Beginning Teachers, Schools and Diversity

By

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Abstract

As the field of education world-wide is explicitly striving to make schools and education available to all children and young persons, classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of language, culture, religion, gender, abilities, socio-economic status and geographic setting. This rapidly growing phenomenon has educators trying to grapple with ways to prepare and support teachers to be responsive to the diverse needs of students in their classrooms.

In New Zealand, cultural diversity is also growing rapidly. By the middle of this century nearly half the student population will be of Pasifika origin. Those opting into the teaching profession must be equipped to confront this reality. While initial teacher education can provide opportunities for student teachers to critically examine their own beliefs and orientation towards diversity, and also provide a snapshot of the reality of classrooms through practicum, it is when they begin actual teaching in schools that the “rubber hits the road”.

This ethnographic study explores the beliefs and attitudes of beginning teachers about student diversity and possible influences of the primary school culture on their perceptions and practice. Seven beginning teachers were involved in the study over a period of 6-18 months. Multiple data sources were used and data was thematically analysed across the settings using a grounded theory approach.
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Chapter One:
Introduction

Locating the research

The field of education internationally is explicitly striving to make schools and education available to all children and young persons. *No Child Left Behind* (USA)\(^1\), *Every child matters* (UK)\(^2\), and ensuring that *the education system must support every child to learn so that they can manage the demands of changing information, technology, work and social conditions*\(^3\) are political mandates for schools to provide quality learning opportunities for all children and young persons in order to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. In New Zealand, the *New Zealand Disability Strategy*\(^4\) validates the sociological model of disability with an underpinning vision of a fully inclusive society in which all people have access to the benefits that society offers.

In addition, the culturally changing landscape of our classrooms is reflected in the population statistics, which indicate that by the middle of this century more than 40% of students will be of Pasifika and Māori origins. Specific strategies such as *Ka Hikitia*\(^5\) and the *Pasifika Education Plan*\(^6\) are part of the Ministry of Education’s drive to acknowledge and be responsive to the rapidly growing cultural diversity in New Zealand classrooms. The extent of student diversity one should

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5. A Ministry of Education strategy to improve the educational outcomes for Māori students.
6. A Ministry of Education strategy to improve the educational outcomes for Pasifika students.
acknowledge, however, is not limited to race, disability and ethnicity alone. It includes language, culture, religion, gender, abilities, socio-economic status and geographic setting (Alton-Lee, 2003), and teachers need to be aware of and sensitive to this multidimensional nature of diversity (Banks, 2004; Meyer, Bevan-Brown, Harry, & Sapon-Shevin, 2007). Potted in this landscape of growing student diversity is also the emerging evidence that debunks the notion of low socio-economic status and culture being barriers to school achievement (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003; Timperley & Yin, 2003). Not only does New Zealand have strategies to uplift the educational achievement of indigenous and marginalised groups, but these strategies acknowledge the importance of future educators being well prepared and responsive to the growing nature of diversity in classrooms (Ministry of Education, 2005). Further, the New Zealand curriculum document for schools has the principles of “equity” and “inclusion” enshrined in its core values and principles (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 9).

What do all these political mandates and strategies, emerging research and statistics mean for schools and teachers in particular? Do they signal a radical revamp of initial and in-service teacher education provision, or do they mean a more conscious and deliberate shift in ways that schools accommodate the range of diversity by providing a culture that strongly embraces the notion that all students can learn (Ainscow, 1991; Fullan, 2001)? While initial teacher education can provide opportunities for student teachers to critically examine their own beliefs in the wake of new knowledge and experiences (O’Neill, Bourke, & Kearney, 2009), how do schools then influence and shape the beliefs, values and attitudes of beginning teachers towards accommodating student diversity? In particular, the responsiveness
required to meet the needs of growing heterogeneity of students can be particularly overwhelming and challenging for beginning teachers as they learn to “sink or swim” in the culture of their schools.

Lortie (1975), in his landmark study of the socialisation of school teachers, observed that teacher socialisation was almost complete prior to formal training in pedagogy due to the hundreds of hours the student teachers have spent as “apprentices of observation” (p. 61). But as later studies showed, these personal constructs were susceptible to changes as the beginning teachers began interacting on a day-to-day basis in a professional context (Cole, 1992; Rust, 1999; Flores & Day, 2006). It is likely that the changes in ways of thinking and working are inevitable in the beginning years of teaching and learning, as “each school has an ambience [culture] of its own” (Goodlad, 1984, p. 81).

In its simplest form, culture can be defined as the shared values, beliefs and norms of a set of people that is reflected in their interactions. Culture is an enigma that is unwritten but encompasses shared philosophies, ideologies, values, beliefs, assumptions and norms of a group of people (Kilmann, Saxton, & Sherpa, 1985); it involves people and their relationships (Allen, 1985). More than three quarters of a century ago, Waller (1932, cited in Harris, 1992, p. 29) observed that:

*Schools have cultures that are definitely their own. There are, in the school, complex rituals of personal relationships, a set of folkways, mores, and a moral code based upon them. These are games which are sublimated as teams, and an elaborate set of ceremonies concerning*
them. There are traditions, and traditionalists waging their world-old battle against innovators.

If schools have their own distinct ethos and “ambience”, how do existing practices in schools support teachers to meet the educational needs of increasing diversity of their students? Unlike other professions, novice (beginning) teachers are expected to perform all the tasks of experienced teachers from day one (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Lortie, 1975). We have to acknowledge that beginning teachers are faced with a two pronged learning path – “they have to teach and they have to learn to teach” during a time of survival, adaptation, learning and discovery (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, pp. 1026-27).

Locating the researcher

Setting – A busy flea market. A young scholar noticed with amusement a blind man, holding a lantern in front of his face, skilfully negotiating his way through the milling crowd. Intrigued by the action of the blind man the young scholar approached him and queried the purpose of the lantern. The blind man replied, “It is for those who can see, so that we can avoid colliding with each other”.

The parable above illustrates the power of experiential learning and long lasting insights that we often gain from these experiences. We are all learners, and as humans, by default, tend to become life-long learners. However, the term “learning” in its formal sense begins with one’s life in a school and pre-school for some. As children and young adults, the place we spend most of our time other than home is in educational settings. Therefore, the influence a school has on an individual, just like
the influence of one’s family environment, can neither be minimised nor ignored. Teachers who are the heartbeat of each and every school have the potential to create profound impressions in young minds. I am sure that everyone can recall a teacher or two who have had some sort of influence on them in their formative years of learning.

Being a teacher today is vastly different from what it was even a decade ago. Technological advancements are rapidly changing the traditional role of teachers. In addition, classrooms across the globe are becoming increasingly diverse. My experience of working in different cultural settings and in different countries and varying management styles also shaped my interest in the different ways institutions and organisations work. Later in my career as a psychologist, I had the privilege of working in a number of schools with a large number of classroom teachers and school leaders among others. I found that every setting had its own ways of working and norms and often queried myself with the question, how do new teachers mould into their jobs? The ease with which some slotted in while others worked their way through the maze and haze of first year of teaching had been a phenomenon that I have observed over a number of years. I was curious to learn more about this phenomenon because as beginning teachers we are fragile and vulnerable, though full of enthusiasm with a crusader mentality. In one way or another classrooms have been my learning arenas over the years, and therefore it is apt that this study is about teachers and teaching.

Classroom diversity poses a challenge to all teachers and in particular for beginning teachers who are in for a “reality shock”. Using a grounded theory approach, this thesis is about the perceptions of seven beginning teachers from five
different schools, of their dispositions and orientations to student diversity, and the practices in their schools that influence these initial orientations and dispositions as they begin to teach.

Research objective

Those of us who have been teachers can no doubt relate to the complexities and demands of the classroom. With this awareness, I have decided to locate my research at the point where teachers begin their careers. The aim of the research is to identify the perceptions of beginning teachers in the process of acculturation to student diversity. The overarching question guiding the enquiry is:

*Do schools’ cultures, practices and policies influence beginning teachers’ beliefs, attitudes and practices in relation to student diversity?*

- For the purpose of this research, “beginning teachers” are those that are about to begin their teaching careers as provisionally registered teachers in New Zealand and have a full time job.
- “Culture” refers to a shared set of values and expectations (EPPI-Centre, 2002). It is the notion of the *way we do things here*.
- The term “diversity”, for the purpose of this study, rejects the notion of a “normal group” (Alton-Lee, 2003) and encompasses many characteristics that extend not only to those with impairments or identified as having special educational needs but to all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures (Ainscow & Booth, 2000; Meyer, Park, Grenot-Scheyer, Schwartz, & Harry, 1998).
Research questions

The terms “dispositions” and “orientations” have been used in the unpacking of the major research objective. “Dispositions” refer to the tendencies in which people act in particular circumstances based on their beliefs (Villegas, 2007). Secondly, examining dispositions keeps the focus on actions of individuals rather than the more abstract nature of beliefs. In addition, dispositions are also an aspect of autobiographical memory, which is subject to changes and modifications through learning (Ellis, 2007). Similarly, “attitudes” are examined in the context of orientations, which refers to their “positioning”, as the term better reflects the stance of these beginning teachers. The concepts of dispositions and orientations are constructs that are amenable to changes and therefore more suited to this study, which attempts to capture the growing understanding and knowledge of the beginning teachers over a period of time. Framed by the above research objective, the following questions guided the line of enquiry:

1. What were the initial dispositions and orientations of beginning teachers towards student diversity?

2. How did schools’ ethos shape the beginning teachers’ initial dispositions and orientations to diversity and their pedagogical practices?

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7 Oxford Dictionary.
8 The words research and study have been used interchangeably and so are the terms beginning and novice teachers.
Overview of chapters

This dissertation is organised into seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter is the literature review. The initial half of the review spans literature related to organisation and culture of schools, to the socialisation and acculturation of beginning teachers. The latter half examines the construct of diversity and the way it is theoretically understood by student teachers, teacher educators and beginning teachers, and literature that examines how beginning teachers respond to diversity in their classrooms. Both international and relevant New Zealand literatures have been reviewed for this chapter.

Chapter Three relates to the methodological approach and the methods used to gather data in the study. It describes the process of selecting the sample and also the difficulties encountered in getting participants and gathering data during specific activities. It concludes with a brief description of the seven begin teachers.

Chapter Four is an analysis of the initial perceptions and orientations of the seven beginning teachers about diversity at the point when they begin teaching, and their initial framing of how they would respond to student diversity in their classrooms.

Chapter Five describes the practices and policies of the five schools involved in the study, including ways in which beginning teachers are employed, and the nature of professional and pedagogical support they are being inducted into during a period of acculturation.
Chapter Six captures the dispositions and orientations of beginning teachers’ understandings and responsiveness to diversity following a period of 6-18 months. The chapter analyses their dispositions and orientations over a period of time during which the context of their schools played an important part in shaping the views of the beginning teachers’ notions of diversity.

Chapter Seven, the final chapter, discusses the findings in relation to the research objective. In doing so, they will be examined in the context of current literature. The chapter identifies the nature of contextual influence on the beginning teachers. It identifies implications for both pre-service teacher education and school-based support for beginning teachers. Limitations of the study are discussed together with identifying areas for future research.

The grounded findings of this study cannot be generalised across beginning teaching communities, but they do provide valuable snapshots of the perceptions of beginning teachers around their beliefs and attitudes towards student diversity, and the factors that they perceive to influence their pedagogical practices in the first few months of their teaching careers.
Chapter Two:

Literature Review

This literature review includes more than one aspect of beginning to teach, as the dissertation spans a period of 6-18 months of beginning teachers’ perceptions of their dispositions and orientations towards diversity. The complex but inevitable interweaving of teachers’ personal and professional learning from being students to novice teachers becomes apparent in the extent of literature reviewed. The literature review analyses the empirical works and works of scholars both national and international, based on their researched content knowledge of beginning teachers and learning to teach. The earlier part of the literature review will centre around the acculturation and socialisation processes that provide the context for becoming a teacher. The latter part will examine the literature on the construct of diversity and its understandings from the perspectives of student teachers, teacher educators and beginning teachers, and the implications of increasing diversity of students on the pedagogy of beginning teachers. In the process of doing this literature review, the paucity of empirical research information focusing on beginning teachers’ perceptions of diversity and contextual influences on these perceptions also became apparent. The review validates the exploratory nature of this thesis, which allows the voices of beginning teachers to be heard.

Becoming a teacher

Beginning to teach marks the start of a two pronged learning process for novices – one is to teach and the other, learning to teach. It can be argued that learning to teach begins in initial teacher education, there can be little doubt that it is
in schools that the “rubber hits the road”. With the rapidly growing range of diversity in classrooms, there are a number of ways in which schools support their beginning teachers for whom the extent of diversity can be particularly overwhelming and challenging. The process of easing into the ways of the school or the acculturation of novice teachers has been studied from different perspectives over the years. Reviewing the literature identified both commonalities in the process of acculturation (also referred to as socialisation in the literature) and the idiosyncratic realities of the school context.

Beginning teaching and teachers has long been the subject of interest for researchers and education scholars. From the starting point of initial teacher education (ITE) to the difficulties in retaining teachers, the profession has been subjected to unabating scrutiny over a long period of time. As the school population becomes more diverse globally there are increased expectations on initial teacher education to prepare teachers who will be able to work in a multicultural setting where students came from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds (Banks, 2008; Gay, 2002; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). However, in his seminal study, Lortie (1975) identified the strength of preconceived ideas of student teachers about teaching and teachers themselves, and the minimum impact that ITE had in changing these preconceptions. Further research on the “washout” effect of teacher education (Zeichner & Gore, 1990) and disillusionment with the context of their teaching (Cole & Knowles, 1993) resulted in more studies focusing on the importance of the context of the schools and their ethos that can affect new teachers, as the period of acculturation is viewed as an apprenticeship period in which the beginning teacher is expected to acquire certain beliefs and practices from the experts (Raths, 2001).
Initial teacher education can provide opportunities for critical examination of student teachers’ beliefs and attitudes and provide them with new knowledge and practical experiences through field-based practicum. However, what they cannot replicate is the environment equal to “the reality of full time teaching” (Loughran, Brown, & Doecke, 2001, p. 7; Ryan, 1986). Beginning teachers, Ryan (1986) argues, go through the stages of “survival”, “mastery” and “impact”, with an earlier “fantasy” stage, which propels them towards becoming teachers (p. 10). Almost two decades ago, Florio-Ruane (1989) stressed the importance for teacher educators to bear in mind the important influence of the social organisations of schools in preparing novice teachers to better understand the contexts of their roles and classroom teaching. Over the years studies have reiterated the influence of contextual factors in shaping the pedagogical practices of beginning teachers.

Empirical research over the last two decades and more that studied the subjective accounts and realities of beginning teachers, have identified some key factors that are critical for them to ease into the phase of learning to teach. They include, a knowledge about the school as an organisation (Flores, 2001; Goddard & Foster, 2001; Goold, 2004; Kuzmic, 1994; Olson & Osborne, 1991; Rust, 1994); the importance of professional guidance (Hudson, Beautel, & Hudson, 2009; Rippon & Martin, 2003); the nature of professional guidance and peer support within schools (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Everston & Smithey, 2000; Kardos, Moore Johnson, Peske, Kauffmann, & Liu, 2001; Langdon, 2007; Wang, Strong, & Odell, 2004; Williams, Prestage, & Bedward, 2001); and the extent of supportive school leaders (Flores, 2004; Langdon, 2001, 2007; Riehl, 2000). Some studies focused on the inevitable intertwining of personal biographies of beginning teachers and the context
of their schools which determined the nature of interactions in the process of acculturation and their socialisation (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Flores, 2001; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). These conceptual categories are not mutually exclusive because they “reveal different aspects of a phenomenon that in reality always manifests itself as a meaningful whole” (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002, p. 109). Therefore some studies contribute to more than one key aspect of the acculturation process.

**Idealism versus reality**

Studies show that ideological perceptions of the role of a teacher and high self-expectations often characterise those who enter the profession (Cole & Knowles, 1993; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1981). In one of the landmark case studies of learning to teach, Kuzmic (1994) highlights the importance of “organisational literacy” for beginning teachers to achieve a sense of self-efficacy in the early periods of their teaching. The beginning teacher in his study, Kara, possessed the disposition to be an effective teacher with exemplary skills in creating a student-centred learning environment. She felt well prepared by her initial teacher education and was keen to have an equitable classroom that valued the co-construction of knowledge. Despite her best efforts she soon began to experience a sense of helplessness and lack of control over certain aspects of teaching. The combined effect of time pressure for the content to be taught while effectively managing the classroom as she wanted to, posed barriers to realising her idealistic image of a teacher. Her perceptions of self-image as a teacher was a barrier for her to be more reflective and “ability to contextualise” (Kuzmic, 1994, p. 23), that rapidly turned into self-doubt about her own abilities to be an effective teacher. Kuzmic also
observed that the need to belong and be respected among staff impacted beginning teachers’ perceptions of their roles in the schools, which in turn affected their roles as teachers. In a study of 19 beginning teachers in secondary schools in New Zealand, the culture of encouragement and support by senior teachers in itself created a sense of belonging despite the majority of the beginning teachers having “little knowledge of schools’ organisation and ways of operating” (Goold, 2004, p. ii), reiterating the importance of a web of supportiveness that is critical for novice teachers to ease into their role of beginning teachers.

The perceptions of role identity and belonging were also evident in a study of four Canadian beginning teachers (Olson & Osborne, 1991). In trying to match the discrepancies between their high expectations of becoming confident and competent teachers, and what was practically possible to achieve, these beginning teachers were overcome with feelings of anxiety and frustration. In their shift from being idealistic to realistic, they sought affirmations from their peers for “authentication of self” (Olson & Osborne, 1991, p. 341). The affective and material support they were able to get from their peers helped the beginning teachers build their confidence in teaching. Another study of nine novice teachers with 1-5 years of teaching experience also highlighted the difference between their initial ideological perceptions of teachers and teaching and the realities of organisational demands (Goddard & Foster, 2001). They were beginning teachers who opted to teach in schools that were multicultural. They displayed a commitment to ensure equity in educational opportunities for marginalised population. Similar to Lortie’s (1975) seminal study, these beginning teachers had an “archetype” (role model) of a teacher that they wanted to be. To achieve their ideals of teaching, they perceived the support
for classroom management and instructional practices to be critical. However, soon they were overwhelmed by the realities of day-to-day tasks of a teacher – juggling daily administration tasks, meeting parents, meeting the needs of a diverse range of learners and meeting expectations all round. Goddard and Foster’s (2001) study showed that while the novices had noble intentions for wanting to be effective teachers for a diverse class of learners, they were not fully aware of the demands of the “real world and its influences on their practice and beliefs” (p. 360).

A similar finding was noted in a study of two beginning teachers (Rust, 1994). The two teachers in the study had entered the profession with images of a teacher being a co-constructor and facilitator of knowledge characterised by mutual respect. In spite of having some knowledge of their schools, they were unprepared for the low levels of collegiality for their professional and day-to-day practices. This soon led them to feel lonely and insecure. Together these studies highlighted the importance of knowing the layout of the landscape – “the micro-political literacy” (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) – as being critical in the successful transition to begin teaching. Lacking this knowledge proved to be an undermining factor for the beginning teachers despite their positive attitudes and dispositions. The above studies also highlight the mismatch that can occur between the idealistic dispositions of the beginning teachers and the pragmatic realities of classrooms when beginning teachers had minimal or no understanding of the realities of the school and its practices.

In seeking acceptance of themselves in the role of teachers, studies have also shown a selective nature involved in their socialisation process. A longitudinal study of 11 high school beginning teachers over a period of five years found that beginning
teachers were selective in their interactions with certain “reference groups” within the school. They were groups whose standards of practice and attitudes served as a professional benchmark for the novices (Gehrke, 1981), that prompted educators to conclude that although the process of acculturation may be a rite of passage, beginning teachers exerted more control and autonomy over the ways in which they meshed into the culture of their schools (Hargreaves, 1994; Lacey, 1977). Despite the urgency to become employed following their training, beginning teachers tend to be selective in looking for schools that have a positive and vibrant culture (Cameron, Baker, & Lovett, 2006). Often they prefer to work in a school with which they are familiar, a place where they can “easily find their place in the team” (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002, p. 114).

Despite the varying knowledge of their contexts of teaching and culture of acceptance and support, it was evident that in this phase of “survival” (Lang, 2001; Pollard, 1985), these beginning teachers resorted to “strategic compliance” and quickly fell in line by embracing existing practices of the way we do things here (Nias, Southworth, & Yeomans, 1989). As they were vulnerable in terms of their own learning as novices, and the anxiety of performing to self-determined and expected standards in their jobs, they were keen to conform and follow the ways of the school (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000).

