s fine. There is no interest. At least I can manage the debt” (I. 2. p. 6). After several years NZQA finally recognised her previous qualifications, which encouraged her.

4.4 Mariana: Summary of findings

Educational discontinuities

Language

In school in Indonesia Mariana learnt English, “two hours a week” (I. 1. p. 4), and as a young adult studied English as a foreign language. However she did not keep it up and on arrival in New Zealand she found “I couldn’t speak English at all!” (I. 1. p. 7) and was “not confident at all to speak” (I. 1. p. 7). After sitting the IELTS test she was told she had to attend an English course to gain permanent residency. Eventually she enrolled in early childhood education, but realized she “couldn’t understand straight away” (I. 1. p. 8). She said “if the language is not your own language, or if we have to use the second language to speak to others it’s scary” (I. 2. p. 7).

Academic expectations

Mariana had a high school certificate, but she had little experience of reading for study or pleasure. As a young person she had helped with the family and “housekeeping ... rather than reading books” (I. 1. p. 8). She said “I didn’t have any hobby to read” (I. 1. p. 8).

Mariana commented that she had wanted more time with the tutors in “one to one conversations” (I. 2. p. 10), and saw this as a barrier. Although she knew tutors were available after class she was not always ready then, “because...after class I wasn’t sure what should I ask...and after a week pass I forgot what questions I should ask!” (I. 2. p. 10). She said “the teacher always encourage us to ask if we don’t understand. But sometimes...the time is not enough. So we couldn’t make it. So that’s the barrier” (I. 2. pp. 10-11). Although Mariana had a strong faith in God and was generally positive, there were times when she “really got stressed” (I. 2. p. 7). She sighed as she said “when

I get resubmit all the time, I feel...I can't do this...I'm not capable. How to do this? I feel depressed" (I. 2. p. 15).

Pedagogy

Mariana saw the programme as a new opportunity as she did not have "an education background...as a teacher" (I. 2. p. 5). It was a challenge, "because my understanding, my lack of knowledge...I never know about ... children's psychology, and teaching experience" (I. 2. p. 11). She laughed saying, "I start from the zero! A white blank paper!" (I. 2. p. 11). She said she drew on her experiences as a mother as "everything for me was new" (I. 3. p. 4) and this was "not a little challenge, a big challenge" (I. 3. p. 4).

Culture and context

She explained that in her culture it was expected her focus would be as a housewife; "providing food for our family is a wife's job" (I. 3. p. 5) and to follow her husband; "as a wife I just follow his goal" (I. 2. p. 14), while her own goals "sometimes stay back" (I. 2. p. 14). Mariana had previously studied over thirty years ago, and explained that studying as an adult "is impossible for me in my country...so I never think about studying before" (I. 2. p. 5). She had heard that it was "more difficult to absorb knowledge" (I. 3. p. 4) for mature age people and this concerned her. She also had to develop computer skills.

Overcoming discontinuities

Practical strategies

Mariana was aware she needed to work hard to meet the course requirements so set up specific strategies and goals. "I really listen, although sometimes I don't understand...if I don't understand I ask...the teacher...it really helps" (I. 2. p. 8). She realized she had to do extra work to keep up, saying, "I had to...reread...the

[material]...it really helped me because...if I read I [get] more understanding rather than listening” (I. 1. p. 9). She believed “review [and] reflection is a good thing to keep us on our journey” (I. 3. p. 1). Following these strategies her “worry became reduced” (I. 2. p. 9). She felt knowing one’s limitations was a benefit that NESB students had over other students because they were more likely to “redo or revisit” (I. 2. p. 9). She also began to develop new skills and interests, finding reading enjoyable “to gain my knowledge...and it proved to me that I can read” (I. 2. p. 12). She was also aware that using the computer “is skill, so I have to practice all the time” (I. 2. p. 10).

Positive attitude

Mariana explained she is a “social person...open...friendly” (I. 2. p. 8), seeing friendship as reciprocal, saying “I like helping others... I believe [others] also, like helping me. So I get support from that belief” (I. 2. p. 8). She saw successful examples of mature people studying and this gave her hope that “there is a possibility” (I. 3. p. 4).

Perseverance

Regular attendance in class was a factor Mariana identified as contributing to her success. She said “I always come to the class...because I am going to miss out if I didn’t come” (I. 2. p. 9). Even when it was difficult, she said she “didn’t have any thought to quit from class” (I. 2. p. 15). She believed “that if you work you can get the result. So keep going. Keep studying. Keep reading. Keep on track” (I. 2. p. 7).

Personal faith

Mariana explained how her Christian beliefs had been an important factor in her success, saying “because without faith, I can’t get through” (I. 2. p. 1). She said, “[I] trust God and I can do it. God

helped me” (I. 2. p. 7). She prayed for God’s help; “Please give me strength to get through this course until I finish” (I. 2. p. 7).

Intrinsic motivation

Funds of knowledge

Mariana had strong feelings about the importance of the early years. As a mother she had nearly twenty years of experience with children, and chose this programme because “first, I love children. I want to see children grow up healthy...[to]...give them strong foundation about education” (I. 1. p. 9). She also spoke about her unhappy early educational experiences in Indonesia and how this had affected her. She wanted to ensure other children “have a good experience with a good teacher...if I teach with my heart” (I. 2. p. 4), it would be personally fulfilling to her to “make them happy” (I. 2. p. 4).

Self-efficacy

Mariana said that she had a holistic approach to her study, explaining “I believe by keeping busy, my body, my health, my spirit, everything become healthy” (I. 3. p. 6). Mariana identified her strong interest in improving her English language skills as an intrinsic motivation, explaining, “inside I want to gain my English language” (I. 1. p. 8). She was an enthusiastic class member, and thought this was one reason she had been selected for the programme even though her English was still poor. Affirmations Mariana identified as impacting on her intrinsic motivation included telling herself to “be positive, be strong, keep working hard...and manage my time” (I. 3. p. 5).

Agency

Mariana knew she had to take personal responsibility to succeed; “it only depend on me actually...what is the motivation of mine” (I. 2. p. 11). She explained that from the beginning “I never had a thought that

I would have to stop my study...because that's my promise to God. And my motivation" (I. 2. p. 16).

Commenting about her first day she said she was happy to "have new friends" (I. 2. p. 7) from different ethnicities. She realized others might find the language or programme difficult. She said, "I thought not only me has a barrier...maybe that make me feel confident" (I. 2. p. 7). She said there were times when she was "unsure of criteria" and "didn't know exactly what to do" (I. 3. p. 11). This was when it was important "to ask" (I. 3. p. 11).

Self-regulated learning

Mariana explained that, "I never think before about the goals that we have to make...during our life, if you want to achieve something...no-one tell me...you have to have a goal in your life...I never practice, how to have a goal" (I. 3. p. 4). She explained she got "that idea from the teacher" (I. 2. p. 8), and said that "during my study I became familiar with short...middle...and long term goals" (I. 2. p. 13), and gave examples of these. She explained that setting goals made it easier for her "to focus on one thing at a time" (I. 3. p. 5), and provided her with vision and motivation. Mariana kept focused on study during challenging times because she saw "study [as a] lifelong journey" (I. 2. p. 12). She linked her goal setting with tangible outcomes, believing that her study would lead to employment and "we can earn more money...this is a long term goal" (I. 3. p. 6).

Extrinsic motivation

Field-based programme

Mariana saw this as a factor in her success because "during study we are also required to have experience in early childhood education" (I. 2.

p. 12) and this added to her “knowledge about the children” (I. 2. p. 12).

Stability for the future

Mariana said; “To survive in New Zealand I have to earn money” (I. 1. p. 10). “I want to get a job. So how can I get a job if I can’t speak English? If I can’t communicate with other people where I am living? ...so to improve my English language I took this course, early childhood education” (I. 2. p. 4). Mariana could see connections between her intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as the two were linked.

Support systems

Family

With her family engaged in study Mariana thought, “why not me? So that became a support” (I. 1. p. 8). The family were disciplined and focused in their study, and in setting aside regular time together. She described the family as harmonious “because we feel comfortable with this situation” (I. 2. p. 12). Her husband was aware of the importance of access to a computer for students “so everyone had one computer” (I. 2. p. 10), and her son taught her the necessary skills. Mariana said her husband was “a good person to motivate us” (I. 2. p. 6), using encouraging slogans to help the family stay motivated, such as; “If you want to achieve something, you have to work hard” (I. 2. p. 6).

Teacher educators

Tutors were “quite supportive” which made ‘it easier to get through’ (I. 3. p. 7). Mariana explained at the beginning of each term, “the teacher always explain this is what we are going to do this week...until ten weeks. So I always try to manage the time following the schedule” (I. 2. p. 8). Comparing New Zealand education with the Indonesian context again, she said “New Zealand teachers want us to achieve our

goals, [its] not just about doing the work” (I. 3. p. 11). When she asked questions she found “the teachers are supportive” and “tried to help [her] with understanding the programme” (I. 3. p. 11).

Welcoming environment

Mariana explained that from the first day in class she felt comfortable, “the teacher...quite welcoming” (I. 2. p. 7). She related to the powhiri which was held to greet students; “the powhiri that we had, it was describing me. It was all about people coming, make them happy, a good environment. So I feel relaxed. I feel I can do that” (I. 2. p. 7).

Classmates and colleagues

Mariana would have preferred to ask her classmates more questions about the course content, but identified that “they all have own [issues]...so actually it depends on myself” (I. 2. p. 10). However when asked about factors that contributed to her success she said, “having workmates, to discuss ...my studies, associate teacher as well...” (I. 2. p. 16).

Macro support

Mariana acknowledged that her study was made possible due to the “government support as well...through a student loan” (I. 2. pp. 6-7).