**Role of school leaders**

It is not only supportive colleagues but also the school leaders who can be influential in schools. Among them, principals can be more powerful as they play a key role in hiring and supporting staff in their schools. In doing so, they maintain the ethos of their schools with like-minded staff which leads to more “within school
homogeneity” (Broadley & Broadley, 2004, p. 267). With their influence on and responsibility for staff development, principals seem to have their own perceptions of novice teachers. In a qualitative study of 15 school principals in New Zealand, Langdon (2001) showed that the principals had lofty expectations of beginning teachers. They expected the beginning teachers to have knowledge of the curriculum, diversity of learners and skills to manage the learning environment together with a commitment to ongoing learning, be a team player and have professional and personal integrity. There was a paradox in their expectations in that the principals wanted the beginning teachers to be reflective thinkers and critical practitioners while expecting them to “fit in, muck in and be part of the school culture, a teacher who would fit in” (p. 26). The latter message would nevertheless set the ethos of the schools as more often institutional practices tend to reflect the social values of those with most power and influence in schools (Gehrke, 1981; Pollard, 1985; Riehl, 2000). In an extensive review of normative and empirical research, Riehl (2000) extended this influence to all school administrators who “reproduce, sometimes unwittingly, conditions of hierarchy and oppression, in particular by fostering compliant thinking instead of critical reflection” (p. 59). Langdon (2001) argued that with complex expectations of beginning teachers, the onus should be on school principals to provide a climate that will support the professional and personal growth of beginning teachers.

The above characteristics in principals’ leadership were identified in seven schools with exemplary induction practices in New Zealand (Langdon, 2007). The principals in Langdon’s (2007) study created and maintained the professional ethos of the school. They were actively interested in the beginning teachers and promoted
collaborative learning environments. The novices in turn viewed the principals as “innovative, dynamic, visionary and knowledgeable of current educational thinking and literature” (pp. 221-222). Similar observations were noted in a study of 14 beginning teachers in Portugal (Flores, 2004). These beginning teachers identified three different types of principal support – normative, effective and laissez-faire leadership. Effective principals were found to be knowledgeable, strong and goal oriented, flexible, encouraging and supportive – “being there for you” (Flores, 2004, p. 309). Effective principals, observes Riehl (2000), are responsible not only for hiring beginning teachers but for the careful socialising of them. They buffer them from intrusions and have goals of continuous improvement in the school and provide feedback on the teaching of novices while ensuring they have manageable classrooms (Wildman, Niles, Magliaro, & McLaughlin, 1989). Kardos et al. (2001) found that school leadership was the key in establishing a culture of collaboration where beginning teachers and experienced ones worked collectively towards improving students’ learning. These studies have highlighted principals and school leaders as architects of school culture and have identified the mark of effective leadership as being committed to nurturing the growth of their staff, beginning teachers in particular.

**The school culture**

Educational scholars and researchers have acknowledged the importance of school culture as the foundation for teacher acculturation and socialisation. So what is school culture? School culture is often referred to synonymously as school ethos, school climate, school atmosphere or school character and it is described as an “underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions and rituals built over time”
that builds a set of “informal expectations and values” that in turn shape the ways people in a school “think, work and act” (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 28). Hopkins (1996) identifies six “visible” aspects of a school’s culture. While not mutually exclusive, they include – staff interactions, norms of group work, dominant values as stated in the school’s mission statement, the philosophy that governs the approach to teaching and learning, the rules that have to be learnt by new teachers to get along in the school, and the feel or climate experienced in the entrance hall that is conveyed, which may or may not value student contributions. The most vital aspect of the culture of any school, observes Fried (2001), is the stance that staff take in thinking about the students.

Undertaking an in-depth study of staff relationships in six schools in the UK in the 1980s, Nias and colleagues observed the strong impact that school cultures had on teachers and the way they teach (Nias et al., 1989). The culture of the school, which included the beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings and norms, symbols, rituals and ceremonies, was created and maintained by staff. In their study, the “culture bearers” and “culture founders” were invariably the head teachers, whose responsibility it was to effect changes in staff and instil a new set of beliefs and values.

In summary, school culture is the beliefs and values that underpin organisational culture and signals “the way we do it around here” message clearly to its members (Kugelmass, 2003; Nias et al., 1989). School culture is something that one hears, sees, feels and does behind the school gate, and it is unique to each school. Therefore, one cannot exclude or minimise the influence of the wider school culture.
on the teaching and learning that occur in classrooms (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994).

**Professional nurturing**

School culture, observes Stoll (2000), is a vital aspect of education that cannot be underestimated or overlooked. Novice teachers have to navigate through the labyrinth of established routines and curriculum as they begin to teach (Bullough, 1992). Rosenholtz (1989) identified the culture of “moving” (progressive) schools to be one in which there was open communication among staff on a number of professional issues. A recent study of seven schools, purposively selected for their exemplary induction practices in New Zealand, highlighted multipronged support systems as being necessary for assisting novice teachers’ initiation into the profession. The study found that the supportive culture of the schools was instrumental in helping beginning teachers becoming confident professionals (Langdon, 2007). Induction programmes in these schools were individualised and provided both “structured and incidental collaborative learning opportunities” (Langdon, 2007, p. 275). A key feature of induction in these schools was the balance between “survival” activities and advancing the focus of beginning teachers on student learning. Studies of the types of school cultures that beginning teachers enter into have focused on the nature of professional nurturing and support that the beginning teachers encountered and have found that there was a wide range in the ways beginning teachers were introduced to practice. They range from being collaborative, consultative, isolating and being “contrived” (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Kardos et al., 2001; Williams et al., 2001).
The importance of professional support becomes increasingly necessary during the initial stages of teaching due to the complex nature of the profession. In a comprehensive literature review of 83 studies on the topic of perceived problems of beginning teachers, Veenman (1984) highlighted the “reality shock” of transition from student teachers to novice teachers during which their attitudes shifted from idealistic notions of teaching to more conservative ways of teaching. In order to ease their transition, induction becomes an “educational intervention” (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, p. 27). Mentors in particular become sounding boards to allay initial fears of teaching and to assist beginning teachers in coming to terms with the practical aspects of everyday teaching and guide them in their professional development (Street, 2004). It is equally necessary for mentors to interpret what novice know and mediate their knowledge into practice (Casey & Claunch, 2005). In a study of 50 beginning teachers in a wide range of school settings – ranging from urban to suburban, elementary to high school, large and small schools – Kardos et al. (2001) conceptualised three forms of professional cultures. In a “veteran-oriented professional culture”, practices of experienced teachers in the schools dictated professional interactions. As experts they set the pattern of pedagogical practices and often did not see a need to interact with novice teachers who were then left to follow the existing practices. A second type of culture that they identified was a “novice-oriented professional culture”, which was at the other end of the continuum to veteran oriented practices. In these schools, although the enthusiasm was high in terms of professional conversation it was led by inexperienced novices with high ideals that were not tempered by the knowledge of experienced teachers. The researchers noted that this type of culture was found more in newly configured schools and in schools with a high number of beginning teachers. The third type of
school culture they identified was the “integrated professional culture”, where there was an acknowledgement of mutual support. The need to guide and support beginning teachers was at the forefront of experienced teachers’ practices, which also valued the contributions of the novice teachers. The study found that it was schools with an “integrated professional culture” that provided the best support for novice teachers, who quickly became part of a learning community that fostered collegiality and mutual learning.

A similar study of induction in 11 schools from two large and contrasting Local Education Authorities in the UK (Williams et al., 2001), found that the professional cultures in schools ranged from being “individualistic” through “structural collaboration” to “spontaneously collaborative”. The study found that teachers in the individualistic cultures followed a pattern of “survival” rather than undergoing professional growth in the beginning years. The study was undertaken soon after mandatory mentoring support had been introduced in schools. This study found that schools that were spontaneously collaborative were able to move induction practice from satisfactory to “beyond excellence” despite the mandatory requirements. There was collegiality and collaboration to achieve mutual goals in these professional communities. However, the positive response from schools that had set up structures for collaboration as per the mandatory requirements to support beginning teachers reiterated the importance of providing a culture of collaboration for the professional growth of beginning teachers. The importance of collaborative cultures for their professional growth was also reiterated in the Portuguese study of 14 beginning teachers reviewed earlier. The teachers, who were from six different schools, identified a school ethos that offered a supportive climate, effective
communication and spontaneous collaboration among staff, as being critical for professional growth (Flores & Day, 2006).

Induction is an intense phase of personal and professional learning in the process of enculturation (Britton, Raizen, Paine, Pimm, & Raizen, 2003) and is often the most important aspect of professional support for new teachers (Bartell, 2005). Among the various type of professional cultures in schools, the practice of professional nurturing falls under the purview of mentoring. Mentors play a key role in the acculturation process of beginning teachers (Tickle, 2000). Mentoring should in essence be a vehicle to transform “teaching into a true learning profession” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, p. 55). This critical role of mentoring has been the focus of a number of studies. In countries such as New Zealand where nationally resourced professional support is in place for beginning teachers, mentors, or tutor teachers as they are referred to, are assigned to beginning teachers from day one, whose support is seen as absolutely essential to “survive” by beginning teachers (Lang, 2001). These mentors or tutor teachers have the responsibility to instil the set of schools’ values and beliefs in the beginning teachers (Nias et al., 1989), and in New Zealand carry the mantle of ensuring that beginning teachers, who are provisionally registered, acquire the knowledge and skills to become fully registered teachers in two years time.

Realising the important role of mentoring, perceptions of final year student teachers from two different universities in Scotland were surveyed on mentoring practices to further inform the designing of induction practices (Rippon & Martin, 2003). The survey data from 217 student teachers and information from a self-selected focus group of 8 students identified three types of mentor relationships. A
procedural relationship that was purely mechanical and not responsive to the needs of the novice teacher; a power relationship in which the novice was expected to conform in an apprenticeship model; and a third and preferred type – a personal relationship which was a genuine partnership based on “professional and interpersonal collaboration” (Rippon & Martin, 2003, p. 215). The latter included a whole range of interpersonal skills that were seen as desirable for mentors. The preference for a personal relationship approach to mentoring indicated that beginning teachers wanted to enter schools that were “spontaneously collaborative” with an “integrated professional culture”.

Mentors’ proximity to practice, together with a close relationship with beginning teachers, positions them strategically to assist novices in their day-to-day practices (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004). Achinstein and Barrett (2004) studied 15 new teachers-mentor pairs over a two year period. The novice teachers were all employed in schools where there was a wide range of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Mentors in this study were observed to frame practices in three distinct ways to reshape the thinking and practices of novice teachers – managerial, human relationships, and political. While the first two frames constituted a hierarchical and equal status approach respectively, it was conversations in the political frame that challenged the existing dispositions and orientations of beginning teachers; they were reflective and critical. In the political frame, conversations revolved around differentiating the curriculum, pedagogical practices, teachers’ expectations of students, an analysis of diversity and the resultant access and inequities in the participation of students. Challenging beliefs of novice teachers did pose some tension for mentors who used this approach, however they were able to move beyond
the role of a friend to “avoid missing opportunities to challenge or push practice” (p. 740).

Similarly, in analysing conversations between four pairs of mentor-beginning teachers, two in China and two in the United States, under the themes of teaching, subject matter and students, Wang et al. (2004) found that the US pair focused mainly on individual students. If the other two themes of teaching and subject matter were discussed, they were talked about in isolation rather than in relation to the students. For the Chinese pair, they found that conversations were centred on “teaching, subject matter, students, and the connections between them” (p. 802). Extending the concept of mutual and equal participation, Wang et al. (2004) argue that critical and reflective conversations about how they approached teaching was the critical ingredient in the professional growth of novice teachers.

The above studies underscore the importance of the school context being able to offer a climate of sustained professional nurturing of novices that allows for critical dialogues between more experienced teachers and novices. Inadequate professional support can lead to ineffective pedagogy, even among beginning teachers who were committed to the profession, as highlighted in a recent study of eight beginning teachers (Hudson et al., 2009). While the beginning teachers in this study were able to practise with an “ethics of care” and understood their legal responsibilities, they lacked in the more sophisticated aspects of teaching such as adapting the learning environment to the individual needs of their students, assessing student progress, relating to parents and wider school community; they were unsure of school policies. Although these beginning teachers were provided with one-off professional development opportunities outside of school, they saw more value in
being supported in-house by experienced colleagues. This study also highlighted the need for individualised mentoring programmes for beginning teachers that are tailored to incorporate an understanding of their existing knowledge and skills, and also given the evidence that they are disposed to be selective in their socialisation process.

The settling of beginning teachers into the realities of teaching depends on a number of contextual factors that are unique to each school (Grudnoff & Tuck, 2005; Lee, 1994), and support programmes for novices must not only address their belief systems but also provide a conducive work environment which allows collaboration and reciprocal feedback that acknowledges contributions to and from novice teachers (Rosenberg, Griffin, Kilgore, & Carpenter, 1997). It includes, among others, the quality of the professional and personal relationship between the novice and the tutor teacher. In the process of beginning teacher acculturation and induction, the tutor teacher, who orchestrates the “Advice and Guidance Programme”, plays a vital role in New Zealand that has been acclaimed and acknowledged by teacher educators across the world (Ball, Russell, & Smales, 2005; Clement, 2000; Wong, Britton, & Ganser, 2005). The time allocation for new teachers away from the classrooms, and the assigning of advice and support in the form of a tutor teacher, have been particularly singled out as being worthy of emulation. An Education Review Office (2003) evaluation of Year 2 beginning teachers in New Zealand also highlighted the importance of these support systems in schools that enabled beginning teachers to shape their pedagogical practices. The report established a strong correlation between the tutor teachers’ efficacy and the establishment of effective practice amongst beginning teachers. Scholars have reiterated that the purpose of the guidance and
mentoring should not be to maintain the status quo of existing practices; but instead for novice teachers to be provided opportunities to teach against the grain by challenging and critiquing existing practices (Cochran-Smith & Paris, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 2001). Given the tall order of supporting the idiosyncratic needs of beginning teachers within the expectations and ethos of their school cultures, professional support for those in the role of mentors is vital (Achinstein & Athaneses, 2005; Everston & Smithey, 2000). In a study involving a survey of 37 experienced mentor teachers and a case study of a single diad of mentor and a novice, the mentor being one of those surveyed, Achinstein and Athaneses (2005) identified the need for providing professional support for mentors as they need to “listen to teacher reflection and move that into a conversation that assists the teacher to look at a practice in a new way” (p. 849). In another study involving 46 mentor teachers, protégés (novice teachers) of 23 mentors who were trained on specifics of mentoring were compared with the protégés (novice teachers) of the remaining 23 mentor teachers who were experienced, but not included in the training workshop (Everston & Smithey, 2000). The workshop had a particular focus on a “limited set of practice known to help with classroom management and instructions” (Everston & Smithey, 2000, p. 303). While in terms of content this may seem limiting, the skill set acquired by the mentors who attended the workshop was that of providing precise feedback and offering specific strategies to novice teachers. These specific skills were noticed to a lesser degree among the non-control group of mentors in practice, though they were all “humanistic” and collegial in their role of mentoring.
Juxtaposing person and context

Few would dispute that teaching is a highly personal and complex activity. In one sense, teaching is personal because “each teacher’s practice is an expression of a personal and professional way of knowing that is shaped and informed by personal and professional background, experiences, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and goals” (Cole, 1990, p. 203). In another sense, teaching is complex because the domain of teacher knowledge is vast and its application is often contextual (Carlsen, 1999). Beginning teachers are individuals with their own biographies informed by early life experiences, including schooling and teacher education among others. When they step into schools, the process of acculturation becomes a complex intertwining of their personal biographies and realities of the classrooms. Some studies have attempted to capture this complex interface of professional growth of beginning teachers.

In a study by Flores (2001), 10 out of 14 elementary and secondary school beginning teachers identified “archetype” figures as one of their extrinsic motivators to become teachers. Their “hours of observations” had a strong influence on the type of teacher they wanted to be. Only two of the teachers referred to intrinsic motivation of a personal commitment and willingness to teach. In comparison, the impact of initial teacher education on their practice was reported to be minimal. The study, which was aimed at ascertaining the perceptions of beginning teachers about their school culture and its influence on their teaching practices, found that the teachers found the culture of their schools to be “individualistic” with no proper professional induction. The leadership in these schools were perceived to be ineffective with little impetus for beginning teachers to be involved in wider learning areas nor were they
supported by experienced teachers. The beginning teachers’ interpretations of their experiences of the school culture were influenced by their own “personal biographies, beliefs and expectations” (p. 144). Their perceptions of the schools’ culture were through their personal biographical lens. However, despite a strong influence of their personal backgrounds and characteristics, these beginning teachers perceived that it was the norms of their schools that shaped their professional behaviour, highlighting the important role of context in influencing their practices. This study also emphasised the need for effective leadership to establish a culture of collaboration which was seen as critical to the professional growth by these novice teachers.

The influence of a supportive school culture on beginning teachers’ perceptions of effectiveness was evident in an earlier study of 173 newly appointed teachers from the nine largest school districts in Connecticut (Chester & Beaudin, 1996). Using a pre and post test survey instrument and a rigorous statistical analysis, the study found that self-efficacy beliefs was mostly dependent upon three school practices – a) opportunities for collaboration; b) supervisor attention to classroom performance; and c) availability of resources. Particularly, feedback by supervisors was seen as an important aspect of increasing self-efficacy while the absence of feedback was construed as lack of validation of their teaching, leading to feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. The extent of professional reaffirmation needed was dependent on the age and prior experience of teachers. The study found that younger beginning teachers required more affirmations and reassurances to retain their confidence to teach.
The need for self-affirmation was also evident in a Belgian study of 14 teachers who were in their third to fifth year of teaching (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). Although this study does not exactly match the sample population for this thesis, the study was reviewed for its relevance to the nuances of beginning to teach and the influence of the professional context of teaching during the acculturation phase of beginning teachers. More importantly, the study asked the teachers to reflect back on their beginning years of teaching, which is relevant to this thesis. The themes that emerged through this qualitative study were similar in a number of ways with the reviewed study of four beginning teachers more than a decade earlier (Olson & Osborne, 1991). The beginning teachers expressed a sense of vulnerability as they came to terms with the exposed nature of teaching, while wanting to be visible enough to be acknowledged and affirmed by their peers. In the process of learning to teach, these 14 beginning teachers in primary Flemish schools also shifted from their idealistic notion of being perfect teachers to more realistic expectations, a shift achieved through collaboration and guidance from more experienced colleagues. Assurances and acceptance by their peer groups was of significant importance for teachers in both the studies. The Flemish study also highlighted the advantages the novices had in gaining employment in familiar schools, which provided them with an understanding of the school context and enabled a smoother transition into the role of teaching.

Taken together the findings from these studies highlight the important influences in the professional metamorphosis of beginning teachers as they start learning to teach in authentic contexts. These findings suggest that the professional growth of beginning teachers is often a period of trials and tribulations. The initial
period is one of coming to terms with managing their classes while effectively teaching the curriculum content bound by definitive timeframes. They tend to perceive initial teacher education to have minimal effect at a time when they are trying to resolve the discrepancies and mismatches between their idealistic notions of teaching and the stark realities of what is possible on a day-to-day basis within organisational constraints and expectations. The researchers of the studies reviewed strongly advocated for ITE to focus more on preparing teachers with more knowledge and understanding of the realities of schools as organisations. Much of it is currently achieved through field placements and practicum experiences in New Zealand and other countries. But what was also common among these studies is the notion that the process of acculturation is one of “fitting in” and learning the ropes of the way we do things here. As Rosenholtz (1989) and her co-researchers observed, schools with collaborative practices and shared goals appeared to be helping beginning teachers to “ground their perspectives in the schools’ tradition of challenge and change” (p. 38). Beginning teachers who struck school cultures where the leadership nurtured a learning community tended to build a confident image of self as a teacher. Their biographies initially exerted a stronger influence on their professional roles (Munro, 1987), whereby their own schooling experiences had a stronger influence than the effects of teacher education. Nevertheless they reconceptualised their roles and responsibilities as a result of the contextual influences and the existing cultures of pedagogical practices. This “culture of teaching” consisting of “beliefs, values, habits and assumed ways of doing things among communities of teachers” formed a framework of their occupational learning (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 165). What was apparent in these studies was that while beginning teachers are not exclusively the product of their socialisation process,
often they experienced a shift in their attitudes to adjust to the existing teaching practices in their schools (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005).

The interdependency of these conceptual categories highlights the complex interactions that occur on a daily basis in the lives of beginning teachers and the process of them learning to teach. Their teaching sits at the cross-section of their biographies that include their beliefs and attitudes and the contextual influences and expectations. As beginning teachers they are in classrooms that are growing rapidly in terms of student diversity. The following section will review some of the ways in which we define and understand the phenomena of diversity and studies on teacher beliefs and attitudes towards student diversity. It will include literature beyond the realm of empirical research.

**The construct of diversity**

The changing landscape of our classrooms is reflected in the population forecast that by the middle of this century more than half of the student population in Aotearoa New Zealand will be of Pasifika and Māori origins. An increasing number of international students are also contributing to the cultural diversity of classrooms (Ho, Holmes, & Cooper, 2004). While the terminology is used widely, diversity is a phenomenon that is both complex and ambiguous. It lacks a precise definition in the literature, which leaves it open to subjective interpretations. The extant literature uses the term “multicultural education” and “education for culturally and linguistically different children” interchangeably to denote diversity. These terminologies however, underscore the importance of pedagogy reaching out to all children.
Sheets (2005) unpacks diversity by assigning the phenomenon a dual perspective which consists of predetermined and reversible characteristics. “Diversity”, she defines, “refers to dissimilarities in traits, qualities, characteristics, beliefs, values, and mannerisms present in self and others”. It is displayed through (a) predetermined factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, national origin, and sexual orientation; and (b) changeable features, such as “citizenship, worldviews, language, schooling, religious beliefs, marital, parental, and socioeconomic status, and work experience” (p. 14). One can dispute whether some of the components of (a) and (b) have universal acceptance. This ambiguous concept, therefore, is used by some educators to highlight and critique the dominant culture and the marginalisation of silent voices while some others consider diversity as a progressive step in education for social justice (Bonal & Rambla, 1999). However portrayed, and ambiguous or complex as it may seem, current and future teachers cannot ignore the phenomenon and need to be aware of and responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity in their pedagogy (Alton-Lee, 2003; Banks, 2008; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2008; Fraser, 2008; Grant & Sleeter, 2009; McFarlane, 2004; Tiedt & Tiedt, 2005). There are increasing calls for schools to provide an environment in which the cultural identity of students is valued and respected (Gay, 2002; McFarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh, & Bateman, 2007; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). Equally, ethnic, social class and disability groups are becoming increasingly vociferous and resisting marginalisation (Riehl, 2000). We are in the midst of a situation where no one even remotely connected with education can afford to ignore, bypass or subvert the phenomenon of diversity. It is the heterogeneous mix of students that greet beginning teachers as they step into schools that have their own distinct traditions and practices (Goodlad, 1984).
Beliefs and attitudes

Attitudes and beliefs are quintessential parts of human nature, helping human beings understand the world in relation to themselves (Pajares, 1992). Schooling, by virtue of its function of educating the young, has a moral obligation to society, and teachers in particular are required to display an “ethic of care” (Little, 1992). Not surprisingly, recent studies indicate that teachers have a significant role in improving student achievement (Alton-Lee, 2003). Given the tall order of the “collective and civic responsibility” of educating the young (Little, 1992, p. 158), the personal values and beliefs that drive individuals to opt into this mammoth role are worth exploring, since belief systems are entrenched deeply and determine the assumptions and understandings held by teachers. Often, teachers do not enter the profession with great enthusiasm towards the diversity that students can bring (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2003). Cushner et al. (2003) observe that beginning teachers’ predispositions towards diversity are “at best interesting” and at worst seen as a deficit (p. 78). Since lack of awareness about diversity can result in hesitation and acceptance of differences, initial teacher education programmes have been increasingly placing greater emphasis on gauging the beliefs and attitudes of pre-service teachers towards diversity (Larke, 1990; Milner, Flowers, Moore, Moore, & Flowers, 2003; Paine, 1990; Ross & Smith, 1992), and incorporating learning situations in initial teacher education programmes that heightens their awareness of diversity (Cook & Cleave, 2000; Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, & Crawford, 2005; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006).
**Student teachers’ beliefs and attitudes**

The expanding nature of diversity in classrooms globally has also prompted eminent scholars in the field of education to prepare teachers for being pedagogically responsive to diversity in the classrooms (Banks, 2004; Bishop et al., 2008; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Gay, 2002; Grant & Secada, 1990; Grant & Sleeter, 2009; Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Sleeter, 2008). Those who undertake teaching as a profession require opportunities to understand racism, sexism and other forms of oppression and be given opportunities to reflect upon their own biases and values in an unthreatening environment if they are to become more accepting of diversity in the classrooms (Ahlquist, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 2009).

Through questionnaires and interviews of 233 student teachers across five sites on their orientation to diversity, Paine (1990) identified four major perspectives in student teachers’ responses. In this seminal study some student teachers perceived diversity as *individual difference*, which was located in biological and psychological explanations. A second orientation was that diversity was viewed as a *categorical difference* characterised by repeating patterns such as social class, race and gender. The third perspective was that of *contextual difference*, where patterns mentioned in the categorical difference were seen to be created, maintained or changed as a result of interactions and thus socially constructed. Finally, there was a *pedagogical perspective* where there was an implicit understanding that there are pedagogical implications for these socially constructed differences. The majority of the teacher trainees were mainly oriented towards *individual* and *categorical* differences. While they tended to talk about fairness and equity as part of individual differences, when they had to discuss operationalising these individual differences in the classroom
there was a mismatch between their rhetoric and possible actions. They proposed to apply differential standards to the specific differences students might bring with them.

Ross and Smith (1992) demonstrated that pre-service courses could influence student teachers to move beyond the individualistic notion of diversity. They used Paine’s (1990) categorisation framework with a sample of six student teachers and found that they moved from a more individualistic notion of diversity among children to accepting that there were some contextual influences. These students were engaged in a teacher education programme that had a strong emphasis on culture in its theoretical aspect with diverse field placement experiences. Through this range of different experiences, the student teachers were able to identify the contextual influence on students, thereby developing a broader understanding of diversity even as early as the second semester of their studies. At the beginning of the course they believed that every individual (student) was responsible for their success or failure, but at the end of the year they had identified cultural background, school curriculum and teachers’ practices as having a significant impact on the learning of students. Ross and Smith (1992) highlight the role of the curriculum and teacher in “creating and maintaining the low achievement of diverse learners” (p. 101).

In a study of 14 intern teachers, Milner (2005) found similarities to Paine’s (1990) study undertaken nearly 15 years ago. He found that the teachers in his study perceived diversity as a “social phenomenon” (Milner, 2005, p. 781) but were not able to see it from a pedagogical perspective. They did not readily link diversity with subject matter knowledge and therefore did not link it to pedagogical approaches that
would blend the subject matter with the extent of diversity in the classrooms, which
has made some scholars underscore the minimal effect of teacher education
programmes on the beliefs and attitudes of student teachers (McDiarmid, 1990;
Pajares, 1992; Rust, 1999). However, Grant and Sleeter (2009) strongly argue that
pre-service teachers must acquire a strong knowledge base about students who are
different from them in culture, gender, social class, impairments and first language,
along with having experience of living with and understanding cultural communities
other than their own to teach with “excellence and equity” (p. 62). In fact, there is an
increasing emphasis on teacher candidates to examine their perceptions and beliefs
about themselves and other groups, to face the growing multiculturalness of

In a study, 51 elementary pre-service teachers from middle to upper socio-
economic backgrounds, who had completed three years of undergraduate courses and
an add-on course in multicultural education, were administered an inventory to
ascertain their cultural awareness (Larke, 1990). The results showed that these
teachers were ambivalent and uncomfortable in working with children from different
cultures and those who spoke different languages. This study highlighted the
ineffectiveness of stand-alone courses in multicultural education and recommended a
more integrated approach in pre-service education, followed by selective field
placements that would expose student teachers to a rich mixture of diversity of
culture. A replication of this study with 99 student teachers showed an increased
level of sensitivity and positive attitude towards cultural diversity among the student
teachers. However, they continued to be ambivalent in terms of providing learning
environments and learning strategies that would be responsive to the cultural needs
of students (Milner et al., 2003; Milner, 2005). Other researchers also argue that having multicultural courses as a stand-alone option in pre-service teacher education is insufficient to prepare teachers for being responsive to those unlike themselves (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005; Pohan, 1996; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006); rather, they need to be infused into all aspects of teacher education programmes instead of being add-ons (Zeichner, 2003; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996).

Exposure to community-based learning opportunities during initial teacher education has also been strongly advocated to bring about transformative changes and reformulate beliefs and attitudes towards diversity in beginning teachers (Carrington & Saggers, 2008; Noordhoff & Kleinfield, 1993). Lenski et al. (2005) studied the effectiveness of a teacher training programme in which students in their final year of training were asked to undertake ethnographic study of the community. Thirty-four student teachers were involved in the study over a seven month period in which they were “asked to make ethnographic observations in the community to observe and learn from cultural groups represented in the district’s communities” (p. 89). The purpose was to provide an in-depth understanding of the extent of diversity in their community and to obtain an understanding of “ways in which people shared traditions, values, and activities as cultural artefacts” (p. 89). The approach was to move away from the traditional teacher education curriculum, which Lenski et al. (2005) observed as being geared towards the dominant culture. The ethnographic approach allowed the student teachers to examine their assumptions and biases towards people and practices through their own self-enquiry over the seven month period. Although the student teachers initially resisted being “ethnographers”, they found that the observational techniques learnt during the ethnographic inquiry phase
assisted them in their classrooms. They were more adept in observing the different needs of their students, which enabled them to provide responsive learning experiences. While exposure to communities different to themselves and cross-cultural experiences may not directly transform to excellency in teaching diverse learners, it provides the experiential learning and contextual knowledge to complement theoretical frameworks and critical dialogues that delve into the depths of deep-seated beliefs in teacher preparation (Banks et al., 2005; Gay, 2002; Sleeter, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Similarly, sustained exposure to diversity in ITE programmes has been successful in developing a deeper understanding of the phenomena. Having peers who were disabled allowed the ignorance and prejudices to be dispelled and increased their acceptance and accommodation of such “others” (Carrington & Brownlee, 2001; Grant & Secada, 1990; Wishart & Manning, 1996).

A study that evaluated the attitudes of 266 student teachers towards indigenous population in Australia (Bornholt, 2002) identified lack of exposure as a prime cause of uneasiness amongst beginning teachers. The beginning teachers in the study lacked the knowledge about indigenous people. They recognised the need for taking personal responsibility to overcome their attitudes towards indigenous populations and also urged for further debate on the need to bring about a wider social change.

To be effective teachers of culturally diverse classrooms, teachers should have an in-depth knowledge of cultural particularities to be responsive to them (Gay, 2002; McFarlane, 2004). A study that examined the effects of “treatment” on the beliefs and attitudes of a cohort of graduating students of an ITE programme found that among the various opportunities provided during their course – autobiographical narratives which allowed for self-examination of their beliefs, prior experiences
about diversity, structured debriefing and immersion experiences in urban schools, it was their practicum experiences that had a profound and long lasting impact on their pedagogical practices (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000). Though “lectures, museum visits, attendance at various religious sites of worship other than their own, reading of history and literature filled many of the action plans it was the internship in the urban schools that had the greatest impact on their knowledge and attitudes [towards diversity]” (p. 36); the students had gained new insights “and a new knowledge about themselves and others” (p. 37). The practicum had created a dissonance between their prior beliefs and the knowledge that they were acquiring in the classrooms. Following two of the graduates into their teaching and examining the residual effect three years later, the researchers found that for one of them, all their learnings from the initial teacher education and urban school practicum experiences were replaced with more cynicism and abdication of responsibility for being responsive to diversity. The other novice teacher, in contrast, had become stauncher in her stance towards equity and social justice that she had started cultivating during her ITE (Banks, 2002; Sleeter, 2008; Villegas, 2007). This study again demonstrated that beginning teachers’ dispositions and attitudes to student diversity were not solely shaped by their ITE but were more likely to be a result of a combination of influences that included their prior life experiences, some key aspects of their ITE particularly their practicum placements, and the realities of day-to-day teaching.

**Teacher educators and diversity**

Preparing teachers for diverse classrooms has also resulted in some scrutinisation of teacher educators (Castañeda, 2004; Milner; 2005). Trent, Kea, and Oh (2008), following a comprehensive literature review of pre-service education
spanning a decade, 1997-2006, identified that the lack of teacher educators’ transformation over time could have possible implications for course construction, and also how their gender, culture and race affected student teachers’ willingness to engage in more open and honest discourse about diversity and equity issues. In a study of faculty members’ understanding of the concept of diversity, Castañeda (2004) found that all 10 of them described diversity in terms of “representation of social group memberships within their class” (p. 99), similar to the social patterns identified by student teachers in the study by Paine (1990). Among the social groups, race and ethnicity were the most commonly discussed aspect of diversity. Some also included gender and sexual orientation and class; a few recognised age. What was conspicuous by its absence was that while staff talked about learning styles as an aspect of diversity, they rarely mentioned learning styles to accommodate disabilities. Castañeda (2004) argues that aspects of social diversity such as race, ethnicity and gender are often in the forefront via media and socialist movements, while issues of “class, sexual orientation, size, language, and ability, have not entered popular discourse” (p. 101), which could influence teacher educators too.

To have an impact on student teachers, teacher educators themselves need to possess the necessary skills and attitudes to deliver an infused training programme (O’Neill et al., 2009) that would prepare them to meet the challenge of being responsive to increasing diversity in classrooms. One such teacher education programme was implemented in Syracuse University nearly two decades ago (Meyer, Mager, Yarger-Kane, Sarno, & Hext-Contreras, 1997), which has the notion of multicultural education embedded in its values, beliefs and policies and reflected in day-to-day practices (Zeichner et al., 1998). Like-minded academics and teacher
educators within Syracuse University who believed in preparing teachers to teach all learners designed a multicultural course that included all aspects of diversity, including those with special needs. These scholars did not stop at ideological conversations of pedagogy for diversity but decided to “walk the talk” (Meyer et al., 2007, p. 19). The redesigned teacher education programme replaced five separate programmes with one unitary Inclusive Programme, thus signalling that becoming a teacher was predicated upon being a teacher for all children. Weinstein (1989) summarised the role of teachers and teacher educators by saying that teaching is more than “loving kids” and that teacher educators should not only be aware of students’ beliefs about teaching but also provide the necessary cognitive and intellectual understanding to build their ability to teach.

**Beginning teachers and diversity**

Epistemological understanding of practices is influenced by interpretations of situational experiences (Bassey, 1999). Although teacher education programmes are trying to equip student teachers with an awareness of multicultural education and prepare them for diversity in the classrooms, beginning teachers may be constrained in their practices by the norms and routines of their institutions (Riehl, 2000). As Alexander (2000) observes, pedagogy, while encompassing one’s beliefs and theories of teaching, links the “apparently self-contained act of teaching with culture, structure and mechanisms of social control” (p. 540). In examining the need to cater to the growing cultural diversity in New Zealand classes, Ho et al. (2004) point out that most of our cultural awareness is at a subliminal level (Ford, 2004). It is this unconscious aspect of culture that forms one’s internal frame of reference and the lens through which other cultures are viewed. In addition, it is also teachers’ beliefs,
attitudes and knowledge frameworks that inform the ways in which they respond to diversity (Bonal & Rambla, 1999; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998).

Increasingly teachers are required to imbibe culturally relevant and meaningful pedagogy (Banks, 2002; Bishop et al., 2003; McFarlane et al., 2007; Nieto, 2000), which has prompted empirical studies of beginning teachers in recent years to focus on the impact of teacher education in preparing them to be responsive to diversity in their classrooms (Averill et al., 2009; Bergeron, 2008; Cook & Cleaf, 2000; Kane & Russell, 2003; Renwick & Vize, 1993). Seventy nine elementary school beginning teachers over a 3-year period from schools in urban Comer⁹, urban non-Comer, suburban and rural areas were surveyed to gather the impact of their preparedness to teach in settings which had diverse racial, ethnic and socioeconomic families (Cook & Cleaf, 2000). The study found that teachers from all four settings were comfortable in relating and responding to the extent of diversity in their classrooms. Beginning teachers attributed their placements in urban schools during their ITE to be the critical factor in preparing their readiness to be responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity as they began teaching. As this study was a questionnaire survey, it was limited in acquiring additional qualitative comments that could have contributed to understanding the complexities of each of the four contexts of the study.

In a case study of a beginning teacher, Bergeron (2008) identifies the “cultural disequilibrium” that is experienced by novices despite being well prepared by their ITE programme. Cultural disequilibrium, she explains, is “not only the

⁹ Comer School Development Programme operates in more than 250 schools in nine states in the USA.
cultural mismatch that can occur between teachers and their students but also the
sense of imbalance or confusion that can result when an individual attempts to
grapple with situations or experiences for which he or she is not fully prepared” (p. 5). In a case study which was aimed at finding out the cultural responsiveness of a
beginning teacher, the researcher noted that setting the classroom as a learning
community with consistent and predictable routines, and the provision of linguistic
peer support where students could switch between Spanish (predominant mother
tongue of students in the class) and English, enabled the novice to maximise the
learning opportunities of students with minimum behaviour disruptions which
generally is a major source of difficulty for novices (Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko,
2006; Veenman, 1984). In further analysing the reasons why the novice was able to
be as responsive as she was, Bergeron identified four components that were a
combination of personal and contextual factors. While the contextual factors
provided her with an ethos that allowed innovation and a multilayered support
system and professional development, she was personally willing and motivated to
take risks in her pedagogy. She was also able to analyse, reflect on the various
aspects of expert knowledge and assistance, and adapt them to make pedagogical
decisions based on her knowledge of her students. She was able to understand the
diversity that existed among her students and their wide range of life experiences
(Banks, 1996; Delpit, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In addition, this beginning
teacher was well supported by the principal whose constructivist philosophy was
congruent with that of her own, which enabled her to take risks and be innovative
with curriculum instructions (Goddard & Foster, 2001; Kelchtermans & Ballet,
2002). Principals who have experience with and exposure to disabilities were more
accepting of diversity and differences, and their attitudes, beliefs and orientation
towards heterogenous classrooms set the ethos of schools that promote an effective learning environment for all students (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Praisner, 2003).

In contrast, a recent study in New Zealand of beginning teachers’ efforts to introduce culturally responsive pedagogy in mathematics in their schools were found to be less successful (Averill et al., 2009). Three beginning teachers were followed from their pre-service programme to the end of their first year of teaching. Two of them were women teachers who taught in high decile schools while the third was a male beginning teacher who was employed in a Māori immersion low decile school. The aim of the study was to explore the “implications of the Treaty of Waitangi and te reo me ōna tikanga10 on their mathematics pedagogy in terms of their initial expectations in their first year, and hopes for the second year; and the supports, challenges and dilemmas they encountered to implement their Treaty obligation within their mathematics programme” (Averill et al., 2009, pp. 174-175). The three teachers had expected their schools to be actively promoting some Treaty principles and the children to have some prior understanding of Māori language and practices. However, at the end of their first year of teaching they felt that the prevailing school culture towards mathematics teaching did not allow them to practice in the culturally responsive ways that they were exposed to as student teachers. They felt stifled by the overall time constraints that led to insufficient planning time together with uncertainty among staff around bicultural issues (Averill et al., 2009). This study also highlights the need for beginning teachers to have an understanding of schools’ cultures (organisational literacy) that was highlighted in the literature on student teachers. As Cochran-Smith (1997) argues, in order to teach the increasing cultural

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10 Māori language and practices.
diversity in schools, ongoing professional learning of all teachers should explore, challenge and expand their existing knowledge and interpretive frameworks to be responsive to the learning needs of the increasing cultural diversity in schools.

These varying contextual experiences also highlight the fact that beginning teaching is more than a mere extension of ITE (Mandel, 2006). While a number of studies reviewed stress the importance of practicum, it is their “own” classrooms that brings home the reality and responsibility of becoming a teacher (Kane & Russell, 2003). A study of seven secondary beginning teachers, four from New Zealand and three from Canada, showed that these teachers, while identifying practicum as the most important part of their IT training, could retrospectively see it as not being an authentic experience. It was having their own classes and developing personal relationships with students “without competition from experienced teachers” (Kane & Russell, 2003, p. 12) that were found to be fundamental in these teachers’ professional growth.

One of the major longitudinal studies on teacher preparedness that was undertaken in New Zealand more than a decade ago tracked student teachers from entry to training into their first year of teaching (Renwick & Vize, 1993). The experiences of 100 beginning teachers from three different training institutions on their preparedness to teach ranged from having grown beyond their own expectations: “I’ve become more confident in what I’m doing – I’ve probably got more faith in myself, what I’m doing now than what I did have – that’s my biggest kind of development personally”, to lowering their ideals to match ground realities in the developmental phase of teaching: “I’ve become more realistic in the sense that I’ve had to accommodate my ideal to an uncomfortable reality” (Renwick & Vize,
1993, p. 142). The shifts in the attitudes of beginning teachers were dependent on a number of variables such as personal characteristics, quality of teacher training, subject matter preferences, mentoring support and situational characteristics of the workplace (Renwick, 2001; Renwick & Vize, 1993; Veenman, 1984). They reported that their training courses were not sufficiently practical and fell short of equipping them with the necessary repertoire of classroom management and teaching skills. They found the job more time consuming and complex than they had envisaged. “I know they try at teachers’ college but you don’t really know until you’re in the thick of it, how much work teachers actually do” (Renwick & Vize, 1993, p. 51). Beginning teachers who reported that they were in supportive schools identified their schools as having excellent and open communication amongst fellow staff members, a relaxed and lively school which had student learning as a top priority, excellent leadership, consultative management, opportunities for personal and professional growth, and positive relationships with students.

The empirical studies reviewed as part of this chapter were undertaken for different purposes, ranging from informing ITE through to teacher socialisation to teacher retention. The qualitative studies captured the lived experiences of the beginning teachers. The interpretive approach in the studies has allowed the voices of the beginning teachers to be heard providing “thick descriptions” of the phenomenon of acculturation. While generalisations are not always possible for reasons of sample size and contextual variances, nevertheless these studies have identified the inevitable and substantial influence of schools’ ethos on the beginning teachers’ ways of thinking and doing. In fact a common element that links all these studies is the theme of beginning teachers wanting to learn to teach in ways that are
idiosyncratic to their schools. In other words, at the beginning, novice teachers were eager to fit in and be accepted while being initiated into the practices of their schools (Lieberman & Miller, 1990).