4.5 Bobby: Summary of findings

Educational discontinuities

Language

Although some of her study in India had been in English Bobby explained; “I wasn’t so fluent...we were not speaking English at all in school. We were speaking Hindi...just studying the books in English” (I. 1. p. 8). Arriving in New Zealand she felt she was “not very fluent...so I was struggling a lot” (I. 1. p. 9). An incident occurred while visiting the doctor with her disabled child; “he was saying something and I couldn’t understand ... and the lady standing next to him... laughed” (I. 1. p. 9). Bobby said; “my confidence broke at that time” (I. 1. p. 9). When her study began Bobby did not feel confident using English, and said this made her “quiet at that time” (I. 2. p. 7). She acknowledged “that was a big challenge for me” (I. 2. p. 7). As a relieving teacher there were times when she felt her relationship with the children was not good, and she put this down to her low English skills and confidence.

Academic expectations

Bobby felt “academic writing” (I. 1. p. 14) and learning academic conventions, such as paraphrasing, were difficult for her. Completing her first assignment made Bobby feel “very scared. It was a feeling like I don’t know whether I will do it or not” (I. 2. p. 6). She said “I couldn’t really understand how to do it” (I. 2. p. 6).

Pedagogy

In India Bobby taught social studies to “three to four year olds” (I. 1. p. 5). She explained that the educational system for preschoolers was “not like children’s choice at all...they have to do what the teachers ask them...[it is] all very structured” (I. 1. p. 3), and this was stressful

for the children and parents. There was an expectation that parents would “sit with the children and do lots of homework with them” (I. 1. p. 4). Comparing Indian and New Zealand teaching styles Bobby said “it’s really different because at the age three here, children just start knowing about their name and they start writing a little bit. Mostly through play they learn. But in India they just put so much pressure on them at that age” (I. 1. p. 5). Pressure also was on teachers as they “have to prepare themselves to give lectures” (I. 1. p. 3). She compared this to the way teachers in New Zealand “know about children’s interests and ... go according to that. In India children, they **have to do** it whether they are interested or not” (I. 2. p. 4).

Arriving in New Zealand Bobby enrolled her children in childcare which gave her opportunity to observe teaching styles. She noticed the differences, and became concerned that the teachers were “not teaching ... just playing ... all the time... just telling stories and songs” (I. 1. p. 9). She worried about her daughter not knowing “how to write her name” (I. 1. p. 9). She said, “it was very hard for me to understand. What are they learning from sand...from messy play and from water play?” (I. 1. p. 9).

Culture and context

Bobby had studied to a high academic level in India but as she explained; “in India I was writing with a pen. I didn’t use computer much. But here I was struggling...with the computer” (I. 1. p. 7). Bobby found there were challenges in her roles of mother, wife and student, becoming concerned that she “wasn’t giving [her children] much time” (I. 2. p. 8). She followed traditional Indian customs of preparing all meals, which meant she would “wake up at five o’clock and cook breakfast and lunch” (I. 2. p. 8). After work she would “come back and cook dinner” (I. 2. p. 8). When Bobby’s husband was

away she had more pressure; “I have to do **everything** then. All the housework, lawn mowing...looking after the children, and work as well [as] studying” (I. 2. p. 12).

Overcoming discontinuities

Practical strategies

Bobby explained that she “liked getting new information” (I. 2. p. 3) and asked questions such as, “why we are doing this, why are we doing that” (I. 2. p. 4) in relation to teaching practice. Bobby worked in a childcare centre as a reliever before beginning studies, and there she “came to know ...how children learn from play” (I. 1. p. 12). She read centre documentation and observed the teachers. She found the play-based strategies teachers used were practical, so decided to begin study. Aware she needed to work on her English skills, Bobby said she learnt more by “looking at readings, how they wrote, and learning stories” (I. 1. p. 14). Finding time to study was a challenge, sometimes studying three or four hours at night, and then “in the weekends or at the centre” (I. 2. p. 9). Bobby took her study to work and in breaks she would “just open my books and do readings” (I. 2. p. 9).

Making connections

Bobby explained that study helped her to understand the importance of supporting children’s first language. Developing knowledge and skills empowered Bobby in her relationships and behaviour management strategies with the children she was teaching. She said “...now I can...I am feeling really confident ...[to]... deal with that” (I. 2. p. 11).

Perseverance

Bobby decided to be proactive about learning English. One strategy was to go to her daughter’s centre everyday. She started speaking English there and built up confidence. When Bobby’s family asked

“can we go somewhere” (I. 2. p. 12) she would respond with; “no, I have to do my studies” (I. 2. p. 12). Sometimes she wondered “why I made my life so miserable” (I. 2. p. 12), but reminded herself “just two more years, and then I will finish” (I. 2. p. 12).

Positive attitude

Preparing daily meals and making time for her children had a positive effect for Bobby. She said “when I do all this, then I feel good inside. Then I study well” (I. 2. p. 9). Bobby acknowledged the role of positive thinking and self-talk, explaining that if she had kept a “negative way [of thinking]...things are going to get more complicated for me ...I think it’s good to have a positive attitude” (I. 3. p. 2).

Intrinsic motivation

Funds of knowledge

Bobby’s family valued education; her “father-in-law was a professor... [her] mother-in-law was a teacher” (I. 1. p. 6). Bobby achieved her Master in Education in India. Bobby explained, “I already liked working with children. That’s what really motivated me and I thought I should study and become an early childhood teacher. That was my personal interest. I really wanted to do this profession” (I. 2. p. 2). She believed this “was the only job I can [be] satisfied with and I can be comfortable with” (I. 2. p. 2).

Self-efficacy

There were times when Bobby felt she might not be able to complete the programme. When this occurred she would tell herself; “no, I have to do it” (I. 2. p. 11). She said “I was really determined at that time. I have to do this” (I. 2. p. 11). When she was asked where this strong determination came from Bobby said “I think from my inner voice. Because if I don’t do it, then I will never achieve this. I think maybe I

was taught when I was young, maybe that came from my parents.... if you are really determined, you can go through all the challenges” (I. 2. p. 11). Her strong Hindu faith also gave Bobby strength, explaining, “I have gone through so much, but there was something that helped. I believe in God, I think he was with me, giving me strength and support” (I. 1. p. 15). Bobby explained, “If something is wrong I always pray. My spiritual beliefs are quite strong...whenever I think about God...it gave me positive...that everything is going to be alright” (I. 3. p. 4).

Agency

Bobby wanted to know about the teaching profession and took every opportunity to learn more. In the childcare centre she “was observing teachers...how they talk, and how they were dealing with other staff members...and how they are talking with parents...how they are doing things” (I. 2. p. 11). When asked about her curiosity Bobby said it may have come from her parents. She said she was “always curious to accept the challenge” (I. 3. p. 2).

Self-regulated learning

Bobby explained that her “goal was to become an early childhood teacher and to learn about early childhood...to get the qualification so [she] can work with children according to the New Zealand curriculum” (I. 2. p. 3). She developed specific goals such as “making relationships with parents...talking to the parents” (I. 2. p. 10), and improving her “relationship with colleagues” (I. 2. p. 10). She also said “making relationships with children... that was a main goal for me to achieve” (I. 2. p. 11). She believed these goals had been met “because of my experiences and studying’ (I. 2. p. 11). She explained “now I feel my purpose of coming to New Zealand has been successful...I feel really good that I have done something here... I have learned so many

things...and I will never forget this' (I. 2. p. 14). Bobby indicated she was interested in pursuing her studies further. Participating in this research was interesting to her and she said "while looking at these questions I also wanted to do my MA. Because there is so much research to do" (I. 1. p. 15).

Extrinsic motivation

Family

Bobby did not mention extrinsic motivation much other than commenting on the pleasure her family in India expressed when she began study; "In India they feel a teacher's profession is a really good profession for Indian women...it has good status" (I. 1. p. 12).

Support Systems

Family

Bobby's husband helped with academic writing and provided practical support, such as "proofread[ing] ... telling me the alternative synonym ... showing me the computer skills" (I. 2. p. 7). She talked to her husband about her lack of confidence in using English, and he advised her; "you just speak ... if you speak more you will learn more" (I. 2. p. 7)... "they will correct you, and you don't mind that" (I. 2. p. 8). He also said "you just talk to them...try to do it freely, you will feel confident" (I. 2. p. 8). When she followed his advice she found that by "the second year I was really confident" (I. 2. p. 8). She said he was a key person in her success; "I always talk to him when something happened. Then he always make me feel better, telling me positive things" (I. 2. p. 10).

Institution

Bobby gained admission to two providers but made her choice based on the fact it was "one day only, and day, not night" (I. 1. p. 14). She

felt the “face to face” (I. 2. p. 7) “really good” (I. 2. p. 7), and even though it was just “one day ... [she could] ... get more information to do the assignment” (I. 2. p. 7).

Teacher educators

Bobby said “the teachers came first...because they were really encouraging and they didn’t let us students ... feel really low...they always ask ...[students]... how they are studying... they were really supporting... the really positive attitude of them... we were feeling free to go to them and ask questions” (I. 2. p. 10). After receiving a resubmit for her first assignment she asked for help. She recalls; “I remember my lecturer, she guided me how to do this... and the second assignment I was feeling a bit confident” (I. 2. p. 6). After this experience she “started doing more studies and asking more questions from the lecturer and making some notes” (I. 2. p. 6).