**Rationale for the proposed study**

Reviewing literature spanning more than two decades, Hollins and Guzman (2005) observed that: many entered pre-service teacher education with a tentative and negative attitude towards those who were different from themselves; student teachers from non-white populations found themselves being alienated and undervalued; and the intent to reduce prejudice did not seem to have a long term effect, although those who had their placements in urban schools had a more in-depth understanding of cultural differences. Although studies spanning more than a quarter century have tended to focus on the preparation of teachers and impact of teacher education on practice, this review identified gaps in the research for knowledge of how teachers who work with diverse students acquire the skills, dispositions and knowledge to be effective. The range of research in New Zealand on beginning teachers mirrors this gap identified in the international literature. The review of literature for this study also identified a dearth of information that has been systematically gathered to find out how the notion of diversity is perceived by beginning teachers both as a construct and the influences that shape their perceptions of diversity in day-to-day practices.

Sleeter (2003) argued that longitudinal research that followed students from pre-service teacher education to the classroom was needed to study the impact of teacher education programmes in preparing teachers to be responsive to the growing
student diversity in classrooms. The recent study undertaken in New Zealand, which examined pre-service teachers’ perceptions of incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy in mathematics, into their first year of teaching (Averill et al., 2009) highlighted the contextual constraints that influenced the novice teachers from embedding culturally responsive pedagogical practices. Such longitudinal research is sporadic and currently there is insufficient research that examines in-depth, the day-to-day lived experience of beginning teachers over a period of time (Patrick, 2003).

As Vonk (1995) observed, there are three key dimensions in the process of novices learning to teach – personal, professional and ecological dimensions; the latter includes among others “adaptation to a certain school culture” (p. 1). To date no research has been undertaken in primary schools in New Zealand to explore the extent of the influence of school culture on beginning teachers’ affective domain of values, beliefs and attitudes (Pajares, 1992; Raths, 2001), with a focus on student diversity.

Increasing diversity has also seen scholars advocating for the recognition of the multidimensional aspect of diversity (Alton-Lee, 2003; Grant & Sleeter, 2009; Meyer, Bevan-Brown, Park, & Savage, 2009; Meyer et al., 2007). Pedagogical strategies, they argue, should include the differences students bring, such as their racial identity, ethnicity, religion, social class, abilities, as well as other group identities. While there is great emphasis on initial teacher education to explore the beliefs and attitudes of student teachers, studies that explore the impact of the school context on novices’ dispositions and attitudes towards diversity is still in its infancy. If one were to accept the “wash out” effect in the initial period of teaching, then examining the shaping of novices’ beliefs and orientation in the context of their
school becomes imperative. Studies on mentoring and induction practices mostly tend to focus on where beginning teachers need to move to in terms of their day-to-day practices, rather than providing opportunities for examining their understandings of diversity. Hall and Bishop (2001) recommend alternative pedagogical approaches in classroom programmes, with examples and topics that are relevant to all the students, and advocate that curriculum must be considered from a variety of perspectives. To do so, it is necessary to ascertain the stance of beginning teachers towards diversity in order to provide the necessary professional support. Studies of beginning teachers in New Zealand to date have also not explicitly focused on beginning teachers’ understandings of the multidimensional nature of student diversity, and the influence of the schools in shaping their understanding and the implication it can have on beginning teachers’ pedagogical practices. To avoid “problematic beliefs to be expected and accepted” (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007, p. 229) it is important that there is a need to understand beginning teachers’ perceptions of the complex phenomena of diversity.

The first two years of becoming a teacher involves a period of aggressive professional learning that needs to include and stretch beginning teachers’ pedagogy to new dimensions. With classrooms becoming increasingly diverse, a closer examination of beginning teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and pedagogical practices could make a contribution to the limited literature in the area. This study will investigate the perceptions of beginning teachers, as they begin their teaching careers, towards student diversity. Given the substantial evidence in the literature of the influence of context on those beginning to teach, it will aim to examine the lived experiences of beginning primary school teachers in their learning path on how and what they learn.
from their interpretations of their day-to-day interactions, and how these influence and shape their dispositions and orientations towards student diversity, since school culture is characterised by the ways in which “values, beliefs, prejudices and behaviour are played out” (Day, 1999, p. 78).
Chapter Three:

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the premises of enquiry and the overall research objective. The key research questions are stated to highlight the “fit for purpose methodology” undertaken in the study. The chapter describes the qualitative approach to the research and the various tools used to gather data throughout the study. The theoretical framework of the analysis is outlined, followed by the profiles of the seven beginning teachers.

Nature of enquiry

This ethnographic study explores beginning teachers’ initial perceptions of their dispositions and orientations to student diversity, and examines whether there are perceived changes to them over a period of time as a result of being influenced by their schools’ culture. A study of seven beginning teachers was undertaken entailing multiple data sources across their first one to two years of teaching in primary schools. The data were analysed using a grounded theory approach. Beginning teachers’ involvement in the study varied from six to 18 months.

Ethnography is a form of social research that includes the following features:

- A strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them;
- A tendency to work primarily with “unstructured” data, that is, data that have not been coded at the point of data collection under any predetermined analytic categories;
- Investigation of a small number of cases in-depth;
- Analyses of data that involve explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations. (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 248)

**Research approach**

This study is a qualitative subjectivist exploration (Glesne, 1999) of beginning teachers’ lived experiences and perceptions. It does not propose to make any value judgements or bring about any changes to attitudes and practices (Bassey, 1999). The grounded theory approach to this study offers a way of constructing the social realities (Charmaz, 1990) of the seven beginning teachers. Interviews, observations and document analysis were the primary sources of data collection. Specific approaches to data analysis contributed to the richness of understanding a subjective and dynamic process (Yin, 2003).

**Research objective**

The idea for the study has its roots in my own comprehensive teaching background both in New Zealand and overseas. The number of conversations and anecdotal comments on “how we do things here” over the years formed the basis of my research objective. As Charmaz (2005) observes, “the questions we ask of the empirical world frame what we know of it” (p. 509).
The research question of “Do schools’ cultures, practices and policies influence beginning teachers’ values, beliefs, attitudes and practices in relation to student diversity?” has been explored through asking:

1. *What were the initial dispositions and orientations of beginning teachers towards student diversity?*

2. *How did schools’ ethos shape the beginning teachers’ initial dispositions and orientations to diversity and their pedagogical practices?*

**Methodology**

This study is a qualitative subjectivist exploration (Glesne, 1999) of beginning teachers’ lived experiences and perceptions. As an ethnographic study based on grounded theory, it focuses on explaining the process of acculturation as perceived by the beginning teachers in relation to student diversity. It does not propose to make any value judgements or bring about any changes to attitudes and practices (Bassey, 1999).

**Constructivist paradigm**

The epistemological stance of this study is located within a constructivist paradigm since the study focuses on the meaning making activity of individuals (Crotty, 1998), in this case, beginning teachers. A paradigm is a set of beliefs that represents a world view that defines for its believer, the nature of the world and the range of possible relationships to that “world” in its entirety (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In a constructivist paradigm, people’s world views are constructed through social interactions – in other words, social reality does not exist without human interactions (Charmaz, 2000). The grounded theory approach to this study offers a way of
constructing the social realities (Charmaz, 1990) of the seven beginning teachers. This research is based on the premises that the actions and interactions of the beginning teachers will be informed by their culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world, and their views of teaching and learning will be influenced by the nature of experiences within the schools (Bassey, 1999; Crotty, 1998).

**Grounded theory**

The term “grounded theory” includes both a method of inquiry and the product of enquiry (Charmaz, 2005). As a “process theory – it explains an educational process of events, activities, actions and interactions that occur over time” (Creswell, 2008, p. 432). Grounded theory provided the theoretical framework to analyse data (Charmaz, 1990, 2000, 2005, 2006; Creswell, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a, 1998b). My approach to the study and the process of analysing data was most influenced by Charmaz (1990, 2000, 2005, 2006). The study explored perceptions and processes that are dynamic and subjective, making the explanations provided more of an “interpretive portrayal of the studied world rather than the exact portrait” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10).

The use of grounded theory for this study was not to produce voluminous description or clever verification but to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour that is relevant for those involved (Glaser, 1978). The research is grounded in the experiences of beginning teachers, “whose relevance” (Glaser, 1998) has driven the focus of this study. The study does not attempt to “force fit” concepts/categories and has used emerging categories from the data collected. Nevertheless, the process of categorising and conceptualising has been an interactive
and interpretive process between the researcher and the data. Charmaz (2006) highlights this process in grounded theory by stating that grounded theory is constructed through the “researcher’s past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices and that neither data nor theory is discovered” (p. 10).

**Sampling**

Theoretical sampling in grounded theory refers to the researcher choosing forms of data collection that will yield text and images useful in generating a theory; the sampling is purposeful and focused on the generation of a theory (Creswell, 2008). The initial decision in theoretical sampling is based on a general sociological perspective about a substantive area within a population, rather than a preconceived hypothesis or problem (Glaser, 1978). Swanson (1986) elaborates on theoretical sampling by stating that it is based on the need to collect more data to examine categories and their relationships and to ensure that there is representativeness in the categories. To minimise the extent of confusion of sampling terminologies, Coyne (1997) suggests that theoretical sampling could be more accurately defined as “analysis driven purposeful sampling or analysis governed purposeful sampling” (p. 629). The rationale for actively seeking sampling is to provide the best possible information for developing a theory in a substantive topic area and the nature of this study required purposive sampling (Locke, 2001; Patton, 2002). Charmaz (2006) further observes that sampling to address initial research questions in grounded theory differs from actual theoretical sampling – the former is only the starting place while the latter directs “where you go” (p. 10).
In this study, while the sampling was purposive, the method of data gathering was iterative and informed by analysis of earlier data. The analysis of data gathered from the initial interview in the pilot study assisted in refining the probes in the following interviews with participants. Observations and learnings from the data collection process in 2007 further informed and refined the questions for the study of two more beginning teachers and their contexts, in 2008.

**Participants and research sites**

All seven beginning teachers in the study were employed in primary schools. My supervisors contacted key staff from the college of education at a New Zealand university to assist with the initial identification of schools where beginning teachers were employed. To maintain the “reliability” of the methodology, the research commenced with the study of one beginning teacher in Term 3\(^\text{11}\), 2006. The mid-year start of the study also coincided with the completion of the graduate teacher training programme\(^\text{12}\) which meant that some graduates were employed by schools in the middle of the school year.

Four more beginning teachers were added to the study early in Term One of 2007. They had graduated from their teacher education programme some time during the preceding 12 months. Two of these teachers withdrew in the middle of the year. One obtained a permanent teaching position in another school, and the new school opted not to take part in the study. The second beginning teacher withdrew for personal reasons. Both consented to the use of data gathered up to the point they

\(^{11}\) The period from July to September in an academic year in New Zealand.

\(^{12}\) This is a one year teacher training programme for candidates who have an approved graduate degree.
withdrew and one of them also completed an end of year interview through email. Two more beginning teachers were included in 2008. They were involved in the study for the entire 12 months of their first year of teaching. Table 1 shows the number of teachers and their period of participation in the study.

Table 1: Timeline of beginning teachers’ involvement in the study

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The following protocols were used to identify prospective schools and beginning teachers:

- A letter of invitation was sent along with the research overview by my research supervisors to a total of 12 principals of primary schools in a particular geographical region who had employed beginning teachers, seeking their willingness to participate in the study.
- Six principals expressed their interest to participate.

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13 See Appendix A3.
The researcher contacted these principals to further explain the nature of the study. The principals consulted with their tutor teachers prior to agreeing to participate in the study.

Once the senior management agreed to be part of the study, the beginning teachers identified by the school were each sent a letter seeking their participation in the study. Written informed consents were obtained from the principals, beginning teachers, tutor teachers and also staff who were part of the beginning teachers’ syndicate.

Parents of students in the beginning teachers’ classrooms were also sent letters through the schools informing them of the study. Two schools decided to send the information through their weekly newsletters.

**Qualitative analysis**

This qualitative research is an empirical inquiry that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2008, p. 18). To identify “local meanings” (Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007), and strengthen explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994), multiple data sources were used to gather a range of perspectives on how the process of acculturation of seven beginning teachers occurred; how they perceived their period of “learning to teach”; and the various practices in the schools that reflected the ways we do things here in relation to student diversity. Specific approaches to analysis which involved a thematic analysis

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14 All information and informed consent forms are attached as Appendices. Appendices A1-A13 refer to 2006-2007; Appendices B1-B13 refer to 2008.
of the data gathered through multiple sources contributed to the richness of understanding a subjective and dynamic process (Yin, 2003). The study has attempted to capture the subtleties and complexities involved in the beginning teachers’ understanding of and learning about existing school cultures and practices around student diversity.

Interviews, observations and document analysis were the primary sources of data and are described in detail in separate sections later in this chapter. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. All participants were provided with their interview transcripts to check for accuracy in order to maintain trustworthiness throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As this qualitative study aims to describe and explain the reality as experienced by those living it, there is no single reality that can be used as a benchmark. The consistency of the study was addressed by taking a rigorous approach and by making available the process of robust data collection, analyses, and how the findings were derived (Merriam, 1998).

**Ethical considerations**

At the foremost of ethical consideration is the fundamental aspect of causing no harm to the participants (Berg, 2004). Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) describe a set of ethical rules for school-based research which informed the ethical stance for the study. They are:

- **Professional integrity:** This includes a viable research proposal, clear explanation of the aims, objectives and methods of the research to all participants and the maintenance of anonymity.
- **Interests of the subjects**: Involves a clear explanation of how confidentiality will be maintained and allows the participants the right to refuse to take part in the research.

- **Responsibility of the researcher**: Ensures participants are informed about the end use of the research report. (p. 52)

The research proposal was approved by the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of Wellington in June, 2006. All prospective participants were sent initial letters, also approved by the Ethics Committee as part of the research proposal, seeking permission for participation. The letters, apart from seeking informed consent, clearly outlined the purpose of the research and the methodology to be used\(^{15}\).

**Informed consent**

It is important that all research participants are provided with full and open information about what is involved in the research and the nature of their involvement (Clark, 1997). Written informed consents were obtained from the beginning teachers, tutor teachers and the syndicate team staff\(^{16}\). Parents of children in the beginning teachers’ classrooms were also sent letters explaining the nature of the study for their information. They were asked to inform the researcher if they did not agree with the protocols of classroom observations\(^{17}\). The beginning teachers were not pressured or coerced (Clark, 1997), and had the opportunity to withdraw

\(^{15}\) See Appendices A1, A3, A4, A6 & A7.

\(^{16}\) See Appendices A2, A5, A6 & A8.

\(^{17}\) See Appendix A6.
from the study at any time during the data gathering phase. As previously mentioned, this occurred with two of the beginning teacher participants.

**Confidentiality**

Although some beginning teachers and tutor teachers chose their pseudonyms, it was decided not to use names to ensure total confidentiality. As Salkind (2009) observes, anything learned from the participant should be held in the strictest confidence. All quotes in the thesis therefore indicate the designation of the individuals. Even pseudonyms were disregarded and the schools are coded randomly (see Table 6).

**Researcher bias**

The nature of my work at the time of commencing the study and through much of its first year was that of an educational psychologist and had been so for more than a decade. The nature of my job positioned me in a situation of reciprocal familiarity. The following steps were taken at the outset to minimise the potential for conflict of commitment and/or researcher bias:

- It was decided that schools with which I had close working relationships would not be included in the study.
- I negotiated with my employer and reorganised my workload to be in early childhood centres rather than in primary school settings, for the period of my study. During the course of my study the nature of my work changed which distanced me from working directly with both early childhood and school settings.
In the selected research schools, I clarified my role as a researcher with all participants at the outset and explained the purpose of the classroom observations. Care was taken throughout the research process to maintain a strict observer role in the classrooms and meetings and to refrain from providing feedback on matters of teaching and learning or “advice” on specific students or activities. Clear protocols were established for classroom observations that are detailed later in this chapter. There were no interactions with students at any time during the study. I had to consciously suspend my beliefs and assumptions on practices around student diversity during observations (Berg, 2004; Glesne, 1999).

As a researcher and having been a classroom teacher, I was conscious of the fact that what goes on in schools and classrooms is a complex set of interactions that is made up of multiple layers of meanings, interpretations, values and attitudes (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). As this research is located amongst these complexities, the goal of theorising extends to providing an understanding of the lived experience of the beginning teachers and focuses on the process of generating a set of propositions (Merriam, 1998), rather than “extrapolating abstract generalisations” (Patton, 2002, p. 584).

As Charmaz (1990) describes, this study combined my experiences, values and priorities in establishing the basis for the data gathering questions. It was a process of active interaction between discovering the categories in the grounded data and pursuing a line of analysis that attempts to locate the interpretations in a manner relevant to the participants and grounded in the data gathered (Glaser, 1998). Though the broad scope of the initial interview setting up the study was pre-conceived, subsequent interviews were iterative, based on observations in classrooms and of
meetings, and the previous interviews themselves. In doing so, this study has attempted to inform existing knowledge and offer additional insight into the process of acculturation derived from a participant’s perspective (Charmaz, 1990; Glaser, 1998). I have been conscious not to attribute a set of factors as having causal links to the phenomena being investigated, as there are a number of variables often transient, that impact upon the participants at various times in different settings (Huberman, 1993).

Following the successful completion of this thesis, each school involved in the research will be provided with a summary report affirming the promising practices that existed in their particular school as observed during the course of the study.

**Methods of data collection**

Methods are procedures, tools or techniques used to generate data, analyse data or both (Schwandt, 1994). Observations, interviews and document analysis were the three methods of data collection and analysis for this study (Yin, 2003). Collecting information using the various data sources provided the richness of data (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003) on the perceived extent of influence of school cultures and practices on beginning teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards student diversity.

Primary sources of data included observations in classrooms; specific meetings and school assemblies; interviews with beginning teachers, tutor teachers and school principals; and review of school policies, some Education Review Office (ERO) reports, and teachers’ lesson plans. Profiles of the schools were accessed
through *Te Kete Ipurangi* (TKI)\(^{18}\), Ministry of Education websites, particularly *Education Counts*, and from the school principals.

**Observations**

The types of observation undertaken during the research for each beginning teacher were:

- Classroom observations twice each term;
- PRT\(^{19}\) (Provisionally Registered Teacher) meetings between the tutor teacher and the beginning teacher twice each term; and
- Syndicate\(^{20}\) meetings once a term.

Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) highlight the complexities involved in doing observations. They argue that to place oneself as either a participant or non-participant observer does not fully capture the role of the researcher. They refer to a fourfold typology – “complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participant” (p. 248). Even these typologies, they observe, have the potential to run into variations depending on the extent of familiarity of the researcher in the setting, orientation of the researcher, familiarity of the research itself in the context studied, and the type of activities observed. Within these intricacies of the observation method, the stance I took aligns most closely with that of a complete observer. To provide participants with more control over the extent of information sharing (Merriam, 1998), protocols for observations were shared with

\(^{18}\) A Ministry of Education online resource for teachers.

\(^{19}\) Beginning teachers in New Zealand are provisionally registered with the New Zealand Teachers Council for the first two years of teaching.

\(^{20}\) Primary schools in New Zealand are generally organised into junior, middle and senior syndicates. Each syndicate has a leader and between 2-4 teachers and meet regularly.
key participants. Agreement was reached with each school at the beginning of each term regarding a specific schedule with dates for observations in classrooms and meetings.

Classroom observations

I observed each beginning teacher twice per term\(^{21}\). The observations were in blocks of 30 minutes. Sometimes the observations were two continuous blocks of 30 minutes and at other times they were two half hour blocks on separate days in a term. The observations covered a range of curriculum contexts including literacy, numeracy, physical education, topic work (in the area of social studies and science), and arts. The rationale for selecting a range of curriculum areas was to observe teacher practices in both formal and less formal instructional contexts. Beginning teachers, their tutor teachers and the school principals were provided with a protocol for observations in the classrooms. The protocol clearly stated that the researcher would not:

- Intervene in the teaching and learning sessions;
- Be involved in the planning of lessons;
- Be involved in assisting, managing, teaching or minding the students;
- Be drawn into any school performance appraisal issues\(^{22}\).

The only time the researcher could intervene were situations where students’ physical safety was at risk, as is consistent with ethical or legal requirements of

\(^{21}\) Schools in New Zealand operate for 40 weeks in a year, which is divided into four terms, averaging 10 weeks a term.

\(^{22}\) See Appendix A9.
guidelines for presence in schools. No such incident occurred during the observations.

In addition, beginning teachers were asked immediately prior to each observation to identify specific aspects of their classroom practices that were indicative of their planning to teach a diverse range of students. The observations focused on the aspects of teaching and learning that the beginning teachers identified. Those aspects observed were recorded in detail (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) in the field notes to capture the setting, and teacher interactions included ecological contexts, instructional contexts and access to resources.

Provisionally Registered Teacher meetings

In New Zealand, the role of tutor teacher is designed to support the beginning teacher, including induction to the practices of the school (Renwick, 2001; Renwick & Vize, 1993). I observed up to two meetings a term, held between the tutor teachers and the participating beginning teachers, which are referred to as provisionally registered teacher (PRT) meetings. The purpose of these observations was to observe, record and analyse the nature of professional conversations that transpired in these sessions, and their potential impact on the practices of beginning teachers. Specific instances observed in the professional conversations at times contributed to the content of subsequent interviews with that particular beginning teacher.

I took notes of conversations related to students’ learning, and other relevant conversations related to the beginning teachers’ professional and personal development. Prior to each observation I explained the aspects of meeting that I would be noting. Participants were given the opportunity to check the notes taken.
**Syndicate meetings**

Beginning teachers in New Zealand primary schools are included as a member of a syndicate where they work with other teachers. Syndicate meetings are generally held at least every fortnight. The focus of these meetings is a mix of administrative matters and curriculum planning. The beginning teachers in this study were part of syndicates who followed similar patterns with variations around the number of meetings held each term. In one of the schools, professional learning team meetings were held alternatively between syndicate team meetings, although the frequency of both meetings varied greatly. The professional learning team meetings focused more on specific areas of curriculum and targeted specific students in the form of case studies. These meetings were not always confined to specific syndicate staff members and involved all staff in the school. As the initial ethics approval brief did not include whole school meeting observations, nor was it for specific children, these meetings were not part of my data source.

I intended to observe one syndicate meeting per term with each of the participating beginning teachers. The purpose of these observations was to gain an understanding of the nature of professional conversations and peer interactions that occurred during these meetings and their potential impact on the personal and professional growth of the beginning teachers. The protocol for observation was recapped before each meeting and notes were taken only when topics on teaching and learning were discussed. Since the focus of the research was on student diversity, only conversations and activities pertaining to student learning were recorded for analysis. Like PRT meetings, all staff in the syndicate were given an opportunity to check my notes. As syndicate meetings were often rescheduled, the total number of
syndicate meetings observed in some of the schools was fewer than what was originally intended. Table 2 shows the types of observations and the number of times each of them were undertaken in the participating schools.

### Table 2: Number and types of observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Numbers of observations in classrooms and meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Schools “Y” & “X” had two BTs in the study.*

### School assemblies

School assemblies often provide a snapshot of practices embedded in the school culture (Pollard, 1985). In a study of ways in which secondary schools operate, head teachers saw school assemblies serving the purpose of “building a sense of community”, and a place for the “development of corporate attitudes” (King, 1986, p. 87). To gather information on the wider school context of how diversity was recognised and acknowledged, I observed one assembly in each of the participating schools. Notes were taken on the content and presentation of the programmes to be used if relevant to the study.

### Interviews

Interviews can lead to understanding the perceptions of participants and how they attach meaning to certain phenomena (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). In this study,
interviews were conducted “to gather descriptive data in the subjects’ own words to develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the (their) world” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103). The beginning teachers, the tutor teachers and school principals were interviewed as key participants (Gillham, 2000; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The purpose of these interviews was to gather direct verbal accounts of their roles, duties and their insights into the realities of their school contexts (Minichiello, 1995; Siedman, 1998), particularly in relation to student diversity. Although the in-depth and semi-structured interviews helped in the free flow of information from participants, they had the potential to become more casual (Wolcott, 2005). A major focus during the researcher’s supervision meetings was to refine the interview questions to be more open-ended.

In-depth interviews

Each beginning teacher in the study was interviewed in the first two to four weeks of obtaining a full time teaching position. The interviews were unstructured, allowing for a natural flow of conversation, and lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. After the initial interview, additional interviews of up to 30-minute duration were held every six months with each of the beginning teachers. The focus of these follow up interviews was to explore issues arising from previous interviews, observations of meetings, classroom observations and review of documents such as lesson plans.

A 45-minute interview at the completion of the study focused on the professional and personal growth of the beginning teachers in relation to student diversity and what they perceived to be key enablers and barriers for them in their teaching and learning for diverse students as they began their teaching careers. For three of the seven beginning teachers, this interview occurred after approximately 18
months as a teacher, whereas for two of the beginning teachers who were included in the study in 2008, the concluding interview occurred at the end of their first year of teaching. Together these interviews allowed for collecting data that traced the beginning teachers’ experiences around the phenomena of acculturation studied over a period of time (Siedman, 1998).

Constant checking and rechecking of information was undertaken during each of the interviews to ensure the validity of information gathered in understanding the beginning teachers’ perceptions, views, attitudes and behaviours (Siedman, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The open-ended interviews provided data on the beginning teachers’ dispositions to the notion of diversity, their personal beliefs towards accommodating student diversity, and their perceptions of the school culture and practices towards student diversity and its influence on them personally and professionally (Minichiello, 1995).

Semi-structured interviews

The tutor teachers and school principals were interviewed at the commencement of the study using a recording schedule that followed a semi-structured interview pattern. These “elite interviews” with the people in the position of authority and power (Berg, 2004; Gillham, 2000) were to gain an insight and a comprehensive grasp of the wider institutional know-how and practices around student diversity that had the potential to influence the way we do things around here. Tutor teachers were interviewed again at the end of the study.

23 See Appendices A3, A4, A5, A12 & A13.
The initial interview with tutor teachers had two sections. The first section focused briefly on their professional biographies. The second part of the semi-structured interview ascertained their disposition towards student diversity and their roles in fostering the growth of the beginning teachers’ understanding of and response to the needs of all students in their classes. The final interview with each tutor teacher was included as a sequential part of theoretical sampling to yield more richness to the study (Creswell, 2005). The open-ended interviews explored what they perceived to be most effective in supporting the beginning teachers in relation to student diversity and how it had contributed to the beginning teachers’ perceived professional and personal growth. The tutor teachers were invited to provide comments on ways to improve their support for the beginning teachers in relation to student diversity.

The purpose of the principals’ interview was to explore how they perceived their roles in creating and preserving the school ethos and culture around student diversity and ensuring that it came through in the support given to the beginning teachers. Principals were interviewed once at the beginning of the study on matters around school policies on student diversity and their roles in supporting both the tutor teachers and the beginning teachers in being responsive to the needs of diversity among the students in the school communities. Table 3 shows the number of interviews with the participants.
Table 3: Number and types of interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Persons interviewed</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>Tutor teachers</td>
<td>Beginning Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Schools “Y” & “X” had two BTs in the study.

Document analysis

Documents are written texts which relate to some aspect of the social world (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Public records, personal documents and physical materials/artefacts are three major types of documents available for a researcher’s analysis (Merriam, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). School policies and strategic plans, personal journals and lesson plans were the type of documents accessed for this study. Table 4 shows an overview of the documents that were accessed.

Table 4: Type of documents accessed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School profile</td>
<td>Principal, school website, Ministry of Education database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School policy and strategic plans</td>
<td>School principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERO report (optional source)</td>
<td>Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective journals</td>
<td>Beginning teachers; tutor teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson plans(^{25})</td>
<td>Beginning teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{24}\) Available for some participants only.
\(^{25}\) In addition to lesson plans for observation sessions, some participants provided additional sample lesson plans.
School policies and plans

The purpose of examining these documents in each school was to better understand the wider school perspective on student diversity, and ways in which it may influence the practices of beginning teachers.

Education Review Office reports

The latest Education Review Office (ERO) reports were included as possible sources of data to triangulate information that may emerge from other data sources such as interviews and observations in relation to student diversity. It was not essential to do so during the course of the study as the only comment around ERO during interviews was by a tutor teacher who mentioned ERO in relation to the monitoring of the documentation practices of beginning teachers for registration purposes.

Reflective journals, diaries

Reflective journals are “written documents that students create as they think about various concepts, events, or interactions over a period of time for the purpose of gaining insights into self-awareness and learning” (Thorpe, 2004, p. 328). Therefore, the inclusion of reflective journals as a data collection tool was assumed to provide a rich source of information on the beginning teachers’ development over a period of time. Merriam (1998) observes that reflective journals or diaries are another source of data on a person’s attitudes, beliefs and views of the world. However, only one of the beginning teachers in the study opted to share her reflections, although they were more personal and emotive in nature than professional reflections. Others were not keen to share them for similar reasons, in that they felt that their journals were too personal to share. As the reflections of the
one beginning teacher who did share her journal were not related directly to the topic of the study, no data from her journal were included in this thesis.

**Lesson plans**

The original intent was to obtain the lesson plan for each observed session. In practice, it appeared that these beginning teachers worked off weekly plans, which were in turn derived from unit plans. The tasks outlined in their weekly plans in Maths and English were based on the groups in their classes. Weekly plans of writing and topic included the activities that the whole class would be undertaking that week. Six of the seven beginning teachers shared their plan of the week that I observed them. When specific lesson plans were asked for, one of the beginning teachers said that they were informal and that she just wrote them up in her personal diary. She provided me with one particular lesson plan as an example, which for this particular lesson was mainly the key questions that she would ask the students during the course of the lesson. Another beginning teacher provided me with a daily sheet from her diary, which was more about the day’s activities, like a time table. While I was able to get topic plans from three beginning teachers, I did not receive a detailed lesson plan from any of them.

**Method of analysis**

It has been said that no research is value free (Eisner, 1991). Charmaz (1990, 2005, 2006) observes that the inductiveness of grounded theory rests heavily on the analytical approach taken by the researcher, and it is a subjective interaction between the gathered data and the researcher. The values, experiences and epistemological stance of the researcher, Charmaz notes, are visible in the process of conceptualising
and theorising data. Theory generation in grounded theory is an abstract explanation of a process about a substantive topic grounded in the data gathered (Creswell, 2008).

**Coding and categorising**

Grounded theory seeks to connect small sets of highly relevant categories and their properties through theoretical codes into an integrated theory, thus using the power of conceptual summary (Glaser, 1992).

**Open coding**

For this study, a process of open coding was used to create categories from raw data (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a, 1998b), whereby data was *fractured* into “Nodes”, and assigned a code word or a phrase that described the meaning of the *text segment* (Creswell, 2005). “Nodes” are labels used to group data using the qualitative software NVivo, explained later in the chapter. The phrase “text segment” includes both line by line as well as sentence by sentence coding that were used in this study. The data required sifting and making decisions about which of the initial codes would make the most analytical sense to categorise the gathered data (Charmaz, 2006) and to conceptualise a pattern among many incidents (Glaser, 1992). Subsequently, through focused coding (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978), initial categories were examined for similarities of property or dimensions and were grouped together to obtain broader categories. Focused coding allows for categorisation of data “incisively and completely” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 58). Analysing the categories saw the emergence of new ways of reconfiguring and categorising data at a higher conceptual level. *Theoretical* codes help understand the possible relationship between the categories developed through focus coding (Charmaz, 2006)
and can assist in “moving the analyses in a theoretical direction” (p. 63). “To understand a basic social process”, says Fagerhaugh (1986), “it is helpful to view it as a core category” (p. 135), and the analysis of conceptual categories was informed by the research question (Locke, 2001).

Strauss and Corbin (1998a, 1998b) stress the need for an interim step of axial coding following the open coding process. Axial coding, they state, enables the researcher to answer the questions of “when, where, why, who, how and what” to explain the relationships between categories (p. 125). Charmaz (2006) provides an alternative by suggesting that researchers who can tolerate some amount of conceptual ambiguity need not strictly pass through the axial coding process. Instead she refers to creating sub-categories and showing the way they interlink, a process I used in analysing the data. While grounded theory research uses a theoretical framework for analysis, the varied use of the terms “categories” and “concepts” in the literature to arrive at a theoretical framework can be confusing. In this study, I followed the pattern of codes – category – concepts, as concepts are at a higher level of abstraction than categories, the latter being more descriptive (Bazeley, 2007).

Conceptual categories, argues Charmaz (2005), “arise through the researchers’ interpretations of the data rather than emanating from it, thus making the analysis an interpretive rendering of reality and not objective reporting” (pp. 509-510). The process was by no means linear. It involved re-reading the data several times and reorganisation of various categories through constant comparison (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978, 1992). Constant comparison of data included comparing data gathered from all the beginning teachers to i) different times; ii) varied contexts; iii) data gathered from other participants; and iv) data gathered from
other sources. Much of the conceptualisation that traced and tracked the thinking and shaping of the data to a conceptual level was mapped or represented in diagrammatical forms to provide visual representation of the categories and how they link together (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin, 1986). With intent of grounding the theory, the data gathered through the multiple sources were sorted and carefully interrogated (Eisenhardt, 1989) and analysed systematically, integrating the relationship between various concepts into a theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a, 1998b).

**Qualitative software**

A computer software package from QSR International was available to code and categorise the transcribed materials from interviews, document analysis and field notes (Berg, 2004; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The qualitative software package, NVivo 7, was used to code and categorise data for this study. The software allowed for merging and creating new nodes as categories so that themes began to unfold. The software allowed for data to be lifted from the textual coding level to conceptual coding levels (Bazeley, 2007; Richards & Richards, 1998).

Using a grounded theory approach allowed the researcher “to portray the understandings of participants’ actions and meanings, offer abstract interpretations of empirical relationships, and create conditional statements about the implications of their analyses” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 508).
Methodological constraints

Obtaining legitimate knowledge from the lived experiences of beginning teachers and collecting the evidence for making knowledge claims can be authentic and sound appealing (Glesne, 1999), but the possibility of pursuing these goals required co-operation and consent from a range of people and schools. The multiple layers of consents required created complexities for recruiting the participants as well as for retaining them for the duration of the study. In summary, reasons for the sampling difficulties included:

- Consent to participate had to be progressed through a series of contacts, any one of which could have led to the loss of a sample.
- In addition to consent from the beginning teachers, the involvement of the school required the consent of the tutor teacher, principal, syndicate staff and parents of the children in the beginning teachers’ classrooms in each of the schools.

Beginning teachers (particularly those starting mid-year) were often on fixed term contracts for a year or less, while the study was for a period of 18 months. Only two beginning teachers were permanently employed at the commencement of their involvement in the study. As result, one of the beginning teachers took up a permanent position in a different school soon after the study commenced. Therefore, initial interview information gathered from the principal and tutor teacher of the first school was not used for the purpose of the study due to the short period of her employment in the school. Instead, interview data conducted with the principal and tutor teacher of the second school where she subsequently obtained a 12 month teaching position, has been used in the study. However, in the case of another
beginning teacher who too left the study after two terms, having obtained a permanent position, withdrew her participation as her school did not wish to be involved. However, she completed some aspects of the end of year interview questionnaire via e-mail. Four others were made permanent in their second year of teaching in their respective schools. The fifth beginning teacher, who did not get a full time position in her first school, secured a permanent position in another school at the end of the first term of her second year of teaching and withdrew her participation in the study at that stage.

Apart from the sampling difficulties, there were also some constraints in maintaining observation time schedules for meetings as the year progressed. At times external support network programmes for beginning teachers clashed with observation times and at other times there were internal reasons for rescheduling the meetings, particularly the syndicate meetings and occasionally the PRT meetings. This does not mean, however, that the meetings were not held. Often the postponed meetings were rescheduled at short notice, and sometimes decisions to hold them were made on the day of the meeting, which precluded my data collection. In some instances, I was provided with the minutes of meetings that I was unable to attend. Although the minutes did not provide me with the richness of conversational details that I would have otherwise observed, it gave me an overview of the matters discussed.

The original intention of collecting rich experiences of personal and professional growth through journals of the beginning teachers was not realised for reasons discussed earlier in the chapter. As a result the sources of data for this study
were primarily from interviews and from observation data that pertained to student diversity

**Introduction to participants**

The following section outlines the profiles of the beginning teachers. It provides a brief background of them in a way that will not allow for easy identification. It includes information on their experiences prior to becoming teachers and their motivation for and pathways to becoming teachers.

**Beginning teacher 1**

This beginning teacher had a very positive experience both in primary and secondary schools. Moving on to university studies directly after school, her undergraduate studies included art history and courses on culture and society, followed by an honours degree in international politics. Studying about feminism as part of her honours degree motivated her to teach overseas. For two years she worked as an assistant language teacher, which involved her teaching English and also assisting some indigenous teachers to teach English.

She was truly enjoying her role as an assistant language teacher by the second year and had to reluctantly return to New Zealand. For a short while after her return, she did some project work in the field of education and also obtained a qualification to teach English to adults. It was while tutoring adults that she realised that she really wanted to be a teacher in a classroom. This led her to enrol in the graduate teaching programme to become a qualified classroom teacher. This is “my long journey”, she says, in becoming a primary school teacher.
Beginning teacher 2

When a friend in high school said that she wanted to become a primary school teacher, this beginning teacher realised that was what she wanted to do as well. She went to university straight after high school and completed her Masters. Although her Masters included subjects like Counselling, Educational Leadership and Management, and Educational Psychology and Diversity among others, she did not feel confident enough to enrol as a teacher trainee. She felt the need to have a more practical understanding of classrooms. She worked as a teacher aide for two years before enrolling in the graduate teacher training programme.

Beginning teacher 3

This beginning teacher migrated to New Zealand almost eight years ago. Initially trained as a Montessori teacher, she trained as an early childhood educator in New Zealand and worked in early childhood settings before training to become a primary school teacher. Although initially she preferred the flexibility provided in kindergartens compared to a more structured Montessori approach, she decided to train as a primary teacher as she wanted to teach in a “more structured” environment. She attributes her preference for a structured learning environment to her own culture and upbringing. She was also curious to work in a system where children started school throughout the year rather than having annual intakes for school entry as in other countries.

Her values of teaching and learning, she acknowledges, stem from the way she was raised by her parents. Cultural values of placing great importance on education and teachers were deeply ingrained in her. Teaching for her was not just another job, it was a passion.
**Beginning teacher 4**

She was a “teacher” right from her childhood, “as long as she can remember”. Coming from a family of teachers, she recalls her childhood toys were always sitting in classes and they all had “maths books, reading books and writing books”. There was never a moment during growing up that she thought of doing anything else, excepting perhaps acting, she added with a smile, in a popular TV serial.

She had always liked children. Conversations she had heard between her parents on the impact that teachers can have on students fuelled her desire further towards a teaching career. She had initially observed some early childhood settings with intent to teach pre-schoolers, but did not feel comfortable with the “play approach” to learning. She felt that there was more that children could learn and do at a young age. Her friends would have been rudely shocked, she says, if she had chosen a different career pathway. To become a teacher has been an unwavering goal for her since childhood.

**Beginning teacher 5**

The road to teaching had been both rough and windy for this beginning teacher. She attributed this partly to her own schooling experiences. Having totally enjoyed her primary and intermediate schools, she was emotionally hurt and disappointed with the lack of closeness between teachers and students in secondary schools. As a Māori, the detached environment did not fit her need to belong and she felt alienated.

These less positive experiences of high school remain with her to this day. She did a variety of jobs related to helping people, including being a youth worker.
She kept resisting the thought of wanting to be a teacher. It took a lot of talking with and encouragement from whānau\textsuperscript{26} and friends before she enrolled in the graduate teacher training programme. Once enrolled, she knew that she had found her niche and teaching was where she belonged.

**Beginning teacher 6**

A combination of willingness to share knowledge, help people and an inherent love for children were the motivators behind her becoming a teacher. She noted that although her route to teaching was not a direct one, it was something she always came back to when she was contemplating her career choices. Experiences gained through nannying and Sunday school provided the foundation to her career in teaching. She had also completed her postgraduate studies in psychology and her long-term plan is to work in the field of psychology.

Children are “cool” and she likes their “totally random and unique perspective of the world”. She enjoys sharing knowledge and likes being a hands-on teacher. As a year 1 teacher, she was full of enthusiasm and said, “It is just this amazing idea that I would be this super teacher”. She had a lot of ideas of utilising and integrating community resources as part of the curriculum.

**Beginning teacher 7**

The pathway to teaching was a chequered one for this beginning teacher. Her experiences in high school were far from being positive and she dropped out of high school. But being academically oriented, she went to university and did a bridging

\textsuperscript{26} Extended family.
course. She embarked on a Law degree but quit when she found the course unappealing. Subsequently, one of the jobs she held was at a university, which again ignited her spark to continue further studies. Some initial papers in psychology and education provoked her interest and she went on to study child development, psychology and educational psychology.

After completing a Bachelor’s degree in psychology with a view to becoming an educational psychologist later in life, she decided to enrol in teachers’ college. “It was hard work”, she recalls, intense but she enjoyed it nevertheless, and is “loving teaching”. It was her personal experiences at school that have influenced her to teach Intermediate age students as she considers them to be make or break years for students.

Tables 5-8 show the profiles of the beginning teachers, the schools, school principals and the tutor teachers participating in the study respectively.

Table 5: Profiles of beginning teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning Teachers</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Teaching level</th>
<th>Cultural Background</th>
<th>Other work experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BT 1</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT 2</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT 3</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Year 1/2 composite</td>
<td>SE Asian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT 4</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Year 1/2 composite (2007) &amp; Year 2 (2008)</td>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT 5</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Year 4 (2007) &amp; Year 2 (2008)</td>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT 6</td>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT 7</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Year 7/8</td>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Profiles of schools participating in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Type (Primary)</th>
<th>Teaching staff numbers</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>Decile</th>
<th>Roll profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Year 1-6</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>150-180</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Year 1-6</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>450-500</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nearly 50% *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Year 1-6</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>220-280</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Year 1-6</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>220-280</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Year 1-8</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>281-350</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18-22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The percentage includes gifted learners.

Table 7: Profiles of school principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Type (Primary)</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No. of years in the school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Year 1-6</td>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Year 1-6</td>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Year 1-6</td>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>&gt; 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Year 1-6</td>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>&lt; 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Year 1-8</td>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>&lt; 10 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27 Data were taken from the Ministry of Education institution profile at commencement of the study in January 2007 & 2008. The table does not include subsequent changes to any of the information presented below.