Another factor that encouraged her to speak up was the development of a class contract; “they wrote in it that no question is a stupid question” (I. 2. p. 7). It was as though she had been given permission to ask. She felt the “face to face study was really helpful. The students’ ideas and the lecturers’ ideas make me...research more” (I. 2. p. 7) and “that helped me in completing my studies as well” (I. 2. p. 7). Being reassured during assessment of her practice had an impact on Bobby as she said, “I felt that lecturers they also help students getting their goal. And they really encourage students” (I. 2. p. 7). Bobby recalled “when my English was really bad I was getting another teacher to help me...they provide study skills... I think I got enough help” (I. 3. p. 9).

Classmates

In class Bobby tended to be “really quiet ...a bit shy” (I. 2. pp. 6-7), but observing her classmates “asking so many questions” (I. 2. p. 6)

encouraged her to ask for their guidance. They advised her to “ask more questions, not from [them] but from the lecturer as well” (I. 2. p. 7). She grew to enjoy class, saying “I feel lucky...we shared laughter. We shared sorrows. Different stories, different ideas...everyone was so supportive” (I. 2. p. 13). She explained that the camaraderie of class was a factor in her success, “because I was feeling positive and confident, and feeling inspired from the other students’... ideas” (I. 2. p. 13). Bobby said “everyone in the programme really gave me motivation...to succeed. I can say that...really motivated me...yes you can do it. You are able to do it...and I did it!” (I. 2. p. 15).

Colleagues

Bobby explained “I have two or three friends [at work]...they were really supporting me...whenever I talk to them they really make me feel comfortable by asking me...if I want their readings ... any kind of help...they make me feel confident ... and positive that I have somebody who can support me” (I. 2 p. 10). Sometimes she would ask her colleagues to help her with proofreading, “but they don’t also get time...they need their own breaks also” (I. 2. p. 9).

Macro support

When Bobby sent her qualifications to NZTC and “they recognised my Indian qualification ... [and] ... gave me level nine ...I felt really positive I can do it now” (I. 2. p. 2). This encouraged her to continue studying.

4.6 Summary

Retelling participants' stories is one way their achievements can be honored and celebrated. This is why they have been presented here, and why a narrative approach was used in this study. Each story is unique; the learning journey traveled by each of the four women was their own. The challenges they faced were also their own and, although they had many people cheering them on, it was they who had to make the decisions and sacrifices required in delayed gratification.

The success these participants experienced in their study has become a legacy for the future, and very much worth celebrating. They are role models for their family and work colleagues; demonstrating it is possible to achieve in a new and unfamiliar learning environment. They can be seen as pioneers from one world to another; it takes courage to step out of one's comfort zone and take a risk.

In the following chapter the main themes identified from the results will be discussed in depth. Links to theoretical models and previous research will be made, with reference to the three research questions that have driven this study.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the key themes that emerged from the data in considering the three research questions. These questions related to: discontinuities between former educational experiences and English-medium educational settings; intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence the motivation of NESB students in English-medium educational settings; and support systems for NESB students in these settings.

The discontinuities participants encountered and various ways that they overcame them will be discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of factors which influenced the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of participants as they progressed through the programme. These factors have been identified as being related to the following four themes: funds of knowledge, self-efficacy, a sense of agency, and ability to engage in self-regulated learning. These themes emerged in the previous stories. It will be shown how these factors may have been connected and progressively developed in each participant as they went through the programme. The chapter concludes with a discussion on support systems that participants identified as being important in relation to their success. These came from both micro and macro sources.

5.2 Key themes related to discontinuity

This section will discuss discontinuities that participants experienced between former educational experiences in their home countries and

the English-medium educational settings they enrolled in here; in particular the Diploma of Teaching (ECE). Examples of ways that these were overcome will be noted. First, a brief explanation of discontinuity will be provided.

According to Lam and Pollard (2006) “continuity refers to two environments that are similar or compatible in which there is continuity of experience” (p. 126). Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested humans demonstrate resilience when adapting to new contexts. The interrelationships which occur for individuals between settings were also important to Bronfenbrenner. What occurs in one setting can have a profound effect on the individual in another setting. When aspects between the two settings are dissimilar the transition between them can be problematic. This is known as a discontinuity. The more information an individual has about settings they are about to move into, the smoother the transition and the greater the learning opportunities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The key discontinuities identified in this research are: language, academic expectations, pedagogy, plus culture and context. How these discontinuities impacted on participants will be illustrated with examples from the narratives.

Language

None of the participants had a background of frequent use of the English language, and identified this as a key challenge as they began study. Participants had experienced English language classes in their home country, though mainly in a written form rather than oral and verbal forms. Accent, clichés and idioms in the New Zealand context added to their challenges. Laxmi found the “accent of English speakers over here” (I. 1. p. 7) difficult to get used to. Previous experiences,

culture and ability to think metaphorically will impact on an individual's ability to understand the use of metaphors and successfully interpret them (Noe, 2007). Section 2.2 explains language differences.

Participants experienced many stressors related to language during their study. When Li-An had to use English for the first time she became scared, with physical effects. She felt that "every cell" in her body opened up (I. 1. p. 9). Laxmi struggled to understand the New Zealand accent of English; wondering "what are they saying?" (I. 1. p. 7). Having her way of using English insulted was traumatic for Bobby and she lost confidence. These experiences impacted on their self-efficacy, or confidence, as learners. Having the opportunity to form trusting relationships with others is important in the development of these attributes (Gibbs, 2006). A strong sense of social efficacy is needed for individuals to have the confidence to build supportive relationships (Bandura, 1995).

It was difficult for participants to engage in class discussions when they believed their English language was not as good as other students. At first Bobby was afraid to speak in class so she chose to be silent. A silent period when one is developing confidence in a language has been described as "a natural stage in ... [language] acquisition" (Collier, 1998). For Mariana it was "scary" to use English and she could not "understand straight away" (I. 1. p. 8). Li-An was faced with continual frustration. Her accent and limited English was like a barrier that would "be forever" (I. 3. p. 7). Although now competent in English she still sees it as a limited form of communication for her, saying it is not "like your first language" (I. 3. p. 7). When two cultures or linguistic groups interact changes in language and culture will result; however psychological and social integration of the learner may not always be smooth or complete (Jin & Cortazzi, 1993).

Wittgenstein (n.d. cited in Stanton, 2007, p. 24) said “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world.” This quote aptly sums up participants’ experiences with the English language.

Academic expectations

As adult students it had been some time since participants had been in formal education; for Mariana it was over thirty years. She saw study as an adult only possible once she came to New Zealand, and had unhappy memories of her childhood education. While participants were excited to begin their study and came to class like Li-An, prepared “to be a really good student” (I. 2. p. 4), initially they did not realize “how hard it would be” (Li-An: I. 2. p. 4). Western academic practices and expectations are going to be different to those from countries who have different philosophical traditions. As McNerney (2008) says; “what defines academic engagement and success in one cultural and social milieu may not be the same as what defines engagement and success in another” (p. 370).

Li-An, Bobby and Laxmi had proven themselves able to succeed at tertiary level; all having qualifications from their home countries. These included degrees in mathematics, statistics, physics and education. Mariana had left school with a high school certificate. However, they found that academic expectations were different here. It has been suggested that “previous academic success is not always a measure of the student’s ability to achieve in a new learning environment” (Stanton, 2007, p. 29). Practices such as taking responsibility for researching and gathering information were not only new but also unexpected. When Li-An had to complete a small research project she “had no idea how to do the study” (I. 2. p. 5), explaining that in China students are provided with the required information and rely on memorization. Laxmi and Bobby had similar

memories of study in India, where the focus was on exam results and structured programmes.

Academic requirements such as making links to course material and providing references to support their ideas were also challenging. Not knowing the educational system here meant difficulties in understanding course requirements. Terminology was often new; Laxmi had never heard the term personal teaching reflection before and wondered what these were. For most students the terms they encounter in academic study will be new for them. However NESB students may not be able to differentiate which terms are new for them and which are new for everyone else in the class. This may make accessing peer support difficult and cause them to feel alone in their study. These issues were also noted by Stanton (2007) in her investigation of English language learners in tertiary programmes.

Putting the new ideas they were learning into their own words was difficult. Li-An said this was “the main difference” (I. 3. p. 8), and the limited English she drew on for paraphrasing made it harder. Laxmi said that receiving resubmits after spending hours preparing course work was discouraging. Mariana explained that her limited English made asking questions difficult because she “wasn’t sure what [to] ask” (I. 2. p. 10). As noted in Section 2.2 differing perceptions about academic study can occur across cultures.

Pedagogy

The knowledge, expectations and practices participants encountered in early childhood settings here were different from those in their home countries. Pedagogy, the way teachers teach and the understandings that they have about teaching and learning, is an area where practices are influenced by current beliefs and the dominant culture (Cannella,

1997). When Bobby took her children to a childcare centre she thought the teachers were not teaching the children; “just playing with them all the time...telling stories and songs” (I. 1. p. 9). Laxmi explained that developing academic skills, such as reading and writing, for children from the age of three was common in India. Thoughts about children spending time playing and not being taught enough were also raised as concerns by parents in Dhasmana’s (1994) investigation of Asian parents’ perceptions about their children’s education.

The early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), incorporates ideas and concepts that were new to all of the participants. Bobby discovered this when she found out that teachers had to “know about children’s interests” (I. 2. p. 4). For Laxmi this was also a new way of thinking, and when she first entered training she was curious to discover if the curriculum was really as important as she had been told. She doubted that small children could really take responsibility for their own learning. Understanding the relationships between learning dispositions and the contexts they develop in, such as a child’s interest, enables teachers to plan for the child’s learning (Podmore, May & Carr, 2001). Bobby had taught three and four year old children in India, and explained how the structure required teachers to deliver lectures and set homework. She questioned the value of play, wanting to know “what are they learning?” (I. 1. p. 9).