28 This is a ranking based mainly on the socio-economic index of the area in which the school is located. This ranking is one of the determinants of government funding to schools.

29 SN – Special Needs refers to students who are achieving at a lower academic level than their peers and require additional support to meet their learning needs.

30 This refers to students who come from islands in the Pacific region. The majority of them are from Samoa, with smaller numbers from Tokelau, Niue, Tonga, Tuvalu and the Cook Islands.
The analytical framework for this study stands at the intersection of individual (micro level) and organisational (macro level) influences on notions of student diversity. The analysis begins with the seven beginning teachers’ perceptions of diversity at the beginning of their teaching careers.

Prior to beginning my analysis of the beginning teachers’ perceptions of diversity, it is important to expand on the researcher’s profile and world view. I am a female, of South Asian descent. Living with and alongside societal barriers since childhood, I have a deep-rooted sense of social justice. As a researcher undertaking a qualitative study and being instrumental for gathering data, I was aware that all observations and analyses were filtered through my world view, values and perspectives (Charmaz, 1990; Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998). I was also conscious of the fact that my organisational affiliations (which as mentioned earlier was with the Ministry of Education for most part of this study) could have been a potential barrier for open and frank conversations during the interviews with the participants. It also

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31 Deputy Principal.
32 Board of Trustees.
had the potential for the beginning teachers being more conscious during observation sessions, both in the classroom and during meetings. Some of my initial concerns were allayed by the candidness of their interviews and their willingness to accommodate my presence in the classroom and meetings. However, whether the nature of data gathered was affected in any way by my own role and perspectives remains an unanswered question.
Chapter Four:
Initial Perceptions and Orientations to Diversity

This chapter examines the initial beliefs, attitudes and orientation of the seven beginning teachers towards diversity, at a time when the beginning teachers were just familiarising themselves in their new roles, and the various experiences that informed and influenced the development of their perceptions of diversity. In particular, this chapter focuses on the beginning teachers’ orientations towards diversity, which they perceived to be greatly influenced by their teacher education programme. These initial perceptions are later contrasted with the data presented in Chapter Six after 12-18 months of teaching, when their professional roles may have been further influenced by the ethos of their schools.

Teacher education programme influences

The beginning teachers in the study were unanimous in attributing their understandings of the nature and extent of diversity to their initial teacher education programme. Positive and negative school experiences, supportive families, and a passion to work with children were among the factors that participants said had originally propelled them to become teachers. However, they perceived it was their experiences in practicum placements in their teacher education programme that had the strongest impact on their beliefs and views on diversity. For some, initial teacher education was the gateway that broadened the understandings of the various aspects of diversity. Two of the participants had attended schools that were predominantly mono-cultural, and it was not until their practicum that they were exposed to a wider range of diversity in classrooms:
I think probably because I am very middle class and my church is very white there are bits of diversity that I did not see prior to teachers’ college and actually going to schools [on practicum]. (BT 6)

Initially, some felt slightly apprehensive about their capacity to manage the extent of diversity evident in classrooms:

I remember in my first placement thinking, my goodness! How do you teach that range of academic difficulties? And then also in contrast to when I was at school [which was very mono-cultural], the ethnic diversity, the background, everything is huge. (BT 7)

For two of the beginning teachers who had been exposed to cultural and academic diversity in their earlier work experiences, the broad theoretical knowledge acquired during teacher training was considered useful in providing the context of New Zealand classrooms in which they would be teaching:

Because my studies had been all about international contexts, I learnt more about the New Zealand context including recent statistics on New Zealand demographics. (BT 1)

What you learn on paper is good. A lot of knowledge and lot of views – research and theories. (BT 3)

One beginning teacher, who initially viewed diversity as being about special needs, found that her views broadened as she progressed through her teacher education:
I tend[ed] to think about diversity as special needs because I am from that background. [Now I know] it is much more than that – whether it is culture or disability or even the way you learn, whether it is the multiple intelligences or whether people learn by doing or learn by watching. (BT 2)

Experiences and attitudes towards the cultural components of training were also diverse. Some viewed the cultural aspect of training positively:

*Every course we did had at least one lecture on diversity in the classroom. In our professional studies we did a whole half of one of our papers on cultural diversity in the classroom. That was really good.* (BT 6)

*We did a lot about opening yourselves up, like cultural diversity and everything was definitely a big part of our training – much more so than probably the academic diversity.* (BT 7)

Two of the beginning teachers did not place a high value on the cultural aspect of their teacher training programme. One saw the emphasis on cultural diversity as somewhat narrow and limiting. The other beginning teacher who was Māori reported feeling marginalised so that she isolated herself, which made her less appreciative of the cultural component of the training:

*I found at teachers’ college it was really like that – it was Māori, Pacific Islander, that’s it.* (BT 4)
I found it difficult to go into an environment where I was such a minority [being the only Māori in the class]. I don’t know if it is fair to say this, even though they paid lip service to diversity, things are not necessarily the same for everybody. (BT 5)

Overall the beginning teachers perceived that the teacher education programme provided them with a strong theoretical background. In contrast, they considered that the practicum placements broadened their perceptions of diversity. For the two beginning teachers who had prior experience in teaching, the teacher education programme provided the contextual knowledge of diversity in the classrooms. Other beginning teachers who had limited exposure to multiculturalism considered that their teacher education programme enabled them to appreciate and acknowledge a range of cultural diversity aspects.

**Practicum**

The beginning teachers reported that practicum exposed them to the extent of diversity that existed in schools and classrooms:

*It heightened my awareness on the grand scale of diversity in different areas; it gave me tools to work with diversity, make it an inclusive classroom.* (BT 6)

Diversity in terms of culture, academic abilities and the decile ranking of the schools were features that appeared to have had an impact on the beginning teachers during their practicum. It appeared that the three practicum placements provided them with both positive and negative experiences, while broadening their outlook on diversity:
I was in decile 4 and then two decile 10s. And I really liked the contrast. It really is an individual thing about what school you would fit into as a teacher because it is quite a community. (BT 2)

My first [practicum] was at a high decile school which was mostly Pākehā33 – I did not really enjoy because I didn’t like the atmosphere and found the AT34 had a very different style to me which I found difficult. The second school I was at was again another high decile school and slightly more ethnically diverse and that was real fun and wonderful experience. And then I came to this school which was most ethnically diverse, I loved it here. (BT 1)

The different practicum experiences the beginning teachers reported had a major influence on them while deciding upon the type of school that they wanted to teach in:

*My first two was really good. I actually just came to be a member of the staff. For my third false start one, my experience was really, really negative. Because I was losing confidence, and I was basically, I was being undermined. And then coming here it was just brilliant.* (BT 5)

*My first placement was similar – actually a very similar school, same full primary and everything. Then my second placement was not so enjoyable. That one almost sent me packing but there were other things in there as well. It was a new entrant class and that is when I very much*

33 New Zealanders of European origin.
34 The Associate Teacher is the teacher in the school responsible for the student teacher on practicum.
decided that was not where I wanted to go. And then when I came here, it was just right again. (BT 7)

The type of school that they wanted to begin their teaching careers was influenced by the experiences of the practicum placements, and familiarisation of the school community and its ethos for these novice teachers.

Although the seven beginning teachers were not part of the same cohort, they acknowledged that their teacher education programme – theory as well as the practical experiences – was critically important in informing, exposing and extending their existing knowledge and beliefs about various aspects of diversity, particularly cultural diversity. For these beginning teachers, their teacher education “congealed” their experiences and understanding of classroom diversity.

**Dimensions of diversity**

From the outset, it appeared that these beginning teachers were struggling to engage with this simple sounding but complex phenomenon: “That is a hard question”, said two of them, when asked to describe their understanding of diversity. Their beliefs and orientations to the phenomenon of diversity further exemplified this complexity and the beginning teachers attempted to describe it in ways that would enable them to understand the nature of their classrooms. Their perceptions of the various dimensions of diversity included uniqueness of individuals, culture, socio-economic status, gender, age, spirituality and academic learning abilities, which are explained in the following sections.
Uniqueness as individuality

A strong theme emerging from the beginning teachers’ initial beliefs on diversity was about uniqueness and individuality. The beginning teachers believed that it was the uniqueness and individuality among people that made them diverse. They often used these terms interchangeably:

I think it [diversity] still comes down to the different things that make up “us” – just an awareness that we are all unique and so everyone including every child, really everyone, that includes all of us teachers, and non-teachers, we are all unique. (BT 6)

To me it just means individuality. It [individuality] incorporates in the broadest sense everything from life experiences, to family background, to height, to age, to physical appearances, to ethnicity, gender. (BT 1)

Kind of more individualism. Like treating every child as an individual, rather than you are a Māori or you are a Pacific Islander, you are this and you are that. (BT 4)

Uniqueness as differences

The uniqueness was also expressed in terms of differences by some beginning teachers:

It encompasses so much, the huge individual differences we all have. (BT 7)

Whatever our background is, what our brains, what our bodies are, and all of those things are different for everyone. And so that’s what
Diversity is. I have got a reasonable range of different ethnic and economic background, and behavioural diversity too. (BT 6)

Diversity to me is a lot of difference, not all the same. (BT 5)

**Culture**

Ethnicity was an obvious facet of diversity for the beginning teachers and they often used it synonymously with cultural diversity. The seven beginning teachers acknowledged that their classrooms mirrored the wider school communities in their diversity, commenting, “The school is very multicultural” and “very much mono-cultural”¹³⁵. One beginning teacher’s notion of diversity stemmed from the acceptance that her classroom would be a microcosm of the New Zealand population, as she perceived diversity to be a salient feature of New Zealand society:

I was aware because I know that NZ is very much a cultural country and wherever you go you see different, diverse people, people are so different. Ethnic groups, and what do you call them – yeah, lesbians and gay people, different religions, one parent families and all types of people. (BT 3).

She was keen and enthusiastic to be part of multicultural communities of her schools:

The school community consists of Samoan, Tokelauan, Tongan, Zimbabwean, Somali, Indian and a minor percentage of Māori and

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¹³⁵ New Zealanders of European origin.
Pākehā students – who bring a mixture of colours, customs, traditions and languages, making our school a unique place. (BT 3)

Another beginning teacher did not explicitly mention culture as a dimension of diversity, but believed that students were not homogenous even among similar cultural groups. She strongly believed that life experiences were critical in contributing to individual differences, and felt that life experiences were often hidden or overlooked:

Everybody’s home life is going to be different, whether they belong to the same ethnic group or not. The values in their households are going to be different. I have very strong views about that. (BT 5)

Her personal experiences at school and beyond had increased her awareness to be perceptive to all aspects of diversity in her classroom:

Just simple things like pronunciation of people’s names, simple things like that. I am kind of still struggling as to how I am going to not pay just lip service to acknowledge and value the diversity that is there. (BT 5)

**Socio-economic status**

Socio-economic status did not feature predominantly as an aspect of diversity for these beginning teachers. Only one beginning teacher specifically included the dimension of economic background as an aspect of diversity in her classroom:

It is quite an interesting mix of ethnic background (Samoan, American, Asian, and NZ European) and most of them seem to be pretty well middle class, socio-economic stuff. (BT 6)
There were no other references to income level or social class in any of these beginning teachers’ descriptions of diversity.

**Gender/age**

Gender was not mentioned specifically as an aspect of diversity by the beginning teachers. Age was mentioned by one of them who taught a composite\(^{36}\) class:

*We [the school] have got so many juniors that I have got really, really young – like ones who have been in school a month.* (BT 4)

**Spiritual**

Two of the beginning teachers included religion and spirituality as aspects of diversity that made everyone unique. For them, being able to incorporate the spiritual aspect of their faith in day-to-day practice was an important feature of embracing an aspect of diversity:

*Like, everybody is diverse, the world is diverse, and we are all different; we are all unique in God’s eyes and so on.* (BT 1)

*The school helps me practise my faith and to instil faith in the students without restrictions.* (BT 3)

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\(^{36}\) A combination of two year levels of students, Years 1 & 2 in this case.
Initial responsiveness to diversity

Getting to know students as individuals emerged as the first step in acknowledging diversity in their classrooms. For some beginning teachers the unitary dimension of individuality underpinned their notion of “getting to know”:

*I think one of my things is trying to get to know the children as individuals.* (BT 5)

*My goal is to accept and recognise ethnic diversity and other diversities including learning ability and life experiences and all of that.* (BT 1)

For some others, being responsive to diversity was about identifying the potential in each student, and being able to accommodate students’ life experiences by providing opportunities for all the students in the class to learn:

*I have viewed it [diversity] positively. My first thing is to identify the differences in everyone’s needs and think about how I am going to interest them; finding the fire in each student and working with that.*

(BT 7)

*I want everyone to do their best.* (BT 3)

Some wanted to value each student as an individual rather than stereotype them. They preferred to avoid having pre-conceived ideas of students and not making assumptions on the basis of students’ background and life experiences:

*Recognising that everyone has something of value and they are something of value themselves.* (BT 6)
I think the most important thing for me is to take them at face value and respect them, instead of trying to learn about their families – lot of times it is like, “we have one of those families, good luck”. Not based on ethnicities but to take them as they come, not making assumptions. (BT 4)

One beginning teacher was cautious against making assumptions as part of being culturally responsive:

If somebody has got brown skin and have a Māori name, do not throw words of te reo at them because they may not know. (BT 5)

The beginning teachers appeared to acknowledge that diversity would be the norm of their classrooms, and had thought about various ways in which they would ensure that they were being responsive to diversity – neither ignoring nor patronising it.

**Academic learning abilities**

Among the various dimensions of diversity embedded in the more unitary notion of unique and individual, one aspect began to feature across these beginning teachers’ perceptions of diversity in their classrooms after the initial few weeks of becoming a teacher. It was the dimension of academic learning needs:

When I am talking about diversity in the classroom, to me it does first strike me as the range in academic ability. (BT 7)
Most of them are quite advanced for their age in terms of ability; and then there is the middle bunch, and one below the rest of the class in terms of his ability in literacy and numeracy. (BT 6)

It is much more than – you just kind of think that in a decile 10 school lots of people will say that there is no [learning] diversity; but there is. In any group of learners there are lots. (BT 2)

I think different learning needs, definitely. I mean there is huge diversity because there is such a range of diversity from year 1s to year 2s. I have got ESOL37; I have got gifted in oral language. Students who cannot write their names to those who can write two pages. (BT 4)

These beginning teachers wanted to acknowledge the individuality and uniqueness of the students, and they seemed most concerned about the different learning needs of the students. They emphasised these differences in learning abilities as the core aspect of diversity requiring their focus in the classrooms:

My first thing is to identify the differences in everyone’s [learning] needs and think about how I am going to interest them. (BT 7)

I have one ORRS38 funded child – being creative and coming with ways to incorporate his needs into the programme is going to be an effort. (BT 5)

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37 English for Speakers of Other Languages. The beginning teacher is referring to students for whom English is a second language.
38 Ongoing Reviewable Resourcing Scheme, which refers to a level of funding for students with significant learning needs.
To me it is about equality, sort of you have to somehow give that extra
time to kids who have greater learning needs, but somehow have
activities that engage the kids with a high learning ability to the same
extent. (BT 1)

Two of the beginning teachers had varying experiences in relation to
classroom diversity. One of them had moved from a multicultural school to a school
which was more mono-cultural; the other had moved from one multicultural setting
to another. These teachers emphasised the learning abilities of their students in their
description of diversity in the classrooms:

My present class is not too diverse ethnically – it is still there but not
too diverse obviously. But in terms of leaning need there is a wide
range. (BT 1)

I was faced with a special challenge to work with children and families
who knew no or very little English. [Although] I can actually quite well
relate to them [children from ESOL background] because I come from
a different culture [ESOL background] and I quite understand where
each one is coming from. (BT 3)

Although being responsive to cultural diversity was extremely important for
another beginning teacher, she viewed her teaching capability in terms of her
responsiveness to the learning needs of her students. Initially, she did not make
references to learning abilities as her syndicate\(^{39}\) organisation was based on students’ abilities. However, learning ability became a predominant feature in the classroom for her when a student with high academic ability was enrolled in her class:

As far as the academic ability goes there wasn’t so much at the beginning of the year but now there is – there is one new boy and he is identified as gifted. I need to seek out, constantly seek out extension work for him to do in whatever we are doing. He just finishes so fast that I need to be prepared for that. (BT 5)

It appeared that the arrival of this gifted student involved changes to her planning and teaching, which made her reprioritise the lens with which she viewed her students. In that, academic learning of students took priority over the cultural lens she originally had purported to use.

**School policies**

The extent to which the beginning teachers familiarised themselves with their school policies on diversity varied greatly. Some of them were aware of some specific procedures and focus of their schools:

I am sure it [school policy] has actually, but I haven’t got that far yet!!!

Sorry. There is definitely a section on gifted and talented and special needs, which I have to read more. (BT 2)

I found it very useful in the first couple of weeks prior to school to, I actually read most of the procedural documents this school has. That

\(^{39}\) Year levels 4, 5 & 6 formed the senior syndicate group in the school. Students were grouped in classes according to abilities and BT 5 had the middle ability group of students in her class.
was really good for getting an idea of how the school does things and what their procedures are for dealing with diversity, meeting diverse needs and that was really useful to just to give you some background knowledge. (BT 6)

I know they are definitely explicit about honouring the Treaty. There is a culture of support for ethnic diversity. There are programmes in place for the gifted and talented students. (BT 1)

One beginning teacher did not appear to be familiar yet with the school policy:

I don’t know actually anything at all [about school policies]. Do you mean like ethnic diversity? (BT 4)

With the exception of one beginning teacher, there appeared to be no sense of urgency among these beginning teachers to know their schools’ policy on student diversity.

**Summary**

There was a range of beliefs and varying orientations towards diversity among these seven beginning teachers. Their initial conceptions of and attitude towards diversity were shaped through their own experiences of family, schooling (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Lortie, 1975), and higher education including teacher education (Bergeron, 2008; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). The practicum aspect of their initial teacher training appeared to have had significant influence on these beginning
teachers in raising their awareness of cultural diversity and extending their knowledge of diversity in classrooms.

Culture and academic learning ability were two dimensions of diversity that were articulated by most of them, while the dimension of spirituality was perceived as important by two of the beginning teachers. Only one of them mentioned social class as an aspect of diversity. Gender as a dimension of diversity was not identified by any of them. One of the beginning teachers alluded to the multidimensional aspect of diversity in saying that even culturally homogenous students had varied life experiences. However, predominant among their beliefs and orientations of diversity were the notions of uniqueness and individual differences. They wanted to consider all students as individuals first who should be respected and valued. They wanted to provide learning contexts that were responsive to the needs of all the students in their classes. These beginning teachers, with one exception, appeared to be less aware of their schools’ policies in being responsive to student diversity.

With a range of views and orientations to certain facets of diversity, these beginning teachers next stepped into schools that had their own priorities and practices. It must be remembered that six out of the seven novice teachers in this study had prior knowledge of their schools. However, the realities of six hour days of intense and continuous interactions with students could also introduce an element of “isolation”, from being the well supported student teacher to being in a classroom as the teacher (Lortie, 1975; Ryan, 1986). The following chapter will examine some of the contextual factors that had begun influencing the initial perceptions of these beginning teachers towards student diversity as they begin to “implement a curriculum generally developed by others” (Bullough, 1992, p. 239).
Chapter Five:

Schools’ Ethos and Diversity

The previous chapter examined the initial beliefs and dispositions of the beginning teachers towards diversity and the influence of their initial teacher education practicum placements in their choice of schools to commence their teaching careers. This chapter will explore some of the contextual factors that could potentially influence the beginning teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards student diversity as they begin teaching. In particular, it examines the ways in which the school leaders and tutor teachers perceived diversity in their schools, and school practices and policies in response to it.

Principals’ perception of diversity

Principals and the nature of their leadership determines the ethos of a school (Bullough, 1987; Langdon, 2001; Nias et al., 1989; Riehl, 2000; Rosenholtz, 1989). The principals in this study had a range of views on the nature of growing diversity in their schools, as schools continue to become increasingly diverse (Whyte, 2008). These included culture, socio-economic differences, gender and academic learning abilities.