Status of early childhood teachers was also commented on. Practices that teachers in New Zealand settings take for granted, such as feeding infants and nappy changing, were considered to be low status tasks and would not be carried out by teachers in India. Participants had to overcome initial dislike of these tasks. Laxmi said that she had “to hide” and not tell her family about these types of tasks (I. 1. p. 5).

Neither Li-An and Mariana had previous early childhood experience, although they had been volunteers or relievers before beginning study. Li-An explained that her limited knowledge of early childhood education caused her difficulties in understanding the new ideas she was being exposed to and putting them into her own words. Often the concepts she was learning had no connection to her own experiences, and she wondered “which one is right?” (I. 2. p. 7). Conflicts between her upbringing in China and the values and beliefs she was learning here often caused her anguish. This was an example of how personal values and beliefs affect the way teachers deliver programmes and respond to students. Gibbs (2006) suggests that “teachers need to know who they are both in terms of their identities as teachers, and as individuals” (p. 13). As student teachers the participants were expected to put their new knowledge about early childhood and teaching into practice while they worked or volunteered in an early childhood centre.

Culture and context

When the participants began study in New Zealand they experienced many discontinuities when compared to their previous educational experiences. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model (see Section 2.4) is a useful reminder that an individual’s characteristics will be influenced by their surroundings, and affected by people, places and things. This is helpful to consider when looking at continuity between different educational settings.

Li-An’s struggle to accommodate Western theories of learning had caused her to “think in a different way” (I. 2. p. 8). She explained that this had implications for her own self-knowledge and identity. Prior to immigrating to New Zealand she had seen herself as “just a person” (I. 2. p. 9), but here she experienced a moment of revelation, exclaiming passionately how she had “found out I am Chinese!”, and this meant

she now lived “in two worlds” (I. 2. p. 9). From reports of immigrants collected by other researchers, reflections of the disparities between cultures often occur. For example, an Indian narrator in Thomas and McKenzie (2005) describes moving to this country as “like an old life dying and getting resurrected into a new one” (p. 51). Jin and Cortazzi (1993) explain that individuals may not be aware of the values, beliefs and assumptions belonging to their culture until they are contrasted against those of others.

Having cultural obligations as wives and mothers meant that for Laxmi, Bobby and Mariana, time for study came after meeting these responsibilities. All identified this as time-consuming but a role they would not change. Bobby explained it like this; “when I do all this then I feel good...I study well” (I. 2. p. 9). However, it was exhausting when meals had to be prepared, children and husbands cared for and all the household duties completed. Occasionally this meant participants had just a few hours sleep at night.

As noted in Section 2.4, contextual factors can impact on the learner’s ability to understand content, to adapt and to make connections with their prior knowledge. Bobby spoke about the stress of having to do “all the housework, lawn mowing...looking after the children, and work as well ... [as] studying” (I. 2. p. 12). While cultural roles are carried out at a micro level they are established and maintained at a macro level and may not be easy to fulfill (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). In addition to these roles, participants had to learn skills that were required in the new academic culture. These included computer skills and accessing books in the distance library service. Bobby, Laxmi and Mariana reported that they struggled with this. Learning to type was an initial challenge. Laxmi recalled she had handwritten her first assignment which took over two hours to type. Finding the English

letters on the keyboard was difficult. “It took me **ages** to get it finished” (I. 2. p. 13), she exclaimed.

5.3 Overcoming discontinuities

It was apparent that participants drew on personal sources of strength to overcome discontinuities. A tolerance for ambiguity and a willingness to be flexible are skills required to survive and adapt in a new setting (Kohls, 2001, cited in Stanton, 2007). Perseverance was a common disposition participants demonstrated throughout their three years of study. It was particularly needed when first beginning study and being faced with a different framework for learning, plus a range of new concepts. A positive attitude accompanied by positive self-talk also related to dispositions for learning (see Section 2.4 for a discussion on dispositions for learning).

Participants engaged in practical strategies such as goal setting, asking for help, reviewing class notes and taking time-out. These responses relate to ideas in social cognitive theory where individuals take increasing responsibility for their learning (Bandura, 1986). This will be discussed further in Section 5.4 on motivational factors. A number of personal characteristics or beliefs were also helpful in overcoming these discontinuities. These included a sense of humor, a strong religious faith, and ideas about fate.

Dispositions such as curiosity, persistence and taking responsibility were also noted as factors in participants’ academic success. When asked where she thought her persistence and curiosity had come from Bobby suggested from her parents. Li-An encouraged herself to continue when she felt like giving up, demonstrating the disposition of perseverance. The disposition of taking responsibility was evident in

participants when they asked questions and set goals for their learning. It could be surmised that dispositions for learning are continually modified and extended as individuals continue their learning journey through life. Although participants came from a range of cultural backgrounds, all demonstrated dispositions for learning as they progressed through their study. As proposed in Section 2.4, dispositions for learning can be observed across cultures.

The decision-making that participants engaged in illustrates a willingness to be active agents in their learning. It has been suggested that dispositions enable the individual to move from ability to action (Ritchhart, 2002). Therefore, a sense of agency is required to motivate the learner to carry on through difficulties and to add to their funds of knowledge. Carr (2006) also explains that “the process of turning ability into action, where skills become dispositions and knowing becomes knowing-in-action, develops through experience, practice, and immersion” (p. 22).

5.4 Motivational factors

Intrinsic motivation

Participants referred to motivational factors that supported them in their success. For example, Mariana referred to her intrinsic motivation as “inside I want to gain my English language” (I. 1. p. 8). A sociocultural lens is useful when attempting to understand the forces that shape a learner’s motivation and set of dispositions related to learning. The unique personal history of a student shapes their engagement in learning – factors such as gender, class, race, religion and family all have a part to play (McInerney, 2008). Participants also referred to factors such as faith, fate and luck and how these had impacted on their ability to succeed in their study.

Becoming aware of the developing sense of agency demonstrated by participants the researcher wondered where this had its origins. Thinking about participants' previous academic success and life experiences, it could be seen that they were building on what they already knew. At times this knowledge was challenged and their belief systems underwent change. In turn this influenced beliefs they had about their capabilities as student teachers and as students in the programme. However, a strong sense of personal agency and intrinsic motivation was visible as participants pushed themselves to complete course requirements.

As a result of this thinking the following four intrinsic factors were identified as influencing participants' motivation: funds of knowledge, self-efficacy, agency and self-regulated learning. It is proposed that each of these factors continue to impact on the learner incrementally throughout the individual's learning journey. This interaction is demonstrated in the diagram below.

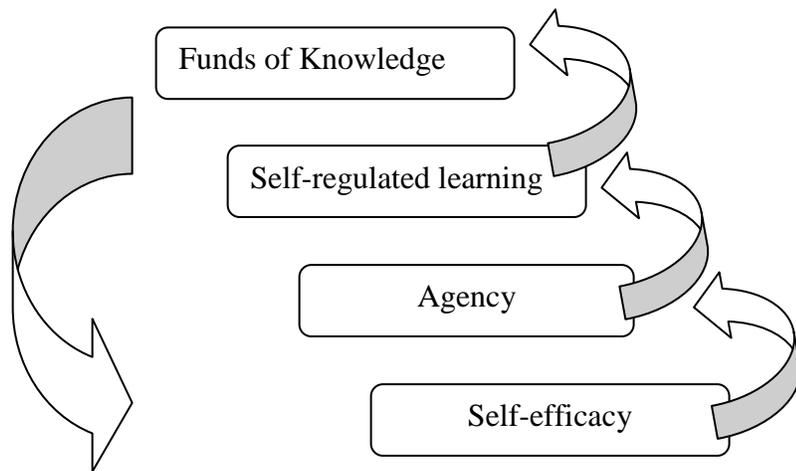


Figure 5.1: Spiral of life-long learning.

In Figure 5.1 (above) the relationship between these factors is demonstrated as a perpetual spiral where each continues to impact on

the others, with no end to the process. As students build on their funds of knowledge, their beliefs about themselves as learners strengthen. In turn this enables learners to develop a sense of agency and their motivation to succeed increases. This leads to activities such as goal setting as they take greater responsibility for their own learning. Increasing knowledge, success in goal setting, and stronger beliefs in their own capabilities adds to their initial funds of knowledge, which enables them to move to a higher level of ability and achievement within each factor.

Funds of knowledge

As previously noted, three of the participants were successful graduates in their home countries, having knowledge and experience of studying to reach a goal, and understanding the commitment required. Mariana's understanding was supported by her life experiences. Li-An recognised that her learning was on-going saying, "it's just the start" (I. 3. p. 14). Bobby also identified her previous interest in working with young children as a strong motivation for gaining a qualification in early education. Funds of knowledge were fully discussed in Section 2.4.

Self efficacy

Self-efficacy in relation to the learner's motivation and in having some control over their learning was discussed in Section 2.4. Belief in their ability to succeed was evident for each participant in this study. One way they developed this was in providing themselves with positive affirmations. Mariana told herself to "be positive, be strong, keep working hard" (I. 3. p. 5). Li-An acknowledged that it was difficult, but told herself that she had "to keep going" (I. 1. p. 2). Bandura (1995) explained that personal strength and resiliency came from having successful experiences in overcoming obstacles. Bobby said that as she

developed more knowledge and skills she felt empowered in her relationships, including with the children she was teaching. Mastery experiences provide proof to the individual that they can achieve and are an important source of efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1995).

Agency

As participants gained new knowledge about studying and about the early childhood field, they began to make conscious decisions regarding their actions and responses. Bobby's disposition of curiosity drove her to seek answers to the questions that had been troubling her about the philosophy and practices in early childhood education in this country. She read centre documentation and observed other teachers and this led her to begin study. From this point she became more intentional as she made connections between her study and her work with children. Agency can be seen to provide an explanation for the way learners act and respond throughout their learning journey (Bandura, 1997). The role of agency was discussed in Section 2.4.

Self-regulated learning

It is interesting to note that all the participants engaged in goal setting for similar outcomes, although this was a new skill for some. Participants' initial goal was to complete the programme and gain the knowledge necessary to be a qualified early childhood teacher in this country. All were clear about this, and spoke about the importance of setting goals to achieve their desired outcome. They set goals for small achievements along the way, some of which related to academic study and others to the practical component of the course – working with colleagues, children and families in the centres they were based in.

Goals related to study included revisiting class content, reading course material, completing assignments, referencing, time management,

using the computer and learning how to skim read. Goals that could be achieved in a short time have been found to be most effective, and success in achieving these impacts positively on self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 1995). Several participants also had long term goals which demonstrated that they had taken responsibility for their future and had assimilated the practice of goal setting into their everyday lives. By taking responsibility for their learning by setting goals, asking questions and requesting help, participants demonstrated that their self-efficacy, as related to learning, was increasing (Bandura, 1997). See Section 2.4 for a more detailed discussion of self-efficacy.

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic factors influencing participants' motivation to succeed in the programme also played a role. All commented on the need to have employment for economic reasons. Laxmi explained that moving to New Zealand enabled her to recognise "the value of money" (I. 1. p. 5). She also understood the importance of early childhood qualifications as without them "you will be out of this field" (I. 2. p. 6). Li-An was aware of the financial commitment she had made, saying, "I don't want to waste my money" (I. 1. p. 10). This fits with the suggestion that extrinsic motivation occurs when an individual "sees the task as a demand to be met ... if some other goal is to be reached (a qualification for instance)" (Biggs, 1987, p. 15, cited in Kember, Hong & Ho, 2008, p. 314).

5.5 Support Systems

During the interviews participants commented on the need for support systems for NESB students to be in place. Both Li An and Bobby commented on the hope that sharing their stories would help NESB students in the future. They acknowledged it was not only the study

that was difficult. The “whole pack is hard” (I. 1. p. 16) said Li-An as she recalled her experiences.

The various spheres of influence participants lived and worked in provided support systems as they progressed through their study. Each was a small microsystem that had influence and provided a place of security. This relates to the explanation of the ecological perspective provided in Section 2.4, which suggests it is important that there are links across settings for development or learning to occur (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). For example, there were connections between the participants’ work places and the institution.

The family was a key support system, closely followed by the environment and relationships that occurred in their place of study. The early childhood centres in which the participants were based also provided practical and emotional support. The next section will discuss ways each of these microsystems contributed to the individual’s success in attaining the Diploma of Teaching (ECE).

Family

The family belongs to an individual’s initial microsystem and has a role in nurturing, giving financial support, and providing a secure base from which to begin new ventures (Drewery & Bird, 2004). Participants’ families shared the three year journey with them, and were often referred to as crucial support for their success. Even for Li-An, the support of her family back in China was necessary. She explained that without the support of her mother in caring for her young son, she could not have traveled to New Zealand or embarked on her study. She understood she had to “get the permission from them...their support, otherwise I can’t go” (I. 1. p. 5).

Bobby's husband provided support with her academic writing and encouraged her when she was feeling unhappy with her inability to use English. He told her "if you speak more you will learn more" (I. 2. p. 7). She found his suggestions worked and became more confident, explaining he was a key person in her success. Laxmi's husband also encouraged her with positive affirmations, telling her; "think positively. You can do everything" (I. 2. p. 4). Laxmi acknowledged it was her husband's guidance that she should do things for herself that enabled her to develop greater independence, confidence and the necessary practical skills. Mariana's family provided support by teaching her specific skills and offering inspirational sayings. Because all the family members were engaged in study Mariana felt this was a support, thinking "why not me?" (I. 1. p. 8). Her husband made sure "everyone had one computer" (I. 2. p. 10).

The institution

The programme the participants graduated from was field-based so students were expected to work in a childcare centre for at least fifteen hours a week. The way the programme was structured was seen as a factor in their success by most of the participants. Having this work experience was important to Mariana as it added to her "knowledge about the children" (I. 2. p. 12). The small classes were seen as a success factor to Laxmi. She didn't think she "would get such support in a larger class" (I. 2. p. 13). Bobby took advantage of a study skills tutor who helped her with English.

Teacher educators

During the course of their study participants would have been taught by a number of different tutors. Mariana said she felt welcomed from the first day and this made her feel comfortable. She said the tutors were "supportive" which made "it easier to get through" (I. 3. p. 7).

Clear explanations about module content at the beginning of each term also helped. Laxmi explained that tutors supported her with understanding requirements such as independent research and referencing. She spoke about her initial fear, saying “I thought I wouldn’t be able to do it...to be honest, the lecturers are so helpful” (I 3. p. 10).

In regards to support Bobby said, “the teachers came first...because they were really encouraging and didn’t let us ...feel really low...we were feeling free to go to them and ask questions” (I. 2. p. 10). She recalled when she asked for help; “my lecturer, she really guided me how to do this” (I. 2. p. 6). This resulted in increased confidence. Li-An said she was lucky the tutor gave her lots of help, including with spelling. It was important for her that tutors understood and cared about her feelings. When this didn’t happen she felt stressed and unwilling to learn. Tutors who were sensitive to her feelings, rather than pushing her, made study less stressful for her. Several participants spoke about the role of tutors in supporting students to reach their goals. Mariana said she found that “New Zealand teachers want us to achieve our goals, [it’s] not just about doing the work” (I. 2. p. 16).

Classmates

While Li-An had a positive attitude towards study she found the course requirements a challenge. Her first response was to ask classmates. She acknowledged all the students had struggles and studying was “not easy for everybody, we’ve been through them together. We do help each other” (I. 2. p. 14). Mariana would have liked to ask her classmates more questions but recognised they too were struggling. She said “they all have own [issues] so actually it depends on myself” (I. 2. p. 10). Discussions in class were helpful and the environment was “really supportive and friendly” for Li-An (I. 2. p.

14). Bobby said she developed confidence after observing classmates asking questions. She began to talk to them and ask for their guidance. She developed a close rapport with classmates, sharing laughter, sorrows, stories and ideas, and gaining inspiration. This support from her classmates gave her “motivation ... to succeed” (I. 2. p. 15).

Colleagues

The participants were working or relieving in early childhood centres when they came into the programme, eventually all obtaining permanent work. The relationships they developed with colleagues became influential, from choice of tertiary provider to guidance with course assessments. Laxmi often referred to the practical advice, guidance and support her centre manager gave her. This included going over course requirements and explanation of academic expectations such as writing essays. The centre manager also demonstrated belief in Laxmi’s abilities; employing her with no New Zealand qualifications and providing her with encouragement. Laxmi was grateful for this opportunity and said, “I never ever forget her in my life” (I. 2. p. 3).

Mariana explained that having a liaison teacher to support her in the centre contributed to her success. She also appreciated “having workmates, to discuss...my studies” (I. 2. p. 16). Bobby spoke about the support she received from colleagues saying, “they were really supporting me...they make me feel confident” (I. 2. p. 10). However, she realized that they also had pressures on them and “they need their own breaks also” (I. 2. p. 9). For all there was a fine line of accessing support from colleagues and still respecting the workplace ethics.

Macro Support

Decisions made by government departments affect the support families and students receive and impact on the ability of many to complete their study. When her young son came to New Zealand in the final year of her study, Li-An became eligible for an extra allowance. She acknowledged this, saying it was “really important to help finish the study” (I. 3. p. 7). Mariana and Laxmi received a student loan. Having their previous qualifications acknowledged by NZQA encouraged both Bobby and Laxmi to continue with study.

5.6 Summary

Over this chapter themes emerging from the data have been discussed in relation to the three overarching questions that drove this research. The discontinuities that participants experienced were English language, academic expectations, pedagogy, culture and the new context. Links to the perspectives of sociocultural, ecological and social cognitive theories also emerged. The factors that enabled participants to overcome these discontinuities were discussed. A strong connection to dispositions of learning was made, and the factors that enhanced the motivation of NESB students in an English medium setting were discussed. Further links to sociocultural perspectives were made. Four key factors were identified and their reciprocal relationships were demonstrated in the Spiral of life-long learning (Figure 5.1). These were: a developing base of funds of knowledge, an increasing awareness of self-efficacy as a student teacher, a sense of agency and a willingness to engage in self-directed learning.

Drawing on the findings for relevant examples, each of these factors was discussed and their role in participants’ success was explored. Sources of support that participants identified as necessary for their

success were noted. These came from both micro and macro sources and included the tertiary provider, lecturers, classmates and work colleagues. However, the role that their families played was considered to be a particularly important one in relation to their success.

The next chapter will summarise findings from this research, consider tentative implications and recommendations and suggest possible directions for future research. A brief comment about possible limitations of this research will be made and a final reflection from the researcher will conclude the chapter.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a summary of the key findings from the research. Implications and recommendations arising from the findings will be discussed. Possible benefits to participants from participating in the study will be considered. The limitations of this study will then be noted. The chapter concludes with a brief personal response to the study by the researcher.

6.2 Summary of key findings

In listening to participants' stories and rereading their transcripts, it became clear that participants did not see their academic success as an event that occurred in isolation from the people in their environment or the context they were living in. Motivating factors were often related to other people in their family or to a desire to have a greater impact in their community. For example, Laxmi's desire to be a teacher and Li-An's dream to one day take her knowledge back to China.

The questions that framed this research related to ways the participants overcame discontinuities between previous educational experiences in their home countries and the English-medium setting that they encountered in Aotearoa New Zealand. The findings relating to these questions indicated discontinuities that included, but were not limited to: language, academic expectations, pedagogy, culture, and context.