Culture

The presence of a range of nationalities and cultures in their schools was widely acknowledged by two of the principals:

To me it is the microcosm of New Zealand society. There is every nationality that we would have in the greater New Zealand society here
– though the majority are Pākehā/Palagi\textsuperscript{40} students, a good proportion of Māori and good proportion of Pasifika and just about representation from every nation in the world. (Pr)

*We do have cultural diversity. We have the whole range of children that come from all over the place. The European population is round about 46\% to 48\%, about 20\% Māori. Samoan is the next one and the Indian population is increasing – lot of Fijian Indians and lot of Chinese; the rest of the make up is about 9\%. (Pr)*

Increase in multiculturalism in the school was also echoed by another principal:

*We have an increasing number of children from diverse nationalities. We are now getting like other schools, the children from Iraq and Pacific islands and so on. The Māori school population is over 15\% which is quite high for decile 10. So it is fairly diverse community on the whole. (Pr)*

One principal highlighted the importance the school placed on honouring the bicultural aspect of New Zealand and the special place of Māori as tangata whenua amidst the wide range of multicultural backgrounds of students in the school. The richness of the various cultural and mixes was invaluable for this principal:

\textsuperscript{40} New Zealanders of European descent are referred to by Māori as Pākehā. New Zealanders of European descent are referred to by Pacific people as Palagi (pronounced as if there is an ‘n’ before the ‘g’).
We still have a strong commitment to tikanga Māori\(^41\) and the recognition that they are the tangata whenua\(^42\) – we have multiculturalism within biculturalism. It gives us an opportunity to develop within the students an acceptance of diversity and actually celebrating diversity and getting on with a wide range of different cultural and ethnic groups. (Pr)

While acknowledging the multicultural ethos of the school, this principal’s perception of diversity is oriented towards individuality:

*We are so conscious of meeting the individual needs of students and different learning styles as your starting point is always where the child is at.* (Pr)

Not all schools were perceived to be multiculturally diverse. As one principal noted:

*We don’t have a wide cultural diversity in this school – mainly European, mainly Pākehā. We have the occasional Asian child, Pacific Island child, quite a few Māori children but they are not Māori children who are totally immersed in their culture. English is the first language of pretty much all the children.* (Pr)

For this principal too, diversity was about individuality:

*I suppose we cater for children as individuals, I suppose that is how we look at diversity. We nurture the children as individuals.* (Pr)

\(^{41}\) Customary, correct and practical ways of doing things the Māori way.

\(^{42}\) The indigenous people – Māori.
In general, all but one principal perceived an increasing multiculturalism in their schools. In acknowledging the cultural diversity or the lack of it, some of the principals also saw diversity as individuality, similar to the perceptions of the beginning teachers.

**Socio-economic status**

Three of the five principals mentioned socio-economic status as an aspect of diversity in their schools. In one of them, families were perceived to be from a higher socio-economic background, while in another school community, there were a number of issues pertaining to low socio-economic status of families. The third school community was perceived by the principal to be a mix of affluent and lower income families:

*Quite a wealthy school; really in terms of it is a decile 10 school, most of the children come from quite well off homes. We don’t have a huge diversity in terms of socio-economic background.* (Pr)

*The diversity is in the financial backgrounds of the parents; plenty of families struggling to make ends meet, large number of families that are extremely wealthy.* (Pr)

*We are a decile X⁴³. They [the parents] do not have the financial backing that perhaps other schools have.* (Pr)

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⁴³ The actual decile ranking of the school has been concealed to protect anonymity.
The principals who mentioned the financial diversity of their communities were realistic about their school communities and what it meant for their students’ learning.

**Gender**

Gender was the least mentioned aspect of diversity by the school principals. Only one principal made specific reference to gender:

*The interesting thing is the proportion of boys, 57% boys across the school and in some cohorts it is almost twice as many boys as girls.* (Pr)

The principal seemed to be pleasantly surprised by the balance of gender among the students.

**Academic learning ability**

Like the beginning teachers, principals in the study also emphasised learning abilities as a key aspect of diversity in their schools:

*Unfortunately we have a tail. And unfortunately, some of these little kiddies I think, no matter how much we pour on to them or into them, they don’t move too much. Some of them have had Reading Recovery and the lights haven’t really come on yet which is unfortunate, but that is reality.* (Pr)

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44 An individualised reading assistance programme delivered by teachers who have had specific training.
Looking, finding children’s needs, because we have children with special needs, we have an autistic boy and a little boy with Down’s syndrome, and we have got two or three from other learning needs. (Pr)

One of the factors perceived as influencing the emphasis on the academic aspect of diversity by the school leaders was that of parental expectations:

In a high decile community parents are vitally interested in a couple of aspects, one is in their children being very safe and sheltered, and the second aspect is definitely involved with kids’ learning. They understand a lot more than any other parents do. So they want to know about that. (Pr)

As a result there was school-wide professional development and support for all staff:

As an example, we are currently doing training on dealing with gifted and talented children. (Pr)

In providing support to meet the increased focus on students’ academic learning, beginning teachers in the schools were provided with buddy teachers, mentors for ICT\textsuperscript{45} development, and team leaders in addition to the mandatory tutor teacher support.

\textsuperscript{45} Information (and) Communication Technology.
The emphasis on academic learning articulated by high decile school leaders was not very different to the expectations of parents from comparatively lower socio-economic backgrounds. As the principal of a school in this community noted:

_They [the parents] want the best for their children like any normal parents._ (Pr)

Another principal, who also had to cater to the needs of gifted and talented learners, seemed to perceive the wide range of academic diversity as a reflection of the school community, which included “tradesmen, architects and accountants”:

_It [gifted and talented] can cause stresses as well, trying to cater for those kids in similar classrooms. Because even identifying them [gifted and talented children] can be hassle. The most gifted child can be the most disruptive._ (Pr)

Diversity in academic learning was mentioned by all the principals in the study. The principals, irrespective of the decile ranking of the schools, perceived a big range of learning abilities in their schools that ranged from gifted and talented learners to those who were struggling to learn.

**Community involvement**

The principals in the study were unanimous in their perceptions of the supportive nature of their school communities. The principals reported that they consulted their communities regularly on matters related to the curriculum and learning, which in turn informed their strategic goals and policies:
We survey the community on a regular basis for lots of different reasons. So that is one way that we know what the community needs and [we] meet those needs. (Pr)

We normally have a meeting once a year where we talk about what’s on top whether it is literacy or numeracy. We also consult with the Health syllabus once every two years and we consult with the Māori community once a year as well. (Pr)

The principals also emphasised the extent to which their school communities were involved in their children’s learning:

They are very interested in their kiddies’ schooling. So we have to be quite transparent in the expectations we have for our children, quite transparent in the decision making process, involving parents as much as we can. (Pr)

It is a fabulous school community. I hadn’t worked previously in a community that has such a sense of togetherness or such a strong commitment towards the school. (Pr)

The community has ownership of the school. Like it is not my school, it is not the teachers’ school – it is very much a community school. (Pr)

It is a very supportive community, very supportive. They do not have the financial backing that perhaps other schools have. (Pr)
These schools also had a range of practices in terms of parents having access to classroom teachers:

*I am very happy for parents to be associated with the school and having a chat with teachers so long as it is not interfering with the teachers’ time. As in time after school and before school I believe, especially the first half hour before and after is neat to be with kids and to check with the kids to find out, and be available to parents.* (Pr)

*I have encouraged the school to be [an] open school so parents are welcomed to the school at any particular time and that has paid off.* (Pr)

Another principal pointed out the unrestricted engagement with families. The school had organised specific meeting groups that were culturally appropriate:

*Really it [community involvement] is unlimited. [We] run a Pasifika support group; also for our Māori parents we have a whānau hui once a term.* (Pr)

All principals perceived their respective school communities to be supportive and collaborative. The communities were seen to be fully involved in many aspects of the schools. Parents were welcomed to be part of the schools at any time, although some schools had certain restrictions for parents to meet teachers during school days. This was perceived not only as a protective measure for teachers, but also to promote more informal conversations between teachers and students immediately before school and after.
Tutor teachers’ perception of diversity

Tutor teachers who held positions of responsibility in the schools and played a crucial role in the induction process of beginning teachers (Cameron et al., 2006), emphasised the culture, students’ background, and learning abilities in their descriptions of diversity.

Culture

One of the tutor teachers further expanded on the school principal’s comment on the commitment of the school to the Treaty partnership. Foregrounding Māori tikanga in all aspects of the school was an integral part of this tutor teacher’s school culture:

*We are totally committed to the principles to the Treaty of Waitangi.*

*Our first priority is really the bicultural nature of New Zealand to reflect that in our classrooms. So to that end we all speak as much Māori as we can and are learning more.* (Tt)

As the school was multicultural in its make-up of students, the tutor teacher also acknowledged the effort taken to respect other cultural dimensions in the school:

*We are aware of our Pasifika students – where they have come from, of their learning styles, the cooperative nature of their families. And then there are other families – our Filipino families, our Chinese families.*

(Tt)

Two of the tutor teachers were excited by the wide range of cultural and ethnic diversity in their schools. While one wanted to provide an enriched and
stimulating environment to enable learning, the other felt that there was a lot to learn from the students and their families themselves:

It is interesting because you have got a nice cross-group of children that learn to relate with each other from different ethnic groups. And we have children who might not have had many experiences but when they come to school and they have got a nice stimulating environment that they really enjoy and take off because they have got that environment to learn. (Tt)

It’s ethnically diverse but it is also culturally diverse you know there are people who are centred and who know who they are and proud of their culture. Families will come in telling us about Chinese New Year or Diwali you know, Pasifika festivals, yeah. We are aware of Māori families who go to Turangawaewae – their marae for tangi that kind of stuff. (Tt)

All but one school perceived themselves to be very multicultural. Tutor teachers in schools that had a multicultural mix of students were very welcoming of the range of diversity and the richness that provided to the schools’ environment.

**Home background**

The home background of students appeared to be a feature of the tutor teachers’ perception of diversity, even among those who felt that their schools were not ethnically diverse:

We have diversity in what they bring to school – and just different family structures, some live with grandparents, some are with
caregivers. So there is a wide range that children bring with them and we have to cope with. (Tt)

We also have lots of single parent families. (Tt)

There is great diversity in the home culture. Because the make-up of the families, the values and beliefs of the families and all that gets put into the melting pot in a classroom. (Tt)

Only one tutor teacher specifically mentioned socio-economic diversity:

Socio-economic background is quite broad, because while we are in [school location], kids are from very low [income families]. (Tt)

Family compositions and structures were aspects that featured more in the perceptions of some of the tutors than the social strata that the children came from.

**Academic learning ability**

Academic abilities also featured as the predominant aspect of diversity among the tutor teachers. These tutor teachers had noticed an increasing diversity in the academic learning ability of the students:

The biggest thing [for me is the student’s ability to learn] – yes. Within the classroom there is always a lot of diversity, there is always children who come in – like some of these children can write their names and I have got children in here that can’t hold a crayon, and then I have got these other ones who have ESOL. I have had a little Down’s boy but we don’t seem to get a huge amount of really special needs. (Tt)
Three other tutor teachers shared this belief around diversity:

*There is lot of diversity within their learning styles. We seem to be getting more and more children with special needs that provide a kind of diversity.* (Tt)

*Our ethnic make up is quite wide. The kids within my classroom, I have a huge range and it has gotten wider at the lower end this year. I have a girl – significant delays, and social delays, academic delays. Then I have the academic range, it is very wide.* (Tt)

*It is a decile 10 school and this is pretty much a decile 10 school. There is not much of a huge diversity. We do have a couple of twins who started last year – they have got quite high needs – haven’t been to preschool.* (Tt)

There was also a major focus on academic learning in one of the schools in response to high parental expectations:

*Parent expectations here [are] huge and the parents want to see their children reading and writing. They don’t want to see their children making models. They want to see results. They want to see their children reading at their age level or above. The parents’ expectations are very high. When it comes to accountability you have got to be on your toes. In this community with a decile 10 influence, there is a bit of pressure. Parents want to see their kids moving along; they want to make sure that their kids are changing reading groups reasonably*
often. They are following through, and putting maybe a little bit of pressure on some of the teachers. (Tt)

Another tutor teacher perceived the role of the school as catering to the needs of individual students’ learning and emotional needs:

*Every child has to be dealt as an individual and every child’s learning has to be catered for and every child’s emotional needs has to, whatever degree can be met in the school, has to be met.* (Tt)

Like their principals, all tutor teachers perceived a huge diversity among academic learning abilities of their students. They perceived a steady increase in the range of academic capabilities among students each year. In one of the schools, it was perceived that the enormous pressure of parental expectations would be a factor that would influence the way the beginning teacher learnt to teach in the school.

**Gender**

None of the tutor teachers mentioned gender as an aspect of diversity.

Overall the principals and tutor teachers in this study perceived their schools as having a wide range of diversity that included culture, ethnicity, socio-economic differences and the children’s varying home backgrounds. While socio-economic status was an aspect that was emphasised by the principals, tutor teachers were more oriented towards the type of home backgrounds and experiences of the students. Gender and age did not feature predominantly as an aspect of diversity and was mentioned only by one of the principals. Among the range of diversity in their schools, the differences in the academic learning abilities of students stood out
predominantly for both the principals and tutor teachers. Schools reported a high level of community involvement in formulating policies and the day-to-day activities of the school. Some schools perceived increased parental expectations of students’ performance as a factor that dictated their focus on academic ability.

**Schools’ responsiveness to diversity**

The prevailing ethos of the school and the prevailing beliefs and attitudes of staff determined the nature of policies and practices (Mentis, Quinn, & Ryba, 2005). These schools appeared to respond to diversity and community expectations in many different ways that included selection of staff, school policies and through their pedagogical practices as articulated by the principals and tutor teachers.

**Staff selection**

The schools appeared to place considerable importance on the selection process of beginning teachers and principals had a major role in the selection of beginning teachers (Broadley & Broadley, 2004). Some principals highlighted the importance of having a well developed appointment process that enabled them choose the right candidate:

> So that is the first part that I have learnt over the years is how to get the appointments right. The interview process we did use was a cracker.

(Pr)

> The most important thing is the appointment process; the first thing for me is building up experience over the appointment processes. Nowadays with so many trainees graduating each year schools can afford to be a little bit choosy. (Pr)
Some of them reported on specific qualities in the teachers they employ:

*When we make an appointment [of staff] here, one of the critical factors for me personally is that I am looking for teachers who have the people skills that we believe will enable them to relate really well to diverse communities. So getting the right people to match up here is quite important.* (Pr)

*I think we wouldn’t employ somebody who didn’t have an intuitive feel for and respect for a diverse community.* (Tt)

*A sense of humour! They need that. No, you get a feeling for the person when you are talking to them and interviewing them. We have some criteria we look at etc.* (Pr)

For one of the principals, the criteria for appointing beginning teachers were that they had to be eager learners with a positive attitude:

*We want somebody who we know can intellectually learn. The second one is that they have to have something about their personality that means that [they] can contribute positively to this school and not negatively. So we are looking for people who will learn enthusiastically.* (Pr)

Another principal looked for classroom management skills in beginning teachers:

*The practicalities of running the classroom is most important and things like classroom management is a big plus. If they have got that*
sussed, then they have lot less problems in the classroom. The tutor teacher will help with the curriculum side and also management side. So if they get those skills from the teachers’ college then it makes a big difference. (Pr)

For another, it was important that the beginning teachers had experienced the school ethos and had decided to be part of it:

They have nailed their colours to the mast, in the sense that they wanted to come to a school that showed such aroha\(^{46}\) and caring towards the students. (Pr)

It was also evident that not all principals were keen to appoint beginning teachers. For example:

We have to take a beginning teacher though I would prefer an experienced teacher. But circumstances you know, there are not enough people to go around. (Pr)

Another principal preferred someone with experience who would share the responsibility of the team. The school’s decision not to employ overseas teachers, or those returning to work after a break, limited the field of potential applicants:

When I advertised the job, I actually said to my senior teachers, “I don’t want a beginning teacher because we have got a young staff and we need staff balance”. We need to make sure that we have those people there who we can throw things at, like responsibilities at, and

\(^{46}\) All encompassing love.
go, “look after it for us, you are part of the team, do your job; help us all out”. (Pr)

However, not all of them echoed the above sentiments. One principal spoke positively of experiences with beginning teachers:

_We have had actually very competent beginning teachers. The ones we had needed support but they have all been very, very good thinkers and very good learners._ (Pr)

A tutor teacher was sympathetic towards the novices and felt it was the structure of the teacher education programme and its short duration of training for graduates that did not allow sufficient time for practical classroom experience:

_I think just the design of the courses; it is pressurised trying to learn everything. Like they come to the classroom they have got big gaps in their knowledge._ (Tt)

Appointment of beginning teachers in these schools had been a combination of well-honed selection processes in some schools, with some schools having more specific requirements than others. Those beginning teachers who had their practicum in their respective schools appeared to be at an advantage in knowing what was expected of them. It appeared that the school leaders wanted someone who would fit into the existing culture, and the hesitation to appoint beginning teachers perhaps reflected their apprehension in appointing persons not acculturated into the schooling system in New Zealand.
Nurturing the beginning teacher

The schools in this study were protective and supportive of the beginning teachers they employed in a number of ways. Two principals were keen to expose the beginning teachers to the school community with support:

*I think it is the first time that they have had to deal with children perhaps coming with some very dubious home backgrounds. Then suddenly the reality is the child is coming to school without breakfast. They are faced with anger problems in the home or something like that and they have to deal with it at the chalk face. It is quite a – you read about it, hear about it but when you actually have to confront the situation and that is where the TT and myself come into, we are always there to support them.* (Pr)

*Nudging a new teacher into those communities is something that you do very slowly.* (Pr)

Some principals ensured that the beginning teachers’ classes did not have challenging students in them, while others exposed them to the realities of the classrooms but provided adequate support to ensure that they were able to cope:

*Ensuring that the children she receives for the first year don’t have extremes of learning or extremes of behaviour. For most schools that still features as being important.* (Pr)

*You don’t hand pick a class. They have to have a good range, for it is not fair on the other teachers as well; we all support her through that.* (Pr)
It would be nice to say that the beginning teacher will never get a difficult child, that is simply untrue and it is unrealistic. We have got the usual proportion of kids with special learning needs, and behavioural issues and quirky natures. So a balanced class means that there are no extremes but there still is plenty of diversity. (Pr)

Another principal focused on supporting beginning teachers to have more realistic expectations of students:

The first years [beginning teachers], they have this expectation that they are going to make these kiddies zoom. A little bit of movement will be fine rather than a zoom. But they want to change the world some of these first years. In feedback sessions trying to put a bit of reality on some of their expectations. (Pr)

Tutor teachers too were keen to ensure that the beginning teachers were supported and nurtured at all stages. They wanted the beginning teachers to be enthusiastic and motivated. To this extent they wanted to ensure that systems were in place to support the day-to-day functioning of the beginning teachers:

That their well being is paramount and that they are bright and sparkly and looking forward to the next week. Eager to be in their classrooms, eager to contribute to meetings so that they feel like they are effective professionals and part of equals in the team. (Tt)

I feel like this at this particular school [a] whole lot of information about the school systems, a lot of those guidelines are made very clear. (Tt)
I have sort of said to her that in the first six weeks all she is to worry about is just setting the routines. And if anything else could happen, it was a bonus. (Tt)

Availability and proximity were two aspects important for the tutor teachers in their support of beginning teachers. Apart from regular scheduled meetings and more informal conversations, the tutor teachers appeared to feel that they needed to be accessible to beginning teachers at all times:

*I will check with her daily – pop over and say, “hey, how is it going?”*

Popping in and out, seeing that they are on top of things, not feeling overwhelmed and helping them manage their workload. (Tt)

*I have been in each morning and afternoon in the last couple of days and she has shown me what she has done. (Tt)*

*Discussions and dialogues and our discussions are actually informal.* (Tt)

*Because we are right next door, we are chatting all the time about what is going on – little pastoral discussions go on all the time. (Tt)*

Tutor teachers saw themselves as being responsible for assisting the new teachers to find their feet. They appeared committed to ensuring that the beginning teachers were well supported to manage their classrooms and academic tasks, and also to ensuring their well being. A tutor teacher, who was a novice teacher herself not so long ago, acknowledged the challenges of the first few weeks for beginning teachers:
I think it is a challenge, because you are just trying to figure out managing your classroom, you are trying to figure out managing all this admin stuff and this new institution you are getting to know well. So there are systems and administration things that you are figuring out. Classroom systems that you have to figure out for yourself and then be ready for the children, you need to think of that as well. So I think it’s definitely challenging. (Tt)

As a result the tutor teachers saw their roles as providing a wrap-around support – from pastoral care to policy induction – for the beginning teachers. From regular meetings to informal day-to-day “hallway conversations”, they perceived themselves as the conduit for the beginning teachers to put into practice the theories they had learnt in their teacher education programmes:

This year is all about finding out things – just take it slowly and enjoy it. (Tt)

Teaching is an overwhelming job; it does not make you a rounded person. It is actually making sure, encouraging young teachers to keep up their sports, cultural activities, social activities – encouraging that whole wellness thing. (Tt)

I like to support her so that she doesn’t feel like she has to stay here till 7 o’clock [at night], and be here all weekend. (Tt)

I think because we have got just a diverse range of kids, and needs and abilities, and cultures – like it is the whole school value of the way we
While providing a comprehensive support for the beginning teachers, tutor teachers were also conscious of the enormity of their responsibilities in terms of the full registration requirements of beginning teachers, the cumbersomeness of the paper work, and also expressed their own professional limitations:

*It is a big responsibility at the end of two years to put this stuff [documentation required for full registration of teachers] through and if it doesn’t meet the standards you have wasted two years of somebody’s time. It is very scary. (Tt)*

*It is quite hard to know what the guidelines are, how much you should record and how much documentation you should keep. There is a folder that came out and I do not know what it is called. I have read through and find some of the stuff repetitive. I was just hoping it will be like a checklist that you just went tick tick tick, and make sure all of these are covered in the year. There are really some good bits [that] I cut out – bits that had good pointers for goal setting and different areas to cover at our meetings. (Tt)*

*I don’t know everything about teaching teachers how to teach. (Tt)*

The tutor teachers in this study appeared to provide a supportive and nurturing environment for the beginning teachers. The tutor teachers also saw their roles not only as professional guides but also as those who monitored the personal
well being of the beginning teachers. As part of the nurturing, some schools reduced the time beginning teachers may need to spend on classroom management or adapting the curriculum by hand picking students for their classes; in some other schools it was not practical to orchestrate such classrooms. Nevertheless, the schools ensured that the beginning teachers were well supported by providing them with tutor teacher support as mandated by the registration requirements of the New Zealand Teachers Council.