In relation to factors which enabled participants to overcome these discontinuities, dispositions for learning emerged as significant. In

this study motivation has been found to be influenced by the context and to have many facets to it. Factors influencing motivation and learning were introduced as being: funds of knowledge, self-efficacy, agency and self-regulated learning. To illustrate the on-going relationship between these factors the Spiral of life-long learning (Figure 5.1) was introduced and it was explained how the key elements of each factor related to participants' experiences. As suggested previously the Spiral of life-long learning can be viewed as an on-going incremental process and demonstrates the impact each of these factors have on the learner.

Support systems participants identified as necessary for their success included their family, the tertiary provider, lecturers, classmates, and colleagues. Participants commented on the importance of support systems in maintaining their motivation to complete the programme, and each microsystem played a unique role in this support. Participants' views of the role of macro support systems were also commented on. These included governmental agencies such as the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

6.3 Limitations

This study has endeavored to understand the experiences of NESB students in an English-medium institution. The participants in this study were asked to recall their early educational experiences as well as events that occurred over the last five years in relation to their progress on the programme. It is possible that their memories were faulty or had been coloured by the interval of time.

Four participants contributed to the data. Although this is a small sample size, the participants were generous in sharing their experiences,

providing the researcher with a rich source of data. The scope was narrowed to investigate the experiences of NESB students in English-medium programmes. It could be argued that this focus may only have appeal and relevance for the areas of Aotearoa New Zealand where increasing multiculturalism is occurring. Nonetheless, this trend is growing. For example, in Waitakere City in 2006, 34 percent of the residents were born overseas (Waitakere City Council, 2010). It may be possible that cultural understandings, values and beliefs limit the usefulness of research when the researcher comes from a different cultural background. These were issues the researcher kept in mind as a representative of both the dominant group in Aotearoa and as a member of a different cultural group to the participants.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

The researcher hopes that this study will go some way to rectifying the gap in recent literature on the experiences of NESB students in this country, and perhaps be an impetus for others to contribute further research. Further research on the experiences of NESB students could well come from this group. One participant indicated she was interested in investigating this topic further while continuing her learning journey. This would enable some of the limitations of this research previously mentioned to be addressed. Perhaps related topics such as how the impact of studying here contributes to a developing a sense of identity as New Zealanders, and a sense of belonging in this country, could be investigated most appropriately by this group. It would be interesting to revisit these four women in, say, five years time, to see what continuing impact this study had for them, and if they had completed their identified goals.

This research investigated the experiences of NESB students within an institution that has traditionally had classes of twenty five or less. It would be interesting to find out if NESB students within a larger cohort had similar experiences and responses. It would also be interesting to find out the impact on native born New Zealanders of studying alongside NESB students. Are there issues and insights that teachers could benefit from learning about these experiences? Brebner (2005) noted that there was very little research about the benefits of home students in mixing with international students, though the claim is often made that the benefits are there. Perhaps following a cohort and investigating the development of relationships between cultural and ethnic groups would be a possibility? However this would have to be done in a way that did not add further stress to the students. The diary format that Hislop (2006) used with NESB students to gather beliefs about group participation may be a useful way to do this.

6.5 Recommendations and Implications

This section identifies implications and recommendations as a result of engaging in this study. Potential benefits arising from this study for the participants are also considered. Recommendations and implications arising from this study relate to institutions and the teachers of NESB students. It could be that there are implications for policy made at a governmental level, but this is outside of the scope of this study. Possible directions for future research will also be suggested.

Implications for institutions:

1. Teachers of NESB students could benefit from relevant professional development.
2. NESB students could benefit from pre-study programmes and web support.

Recommendations for institutions

1. As an inclusive approach, pre-study programmes could be offered to all students.
2. Professional development related to NESB students could be offered to teacher educators.
3. Closer relationships could be fostered with the microsystems NESB students operate in e.g. family, early childhood centres.
4. The provision of web-based support could benefit NESB students.

Implications for teacher educators:

1. NESB students may come to class with different understandings about learning and pedagogy.
2. NESB students may experience a range of discontinuities, but are likely to be driven by strong intrinsic motivation.
3. The choice of pedagogical practice that teacher educators employ may imply beliefs about the learner and relate to the teacher educator's own cultural self-efficacy.
4. Engaging in professional development related to the support of NESB students may improve the teacher educator's own cultural self-efficacy and the level of support they can offer to all their students.

Recommendations for teacher educators:

1. Understanding that dispositions for learning are constantly evolving may enable teacher educators to further support NESB students on their learning journey.
2. Investigating the factors identified on the Spiral for life-long learning (Figure 5.1) may strengthen teacher educators' pedagogical style and methods they employ in the classroom.

3. Avoiding making assumptions about the cultural heritage and understanding of NESB students may open doors to valuable sharing of knowledge within the classroom.
4. Addressing possible sites of confusion e.g. idioms, clichés, academic language, may further support NESB students' integration into the classroom.
5. Providing physical and mental space for reflection for NESB students may support their learning.
6. Fostering discussions between NESB students and other students in the classroom may strengthen cross-cultural relationships and provide opportunities to discuss cultural diversity and different perspectives.

Potential benefits for participants:

When this research project began it was hoped that participants would benefit from being part of it. Having their successes recorded and validated was expected to affirm for them their academic ability, to encourage them to continue working on their own long term goals, and to provide encouragement to see themselves as role models and mentors for others beginning this journey. It is hoped that having the opportunity to talk about their goals and dreams will help participants to put them into action.

6. 6 Personal response to the research

The researcher's personal aim is to continue developing the skills and characteristics of a culturally responsive teacher (Gibbs, 2006). Clearer awareness of the factors that contribute to the success of NESB students will enable the researcher to continue on her own learning journey, and become a more effective teacher. It is likely that the results of this research will impel the researcher to question current

practices in relation to the way NESB students are taught and supported. Using the deeper understanding gathered through this study, the researcher will be better able to take the role of an advocate for NESB students.

Rereading the interviews and writing participants' stories has been a powerful experience. I gained a strong appreciation of what the participants had been through and I felt humbled and privileged to be trusted with these stories. It has been inspiring to read and rewrite their words; my own motivation and resolve has been strengthened. The participants are very much a part of my journey also, as a teacher of adult students and in particular working with those from a different cultural and ethnic background to me.

Using a narrative approach has been useful as I believe stories can illustrate difficult concepts such as paradigm shifts and cultural change. I think they do this because a story speaks to the heart. They transmit not only information but also emotion, and when the two go together learning and recall occur more naturally. So it seems to me that the deeper a story goes, and the more personal the content revealed, the more useful it can become. When this occurs the shared stories become part of the common wisdom; they belong no longer to the storyteller but to the community.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview schedule

Appendix B: Information sheet-participant

Appendix C: Participant consent form - individual

Appendix D: Consent form- institution

Appendix E: Information sheet- institution

Appendix F: Authority for the release of transcripts

Appendix G: Example of Transcript (Laxmi interview three)

Appendix A

Interview schedule: Success stories: Experiences of non-English speaking background students within an English-medium tertiary programme.

Each interview will be no more than one hour in duration.

Researcher: Gayleen Taylor

Interview one	From where? Setting the scene – background
Topic	Prompts
Moving to New Zealand	Reasons
Prior to New Zealand	Education experiences/ study/ qualifications/ skills Lifestyle Work experiences Family – your role
Arriving in New Zealand	First impressions Household Family – your role
Prior to commencing study	Qualifications Support/skills Family – support Challenges Choice of early childhood education
Interview two	To here: Gaining a qualification.
Reflections	Previous interview
Commencing study	Motivation – beginning Impact of motivation First day Impact on lifestyle/family
During study	Goal setting/motivation Successes/reasons Significant experiences Changes Centre life – your role
Graduation	Attended/ feelings/comments
Interview three	Where to now? Goals, dreams and aspirations
Reflections	Previous interview
Now	Changes – self/philosophy/life/work Expectations- self/others
Future	Goals/study/ Five years
Suggestions	Programme/students

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<p>Success stories: Experiences of non-English speaking background students within an English medium tertiary programme .</p> <p>INFORMATION SHEET- PARTICIPANT</p>	
<p>Tena koe, my name is Gayleen Taylor. I am undertaking research for the completion of a thesis for the Master of Education qualification (180.898) through Massey University. You may already know me in my role as a lecturer in the programme from which you recently graduated.</p>	
<p>You have been approached by one of my colleagues to invite you to participate in my project which aims to investigate the experiences of a maximum of four successful graduates from the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) who come from a non-English speaking background. In particular I will consider the factors that enabled you to achieve so well. Participants have been invited based on accessibility and availability.</p>	
<p>Once you have indicated your interest in the project to my colleague, I will make contact with you, answer any questions and provide you with the consent form. I will also provide you with a self-addressed envelope for returning the consent form to me within seven days.</p>	
<p>Participation will involve a maximum of three individual interviews with the researcher (each taking no more than one hour). Each of these meetings will be recorded on a digital tape recorder and as a back-up I will also take written notes.</p>	
<p>Data Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings from the study will be included in the final thesis report and may be used in later publications and presentations. • Raw data will only be accessed by myself, and my supervisors. • All raw data will be stored securely for five years and then destroyed. • You will have the opportunity to review transcribed data from your individual interview and make any changes. • Your real name will not be used in any reports and publications arising from the project, but due to the small nature of the educational community it is still possible that participants may be identified by others in this context. However, all care will be taken to protect your identity. 	
<p>Participant's Rights</p> <p>Participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not answer any particular question; • withdraw from the study (at any time up until two weeks after the final interview); • ask any questions about the study at any time during participation; • provide information on the understanding that your real name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher; • be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded; • ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview. 	
<p>Project Contacts</p> <p>If you have any questions about this research, please contact the researcher and/or either of the supervisors.</p> <p>Researcher: Gayleen Taylor. Contact details: mobile phone: 0276218878; Email: taylormaid50@xtra.co.nz</p>	
Format for Information Sheet (2009)	Page 1

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Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application **09/67**. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Julie Boddy, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 06 350 5799 x 2541, email humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz



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**Success stories: Experiences
of non-English speaking background
students within a tertiary programme.**

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

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

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

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

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - printed





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students within an English medium tertiary programme.**

CONSENT FORM - INSTITUTION

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. I have considered the implications for the Institution, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that further questions may be asked at any time prior to the completion of the project.

I agree/do not agree to the research being carried out according to the procedures as set out in the Information Sheet – Institution, and pending the outcome of this Institution's own ethical procedures for approving staff research.

**Signature (on behalf
of the institution):**

Date:

Position:

Full Name - printed





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Success stories: Experiences of non-English speaking background students within an English medium tertiary programme .

INFORMATION SHEET – INSTITUTION

Researcher Introduction

Tena koe, my name is Gayleen Taylor. I am a staff member at your institution who is undertaking research as a requirement for the completion of a thesis for the Master of Education qualification (180.898) through Massey University.

Project Description

My project aims to investigate the experiences of successful graduates from the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) who have a non-English speaking background. In particular I will consider the factors that enabled these students to achieve so well.

There will be four participants. These will be selected on the basis of accessibility and availability from the pool of graduates known to the researcher. It will not be necessary to use the institution's data base.

Participants will be approached by a third party (a colleague who also knows the potential participants). They will be invited to take part and information on the study will be provided to them. Once interest has been confirmed with the intermediary, the researcher will make contact with potential participants, answer any questions and provide the consent form which can be returned to the researcher within seven days in the self-addressed envelope provided. At that point they will have the opportunity to sign the consent forms and have any questions answered. Full documentation of the proposed research will be provided to the institution as required, using the forms provided by them.

Project Procedures

- Participation will involve the following: a maximum of three individual interviews with the researcher (each no more than one hour). Each of these meetings will be recorded on a digital tape recorder and I will also take written notes.
- There may be a possibility that interviews could take place in my workplace, and if this option is selected then the institution's procedures for use of the setting will be followed.

Data Management

- Findings from the study will be included in the final thesis report and may be used in later publications and presentations.
- Raw data will only be accessed by myself, and my supervisors.
- All raw data will be stored securely for five years and then destroyed.
- Participants will have the opportunity to review transcribed data from their individual interviews and make any changes.
- Participants' real names will not be used in any reports and publications arising from the project, but due to the small nature of the educational community it is still possible that participants may be identified by others in this context. However, all care will be taken to protect their identity.
- It is possible that participants may discuss aspects of the programme during interviews, but all care will be taken not to identify the institution in any subsequent reports, presentations or publications on the study. Nonetheless, given the small nature of the early childhood community it is possible that some people may deduce where the study has been carried out.

Participant's Rights

Participation **will be** voluntary. If deciding to participate, participants have the right to:

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

Project Contacts

If you have any questions about this research, please contact the researcher and/or either of the supervisors.

Researcher: Gayleen Taylor. Contact details: mobile phone: 027 621 8878; email:

taylormaid50@xtra.co.nz

Supervisors:

Dr Penny Haworth
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AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

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

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

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Full Name - printed _____

Laxmi interview three: Where to now? Goals, dreams and aspirations.

20.3.10

42 minutes

Venue: her home

Incidental conversation prior to commencing interview

Interviewer: So is there anything that you wanted to add on from the last two discussions that we had?

Laxmi: No, nothing much.

Interviewer: Okay. I wondered if you thought there was anything else from the programme, that contributed to your success or made it more challenging for you succeed.

Laxmi: My classmates. They really supported me in my challenges. The teachers were there to help me as well as my colleagues and classmates otherwise I wouldn't have been able to do this. When you are stuck with the assignments and such. And when you are stuck with the topic for the reflective journal.

Interviewer: Okay, that's great. Thanks. So today we are going to focus on the future.

Laxmi: Aha.

Interviewer: and think about changes that have occurred for you. Do you think you have changed?

Laxmi: Yes I have changed a lot. I reflect on my practice every day now actually.

Interviewer: How's that helped you by doing that reflection?

Laxmi: I can think about what changes I can make in my profession as a teacher with young children. Every day is different in early childhood, so when you set up activities if anything goes wrong I can think about how I could have done that in a different way. And another thing, every day when I come home I browse the internet to get some ideas to it to the children. So I never did it before.

Interviewer: So the training has made changes?

Laxmi: I never did it before. You know when I came to this early childhood field, I thought oh, how can we introduce mathematics, how can we introduce science and technologies to the children? But when I finish my studies I got a clearer idea of what was the expectation. As a teacher how much we have to learn. It gave me big change in my life. Especially in my profession as a teacher.

Interviewer: Yes. Because you mentioned before being able to see the connections with the school curriculum, and you used part D of *Te Whariki*, and able to support others.

Laxmi: Yes really able to support others with TW most of them, most of the staff, the teachers they are not bothered with that part D. Most of them just go with the goals and strands. And just link it with that one. But I really supported them and a couple of them they acknowledged it, they said, oh see!

Interviewer: So you were able to support your colleagues?

Laxmi: Yes. Able to support them.

Interviewer: What about your own personal teaching philosophy. How did that change for you?

Laxmi: Yeah. Cause after my studies I really thought about children. I changed my philosophy. I was really strict pointed to the uniqueness of the children. I realize that child was different and their interest. Everything is different. I started to plan according the children's interests soon after my courses really. Individual children's interests as well as the group. Then almost every day I make some changes in my planning as well children's interests, each and every time. Then a couple of my colleagues said why do you go and change this every day? Why don't you focus on this, and we change it every week? And I said that child is not showing that interest in that particular, I mean, that area at the moment. They said, but still you can keep it that one. You can give some activities. We don't need to worry if the child is more interested in that one or not. It's too much of paper work. If you want you can follow that. If you don't want, that's up to you cause what we do is, we divide the children into four groups according to the portfolios and stuff. But still we can give individual attention to the other children as well. So every month when I take over my programme planning I get like three or four papers. A couple of my colleagues said see you are increasing **our** workload too! See!

Interviewer: It's interesting how others see it as workload, but you have a different perspective on it.

Laxmi: Yes. A different perspective

Interviewer: I guess it's about having some enjoyment, a sense of achievement of what you are doing?

Laxmi: mmm. A sense of achievement. I mean sort of like, you know, we are getting some sort of self...how do I say...I'm feeling more comfortable, I'm feeling more happy. I'm doing at least something to the children. They are with us from 7.30 in the morning, five o'clock in the evening so if we go and ask them, what did you do today, some children; I didn't do anything today! We just played around! So what sort of play did you do? Did you ...then they come, oh we did that today, we did this. Then we did not show

any social skills in the beginning, then in the afternoon we started to show that. Cause the teachers have been telling; share it or all sort of things. Yeah. Quite a lot of changes in me. I started to focus on how I am going to do that tomorrow. Many of my other colleagues, they said oh we don't need to worry about tomorrow cause we don't know how that are coming in tomorrow. If they are happy then we can do something, if they are not happy then just... but still when I come home in the evening I do something for them. I do prepare some activities and ...(pause).

Interviewer: Preparing in your own time?

Laxmi: Yeah.

Interviewer: And it sounds like you are really reflecting on what you can do as a teacher.

Laxmi: Yes. Exactly.

Interviewer: And using those things to help you plan for it?

Laxmi: Yeah.

Interviewer: Great. That's wonderful. So reflecting on the expectations that you had at the beginning of the study, do you think those were met? The expectations that you had about the programme and what you were going to learn?

Laxmi: Yes. Really. I met those expectations cause before I started my studies I thought oh, everyone said *Te Whariki* is nothing. It is just a play based curriculum; you don't have to learn a lot on that one. So I got that information from my colleagues and I started my studies. Then I realized how broad is *Te Whariki*. So I was really keen to know that oh, what is in *Te Whariki*? I got conflicting information about it. Some of them they said oh it's *Te Whariki*. You just put the strands and goals, you just pick it up and put it in the learning story, that is enough to learn in that one. Actually you are going to waste your three years in your life to do these things and learning all sorts of things. And when we come back you will come to know that thing is happening. But ...I just need to know what is happening in *Te Whariki*. When I started my studies I realized it is a broad curriculum. Quite a lot of things in that one. So teachers, they have to pick it up, and do accordingly for the routine of the children.

Interviewer: Yes. It's a shame that some don't recognise the value...

Laxmi: The value of *Te Whariki*.

Interviewer: That's quite sad.

Laxmi: And you know, the other thing is some parents, people from different countries, they might migrate to New Zealand and they don't really know what is happening in *Te Whariki*. Especially Asian culture. Even if somebody comes from India, the Indian style

is really structured curriculum. Even for the little ages. I met a couple of Indian families in my old work and they all said, oh God! Please don't send my child to the sandpit today. Don't allow him to go for the water play. I don't want him to fall sick. I'm just sending here to learn something from here. Not for making sand castles or playing with water. At the very first, I mean in the beginning of my career in early childhood, I just kept quiet. I could not have any answer to them. But then I started my studies I slowly start to, yeah, speak back to the parents. To say this is happening. Now I am confident enough to tell them, see your child is learning.

Interviewer: That's great. Because the parents don't know...they haven't had the training.

Laxmi: No. they haven't had the training, and they are coming from an entirely different situation. So one parent, when I started this early childhood career in 2006, a couple of parents, especially the Indian parents, they come and approach us. Hey what's happening here? Are they teaching anything to the children? You know. And I say, I can't... I always take them to my head teacher to just explain. Because I did not know what was happening there too. So when I started my studies, I gained the confidence to speak to them actually. Now I am really confident enough, I can explain to them what is happening. What your child is going to learn here. How he is going to learn and develop from here. Now I can do that.

Interviewer: That's great!

Laxmi: That's great achievement! It's a great achievement.

Interviewer: Yes. And they are more likely to listen to you.

Laxmi: Yes. Listen to me. Especially Indian parents. Some of them they come and speak in our language. (Whisper) "What is happening here?"

Interviewer: Yes?

Laxmi: (whisper) "are they learning anything?"

Interviewer: They have private conversations with you?

Laxmi: Private conversations (Laugh). So we really want to know what is going on here. We are spending this much of money. So we really want to know. Are they simply writing the stories? Is it happening there? Is it happening in that child? In our own language they come and talk to me. And I'm confident to talk to them now, see?

Interviewer: And you can reassure them?

Laxmi: Yeah

Interviewer: Great. That's fantastic you can do that. And it will make a difference for those families.

Laxmi: Yes.

Interviewer: They will perhaps be able to talk to other families who also will be a bit concerned about what their children might be doing.

Laxmi: Yes. You know the moment they send a child to the centre they convert that money into Indian rupees. Ohh! God, I'm spending this much of money, is there any outcome? This is what they are asking.

Interviewer: I can understand that. You are sort of acting as a bridge for those people from one culture to another.

Laxmi: Another culture to another. Mmm. You know Indian ...another thing is... they just have to learn to at least...yeah...he has to gain that...pen-grip or whatever and hand – start to learn to read and write, recognise the alphabet and stuff. That is what they are expecting from their first week of the early childhood field here as well. Oh he has been attending here for the last two weeks; he doesn't know how to take a pen or to hold a pen, or a pencil. Or he doesn't know how to what alphabet is there, or what numbers are there. All these sort of things.

Interviewer: And that would be quite a young child?

Laxmi: A young child. Just three years or three and a half years. So what they say is, you know in kindergarten back in India they learn to sit and do the things. That's true!

Interviewer: So there are lots of comparisons?

Laxmi: (emphasis) **Loads** of comparisons. Even we get that from other Asian cultures. You know, those who are following the structured curriculum. They come in and say; wow he hasn't learnt anything at this age. He has to do this or he has to do that. Why my child is not sitting and learning this stuff? He is not writing. Look at that. That child is sitting and writing, and this one is not doing. Why is the reason behind that? All these sort of things you know.

Interviewer: It's good that these parents have someone to ask these questions.

Laxmi: Of course.

Interviewer: That's great. So the next question is about how you felt you were treated by parents and colleagues at the beginning of your study, or before you became a student, to when you actually completed your study? Did you feel you were treated differently by people once you had your piece of paper?

Laxmi: yes. Yes.

Interviewer: How was that?

Laxmi: um. When I started my career as an early childhood teacher, none of the parents they came to me first. And one parent came to me and said, oh, I don't want to give my child to you because she doesn't like brown people. I just stepped back, when I heard that answer. She gave it to another lady over there. The child started screaming and screaming. Oh she doesn't like brown people. Oh, I just left that place to make that child feel comfortable or the parent to feel comfortable. It was because of me. Because I just started there as a reliever so I really felt...oh God.

Interviewer: How did you feel?

Laxmi: oh. I don't know. I just really felt it. I thought oh my God. What is this? How am I going to work in this field? Then I left that room and I went back to my centre manager and I said, oh I'm not feeling comfortable there so can I please spend some time in another room? She said what is the reason? And I said oh...and she said no, all people are different. They will realize in another couple of weeks, they will know that you...not just a reliever. They are not comfortable ...And later on that child started to play with me. Every day, morning, when she comes she wants me to pick her up. That's after a month or something. But the mother was really worried to give the child to me. "Oh normally she doesn't like brown people."

Interviewer: Such a racist comment!

Laxmi: mmm. You know people are different. And my colleagues said, only qualified teachers are allowed to do this. Qualified teachers are allowed to do that. Medication, some policies are there. And even if I remind them, oh you don't need to do that cause we are qualified teachers here to think about some of those things. Sometimes they forget to give the stuff. I say; you have to give the medicine at...oh no. Not you! But only qualified teachers are allowed to do that. I say, I know that, but still the time is written there and you haven't done that. That's why I pointed it out. Oh we know that. It doesn't matter if one hour late, or two hours late. As long as we give the medicine that's fine. And even in the portfolio entry, if I take some photograph ...oh you don't need to take photograph, then we have to show some sort of accountability on that photograph. Some wonderful moments they don't capture it. It's not their fault, they are busy doing some other stuff. Then if we take the photo ...oh you don't need to do that cause we are accountable for the photographs. When they are taken you have to write something. So can I write something? Oh no you can't do that, because we teachers are here.

Interviewer: So you weren't given the responsibilities?

Laxmi: No. No. I was not given the responsibilities. But when I started my studies slowly I start to get some responsibilities.

Interviewer: So what kind of things were they starting to let you do?

Laxmi: all sort of... yeah...responsibilities I got first is to take the children, when the parents come in I can take the children from their hand or ...then I got the responsibility to take photographs and write daily diaries about the children. What else? Then portfolio entries.

Interviewer: So once you got your piece of paper, how did things change then?

Laxmi: (laugh). Now they found me on their level.

Interviewer: You were on their level?

Laxmi: mmm.

Interviewer: So how did they treat you differently?

Laxmi: They treat me as a qualified teacher. So you have the responsibility to do everything now. So I don't have to go and ask them now.

Interviewer: So you got more autonomy?

Laxmi: Yeah. And that piece of paper. A big jump in my salary. That's true. A great jump!

Interviewer: That would be nice.

Laxmi: I started off with \$9.00. I think it is nearly 2.8 times more.

Interviewer: That's good. Well done. That's the way it should be.

Laxmi: Still I am paying off my student loan, but that's fine. Laugh. But now I am getting the opportunity to train the other students now. So I am getting the opportunity to train them if a reliever comes over there. I have the right to tell them, see, these are the jobs for you to do today. The reliever's jobs are there. If you have any doubt, feel free to come and talk to me. I am here to help you. You know whatever...I experienced it in my past...I don't want to give that to my followers.

Interviewer: So you are more aware of how you can be a fair and helpful leader?

Laxmi: Yes.

Interviewer: Good. So have there been any other changes in your life since you completed the diploma? Apart from taking on more responsibility and getting more pay?

Laxmi: (Laugh). Getting more pay! Yeah, contributing well to the staff meetings. If there is anything negative or you know. And attending more professional development courses

now since I got my provisional registration. Of course if they have qualified people they get more funding, but based on that I get to attend quite a lot of professional development courses. Just to keep my career up to date.

Interviewer: Yes. Good.

Laxmi: I never got it before. But when I was at [name of centre] I got some opportunities to go for some in my third year. But before that I never got any opportunity to go for any of these PD courses.

Interviewer: So this has been a big change?

Laxmi: Yes. A big change.

Interviewer: Do you get to choose the kind of PD you go on?

Laxmi: mmm. Yeah. But my current workplace my centre manager is very good, so PD we want we can go. So it is up to us ...so she displays all those things. Whatever she is getting she displays on the board. The only thing is we have to pick it up and give it to her. Say, I would like to attend this one, she is ready to send us.

Interviewer: Great.

Laxmi: So she sent me for the [name] conference last year for the three days. Plus I attended how many? Six or seven other PD courses.

Interviewer: Great.

Laxmi: Even this year she said, you don't need to worry that you are leaving us, you can do as many as you want. You can take in the period of time. So I attended a couple of them this year too. That makes big changes in our practice actually.

Interviewer: Big changes like what?

Laxmi: Like the current changes in the early childhood...you know different perspectives of the theories. I attended the Pikler philosophy one last time.

Interviewer: So this gives you wider knowledge?

Laxmi: Wider knowledge about the child development and stuff.

Interviewer: Now you're not engaged in any study at the moment are you?

Laxmi: No I'm not. Laugh. Not in the near future too.

Interviewer: What about in five years or so? Do you see yourself doing any study then?

Laxmi: Let's wait and see (Laugh). I can't tell you at the moment.

Discussion about the family moving to another country

Interviewer: So has being a qualified teacher all you expected it to be?

Laxmi: (Laugh).

Interviewer: Any thoughts you want to say about that? Well, you were a qualified teacher in India but it is different in New Zealand.

Laxmi: I don't know. What should I say on that one? (Laugh. Shared humour)

Interviewer: It would be really helpful if you thought there was anything that would benefit future students like yourself, immigrants to New Zealand, who are coming into our programme, if there was anything we could do differently to support those students. Whether it was the way the written material was presented or anything differently that the lecturers did, or the way the programme was structured. Was there anything?

Laxmi: I think the programme was structured in a very clear way. The only thing is if they are committed to do their studies, just go for it and do it. That's all.

Interviewer: So that's what you would tell them?

Laxmi: Yeah.

Interviewer: Your advice would be to just go for it?

Laxmi: Yeah. Just go for it. Don't be scared of what is waiting for them in the future. It's just nothing. They just go for it. Cause I was so scared when I went for my studies. I thought I wouldn't be able to do it. But then I realized, no at any age we can study. And to be honest the lecturers are so helpful.

Interviewer: Thank you. So it would be mostly encouraging?

Laxmi: Yeah. It's a wonderful field. It's a rewarding field actually.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Laxmi: No. We have covered pretty much everything. Haven't we? (Laugh).