School policies

The broader policies of schools had the common element of stating their goals, visions, and special character of the schools, through to National Administrative Guidelines (NAG)47 and their community consultation processes. Some schools’ documents acknowledged the bicultural aspect of Aotearoa explicitly and others had sections devoted to their commitment to Manaakitanga48 and Whakawhanaungatanga49. In one of the schools, the strategic document outlining the importance of curriculum planning identified planning as a process that allows for “helping to cater to individual children’s learning needs”. Another school’s charter highlighted the importance of educational achievements and quality educational experiences that would be provided to create “motivated and independent” students.

Schools’ policies and the guiding documents had an explicit focus on individual learning, assessment processes, and aspects of behaviour management – all three being important to the day-to-day practices in the classrooms. These schools

47 NAGs set out statements of desirable principles of administration or conduct for specified personnel.
48 Respect and upliftment.
49 Extended kinship ties.
had distilled the core essence of their policies in the staff induction folders as a strategy to avoid overwhelming their novice teachers. The primary focus of information in these folders was on curriculum delivery and assessment, along with administrative and class management information. The induction folders clearly outlined expectations from staff in terms of pedagogy, professional learning, reporting and assessments. A strong emphasis on curriculum delivery and assessment in particular required the teachers to be able to assess and group the students according to their abilities, particularly in literacy and numeracy. One school broadly classified the purpose of assessment to include:

- Feedback to parents, BOTs; establishing groups; diagnostic purposes;
- use in portfolios, and evaluate class programmes.

One of the ways in which another school ensured that all students were assessed appropriately was through a “best fit” level, which was the level at which a student usually worked. The underlying assumption for this process, used alongside standardised tests, was to ensure that staff had an expectation of “every student’s working ability, attitude, or skills”\textsuperscript{50}.

In one other school, the policy related to diversity is referred to explicitly under NEG 6\textsuperscript{51} and focuses on students’ academic learning abilities. The school had a special needs policy that included a wide spectrum of students including the gifted and talented. The policy also stated that the identification of their special needs will be undertaken using a variety of methods including school, home and community

\textsuperscript{50} Induction folder.
\textsuperscript{51} National Education Goals 6 states: Excellence achieved through the establishment of clear learning objectives, monitoring student performance against those objectives, and programmes to meet the individual need [of students] (Ministry of Education, 2009, www.minedu.govt.nz).
inputs. The policy stated that an awareness of social and cultural factors was necessary during the identification process. Nevertheless, the policy also stated that the purpose of the identification was to categorise students to provide the appropriate learning context and support.

In general, assessments of students that formed a key part of the staff induction folders appeared to have a dual purpose. While monitoring individual learning was one of the stated purposes, there was an underlying element of classifying students according to their academic abilities. The term “special needs” was used to cover the wide range of academic learning abilities in the schools – from gifted learners to those who required additional support to access the curriculum.

Although schools had well documented policies that defined the focus and direction of schools’ responsiveness to their diverse communities, the school principals appeared to have a range of views about the extent to which they wanted the beginning teachers to be familiar with the school policies. Some principals did not want the beginning teachers to have a sound knowledge of the policies at the beginning:

To be perfectly blunt they shouldn’t be bothered about it, at the beginning. I don’t even want to show it to them now because they have to get on with the nuts and bolts stuff. The reality of diversity, the deep thinking stuff will come later, when they are not so tired. (Pr)

Very slowly; they have got an awful lot to take on board. (Pr)
We have got a policy folder in the staff room where all the policies are and they will be told where that is, so that they can access it if they want to, when they want to. (Pr)

Rather than focus on becoming familiar with policies, most of the principals felt that beginning teachers had a lot to deal with in the day-to-day management of their classrooms. They perceived the roles of beginning teachers as primarily focusing on getting to know the children and begin teaching, rather than gaining an understanding of the schools’ policy intent:

We have got a copy of all of the school policies on the shared drive on the computer. They can access that from their classroom. I really don’t think that beginning teachers are too interested in policies. They are too busy learning to swim. (Pr)

I am saying to them that they [policies and other governance structure documents] are there on the shelf and you are not to read them. (Pr)

Another principal seemed to feel that relevant sections of the school policies were included in the induction folder:

I give the teachers a copy of the teacher’s handbook, which really is all they need to know about their day-to-day management of their classrooms. (Pr)

Two principals, however, were of the opinion that beginning teachers should know about the school policies and that it was the role of the tutor teachers and other staff to help beginning teachers become familiar with them:
They have a policies and procedures handbook in each room and the tutor teacher also goes through with them as well. (Pr)

The school culture is such that staff members will take new teachers under their wings and guide them on such things. They will help them understand those things [policy matters]. (Pr)

Some tutor teachers too saw themselves in the role of introducing school policies to the beginning teachers:

It is [my role to inform them of the school policy]. Got to show them everything – show them how the curriculum works and how it works from the school plan down. (Tt)

Yes, walking them through the documentation that we have. Not that I have needed to do it for she has walked through herself. But if needed, yes, I would. (Tt)

Oh, yes. That is actually one of the things in my goal. I can put down here actually. Yes that is something to go through. (Tt)

One tutor teacher in particular differed in her views. She felt that expecting novice teachers to know the school polices at the beginning might be too onerous and time consuming:

Yes there are some bits and pieces that you do pass on but you don’t sit down and say, “this is the school culture”; “this is the school policy on this and that”. You don’t want to overload them with policies when they
walk through the door as they have so many other things to overload them. (Tt)

The expectations to know about school policies on various aspects of student diversity appeared to vary between the schools. Some principals were definite about not overwhelming the beginning teachers with the nitty gritty of school policies. Others felt that the information in the induction booklets provided to newcomers is all that the beginning teachers needed to know to be in the classroom.

Tutor teachers too had different perceptions of the extent to which the novice teachers needed to be exposed to school policies. Some saw their roles as introducing school policies to the beginning teachers at the outset, while some felt that it was up to each novice teacher to decide when and what they wanted to access from school policy documents.

**Pedagogical practices**

Teachers’ handbooks or staff induction folders were the documents that provided the guidance for the pedagogical practices of the beginning teachers:

*We have got a staff induction handbook that I have been through with her. It talks about how and why and what we do at school, bell times and behaviour management programme of the school and all sorts of things.* (Tt)

In one of the schools, the beginning teacher was provided with an induction folder that contained the systems and administrative tasks, along with policy
documents related solely to curriculum procedures and plans which specified how the curriculum was to be delivered, assessed and reported upon.

As mentioned earlier, schools in this study also varied in their practices of placing students with learning and behavioural needs in beginning teachers’ classrooms. Schools that had students with additional learning or behaviour needs in beginning teachers’ classrooms were sympathetic to the situation and ensured that there was adequate support for them:

*It is an unfortunate reality that the year group she [beginning teacher] is in we couldn’t keep the numbers down. She has got a special needs boy in there too, an ORRS funded child. I am conscious that it can create extra stress. Luckily she is well supported with teacher aide time.*

(Pr)

*But certainly we wouldn’t, we have got two students who have a full time teacher aide, we haven’t given them one of those.* (Pr)

*Were she to have a child that we suspected having characteristics of ASD or were there to be a child in her class that we really wanted to investigate further as we were worried about their learning, then we will be doing it alongside her.* (Tt)

It is perhaps the perceived knowledge of what initial teacher training offers that dictates the ways in which schools dealt with placing and supporting students with special needs:
We would not expect her to know about that [students with special needs] kind of diversity. (Tt)

One year course, it is pressurised trying to learn everything. They have got big gaps in their knowledge. (Tt)

There was a school-wide professional development on specific disabilities in one of the schools:

The fact we have the enhanced learning development in the school’s PD so that we are looking at the needs of students with Aspergers, ASD students and students who have suffered trauma, that in itself is a support as well because that really supports in looking at students as individuals, and to celebrate their diversity and not to see the class as a class but to see children as individuals. (Tt)

One of the schools in the study, however, appeared to place a strong emphasis on all teachers having responsibility to plan and deliver the curriculum to students with special needs. In another school, a specialist teacher had the responsibility of planning for students with special needs, as the focus of the school was to meet the individual needs of students:

I definitely think that individual abilities are being recognised and catered to much more than they used to be [in primary]. We don’t teach the class; I think that is definitely no. (Tt)
One of the ways the individualisation of the programme worked for a student with special needs in this school was withdrawal from the class to work with a teacher aide\textsuperscript{52}.

In one of the schools, the beginning teachers were inducted into bicultural practices in their pedagogy:

\textit{Our first priority is really the bicultural nature of NZ – to reflect that in our classrooms. So to that end we all speak as much Māori as we can and are learning more. We never sit on tables here; we respect the cultural practices around food, taking our shoes off as we enter classrooms, having a karakia at the beginning of the day. So the tikanga of the school is really important.} (Tt)

There also appeared to be an expectation among the tutor teachers that the beginning teachers had to understand the children in their classrooms and develop rapport with each one of them in order to be responsive to the range of diversity in their classrooms. It was important that they understood the expectations of the particular school community:

\textit{I think in the first instance any teacher has to connect with their children first – to get to know them first – you can’t teach a child unless you have a relationship with them.} (Tt)

\textsuperscript{52} Classroom observations – Term 2 & 3.
I think in the first instance any student [teacher] has to connect with their children first; they need to connect, need to get to know them first. (Tt)

She [the beginning teacher] has seen a lot of things while she has been on sections [practicum placements]; they might work in one school but they won’t work here. (Tt)

Schools in the study had definitive ways of teaching and assessing, including the times that each curriculum area was taught, and these were explained to the beginning teachers as part of their induction information. This time-table for teaching was provided as a basis for the beginning teachers’ day-to-day routines while they get to know their students. While the tutor teachers guided the beginning teachers’ practice through informal and formal meetings, there was an overall practice of not expecting beginning teachers to teach students who were academically or behaviourally challenging.

**Planning**

The planning of lessons and units also seemed to vary among the schools. There appeared to be variations in the extent to which there was consultation, information sharing and planning of lessons among the teachers (Hargreaves, 1994). In general, discussions in planning sessions appeared to focus on topics and did not include adapting topics in response to the diversity in the classrooms. Nevertheless, in some schools, there was an underlying expectation that the broad unit plans would be adapted for individual classrooms. But there appeared varying degrees of support for the beginning teachers to be able to do it:
Sometimes you can do a syndicate unit but you all have to do your individual planning to make it work for your children. (Tt)

I have asked [the beginning teacher] if she would like to plan her weekly planning with me for the next few weeks. She knows my systems from last year, but we have worked the last couple of weeks together to do our weekly planning. (Tt)

I show them the planning. Even though they do planning [as part of their training], it is different from reality when you have got to do it yourself. (Tt)

Involvement of beginning teachers in planning appeared to vary among the schools. In some schools the beginning teachers contributed freely to discussions around planning units. Collaborative processes were observed in the syndicate meetings of two of the schools, where the beginning teachers contributed equally with their more senior peers. The planning process included a shared brain-storming session where everyone’s idea was built upon and expanded by others:

She has led the staff meetings, she has done the planning, she is a real researcher, she researches, she is a reader, she wants to find out all the information and she is really very happy to share it. (Tt)

Some tutor teachers even encouraged the beginning teachers to lead or share the planning sessions:

It is really by noticing and building on their strengths; it is keeping an ear to the team meetings and listening for the ways in which she is
contributing and knowing her strengths, encouraging her to contribute.

And within our team as well, she has really taken her place within the team as a bright young professional with a lot to give. (Tt)

In another school, the tutor teacher provided step-by-step guidance to teaching a topic, although the beginning teacher planned individually:

Remember this [enquiry learning] is hard as you have to get children to ask questions and how are you going to do that? You need to present the experiments but not answers – you are going to make them ask the questions. (Tt)

The practices around planning in these schools appeared to be generic – undertaken for a homogenous group of students. Unit plans were drafted with the whole class in mind and the weekly lesson plans were general outlines of the topics to be covered. The exception was the reading plans, which tended to specify the names of particular texts that matched the ability level of the students. Often planning templates were downloaded from a curriculum resource website. From the weekly planning documents sighted by the researcher, and in observations during syndicate planning meetings, there appeared to be no explicit discussions around planning for the various needs of the students. There appeared to be an expectation that all teachers, including beginning teachers, would adapt the general unit plans to suit the needs of the children in their classrooms.

53 Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) being the most accessed website.
Student assessments appeared to be the main agenda item in the PRT and syndicate meetings observed by the researcher. Mentoring conversations were predominantly around assessments in literacy and to a lesser degree in numeracy. In one of the schools, establishing reading levels of students was seen as the primary task of the beginning teacher:

*To start with she is going to do her running records so that she can get the reading levels right. So the first while, assessments are going to be, she has to check all their alphabets as well – where those children are. That is the first thing she has to do. (Tt)*

In another school, the tutor teacher appeared to perceive her role to assist the beginning teacher to assess the students so that they could be grouped for teaching:

*Assessment is important and how to group the children from what they have found. (Tt)*

Planning and assessment of reading dominated the conversations in PRT and syndicate meetings observed in all the schools. In comparison, lesser time was devoted to numeracy planning, in what appeared to be a hierarchy in terms of time spent on planning among the curriculum areas. In one of the schools, the beginning teacher was asked to shift her first block of teaching time, initially allocated to numeracy, to make way for literacy, as children were perceived to be more alert first thing in the morning:

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54 Field notes.
[The beginning teacher] wanted to do maths first thing in the morning, but I suggested to her that maybe children are more receptive first thing in the morning and we will be better doing the language-based things. (Tt)

The researcher came to understand that the efficiency of the maths website\textsuperscript{55}, in terms of offering well prepared plans with related activities, was the main reason why less time was spent on planning for numeracy. The web resources with ready-made sample lesson plans were used in three of the schools:

\begin{quote}
It [the website] is god sent; it has all the activities, and resources and worksheets and it is just great. (Tt)
\end{quote}

Another explanation for less planning time for numeracy was that the schools were in various stages of involvement with the Numeracy Project professional development that provided dedicated time for numeracy-based planning and teaching.

\textbf{Summary}

The perceptions of school leaders about the nature of diversity provided the backdrop for the context in which these seven beginning teachers were placed. The extent to which the communities engaged with the schools, and their expectations, had also shaped the day-to-day practices of these five schools. In the absence of being able to appoint experienced teachers, some of these beginning teachers had been appointed through finely honed selection processes in which school principals

\textsuperscript{55} www.nzmaths.co.nz
looked for attributes and attitudes that aligned with the ethos of their schools. The “organisational literacy” that the beginning teachers gained through practicum placements appeared to be a passport for their acceptance into a school community. Once welcomed into the schools, the principals and tutor teachers nurtured and supported the beginning teachers to begin learning ways of working in the particular school community.

School principals made deliberate choices in determining the extent to which they wanted the beginning teachers to know about school policies to meet the diverse needs of the community. Some of the principals felt it was unnecessary for the beginning teachers to know about the policies of the school in their entirety during the first year of their teaching; some others felt that, realistically, the beginning teachers would have no time to engage in school policy documents.

The policy documents and strategic goals of the schools and the type of information provided in the staff folder to beginning teachers reiterated the concept of diversity being about individuality. The emphasis in these folders was on identifying individual differences in the academic learning abilities of students. The convergence on the importance of assessments, and identification and grouping of students according to their academic learning abilities appeared to reinforce the unidimensionality of diversity and in promoting individuality and individual differences.

The next chapter will examine the pedagogical practices of the beginning teachers in relation to student diversity. These are informed mainly by the guiding documents provided during their induction with support from their tutor teachers and
peers through formal and informal meetings. As Cole (1992) observes, they had become part of a “new and different reality”, thus they must come to terms with their roles and the values that sustain their institutions as they attempt to strike a balance between their own personal interests and values and those of their institutions (Bullough, 1987). As analysed in the previous chapter, the beginning teachers had already begun to shift and focus their orientation on the dimension of academic learning abilities of their students. The next chapter will further analyse their dispositions and orientations at the end of 12-18 months of teaching.
Chapter Six:

Perceptions and Orientation to Diversity – 12 to 18 months later

Chapter Four reported the initial beliefs and attitudes of the beginning teachers, and Chapter Five reported their schools’ perspectives on responsiveness to diversity. This chapter will explore the beginning teachers’ views on diversity after four to six terms of teaching\textsuperscript{56}. The chapter will explore and examine the pedagogical practices and their perceptions about the influence of school contexts on their practices. To recall, one beginning teacher withdrew from the study after six months. Therefore data gathered from five beginning teachers who participated in the study for 12-18 months, and from a sixth beginning teacher who withdrew from the study after six months due to changing schools, but completed some interview questions at the end of the first year via e-mail, have informed this chapter.

Views on diversity after the first year of teaching

A year after stepping into a “new reality” and navigating the “survival” phase, the orientation of the beginning teachers towards diversity ranged from maintaining their original views to increased awareness and broadening of initially held notions. The three beginning teachers whose initial views on diversity were about uniqueness, differences and individualness did not perceive changes to their initial beliefs a year later:

\textsuperscript{56} As is suggested by the title, these findings are based on a time period 12-18 months later.
I don’t think it has changed. But diversity is still the same thing – different pieces coming together to make unique people and all of those unique people ending up in the classroom. (BT 6)

Because I have had the same sort of ideas from the beginning, I think like I haven’t changed what I think. I still believe that it is an individual thing. (BT 4)

It is still about each individual. I take each child as an individual. I mean that there are so many little things that are different about each – every person and that goes way beyond the classroom – different family situations, different circumstances, different opinions, different views of school, different friendship, different relationships – all throughout their life. There is so much that makes them different from each other. (BT 7)

For some, the first few terms of teaching had provided them with a broader understanding of various aspects of diversity:

I think my understanding has broadened. Initially, maybe I would think immediately in terms of ethnicity. Whereas now, I would also include, learning styles, learning needs, physical needs, mental needs as well, under the banner of diversity. (BT 1)

My perception of diversity has been enhanced by working in these two schools. (BT 3)
In one school, the tutor teacher perceived that she might have contributed towards strengthening and shaping the beginning teacher’s views on diversity:

*I have certainly contributed, certainly encouraged her to think of students as individuals. We have had many conversations about the personalities of each child, the learning needs of each child, the behavioural needs of each child and the ways that she might be responsive to those.* (Tt)

In a period ranging from 12-18 months, it appeared that while these beginning teachers’ understandings of diversity had broadened, their initial orientation of diversity being unique and individualistic remained relatively unaltered.

**School policies**

For the beginning teachers who completed the study, school policies appeared to have had no salient influence on their orientation and dispositions to diversity:

*The school policy is just a document isn’t it? The character and environment of the school probably influenced me more.* (BT 1)

*I am sure I have had a chance to look at them but I have not done it.*

(BT 7)

The reduced expectations of their schools in terms of school policy awareness, as outlined in the previous chapter, could have influenced the beginning teachers’ lack of engagement with policy information.
**Pedagogical practices responsive to diversity**

As the year progressed, the beginning teachers appeared to be developing a better knowledge of their students that allowed them to be more responsive to the students:

*It has been so nice being here and knowing who the kids are, who their families are, where they live, what their lives are like and what they are interested in – really knowing them as people. And that is fundamental to any way that you are going to teach and address the kind of diversity, ethnicity or learning or whatever.* (BT 1)

*Having a relationship with them; they come and tell me things; they come and give me a hug in the morning, or they say thank you and they are well behaved. You can kind of have that next level [of engagement] with them as well.* (BT 4)

These beginning teachers seemed to become more understanding of the students and their different life experiences as the year progressed.

**Responsiveness to academic learning diversity**

As they got to know their students, the beginning teachers perceived that they were able to respond better to the learning needs of the students:

*As each day goes by, I feel like we are just getting to know each other a little bit better; I am now recognising the students that need much more work, much more help.* (BT 7)
Realising that I have to do things differently. Just that one thing does not suit for all of them. That sometimes I do have to spend more time with some or do something differently with someone else or explain it differently, or write it or draw it or whatever; for different kids to make sure they get it, understand and that. (BT 4)

They were, it seemed, more aware of the pedagogical adaptations that would be needed in the classroom, particularly in relation to meeting the learning needs of the children:

*You don’t think about in teachers’ college – specific things like holding a pencil, left-handed children, and the real occupational, environmental factors – that you just don’t think about when you are immersed in the basic stuff. And I have realised the importance of that kind of stuff that makes a difference.* (BT 1)

Two beginning teachers felt that their growing understanding of the students had provided them with the knowledge to be more intuitive to the learning needs of their students:

*I have learnt to manage my writing lesson better so that I actually have time for those students who need the support.* (BT 6)

*Now that I have been teaching a bit longer, I can tell easily where they [the students] are at. And like without having to do all the testing you get a fair idea of, feel of it. And when they are reading, I can pick up things easier than when I first started – pick up on all the different levels and different things sub-consciously. I can call on my own*
knowledge of the kids and where they are at, instead of having to go back to look at my testing. (BT 4)

One beginning teacher, who had relied substantively on collaborative learning situations in her first year of teaching, had decided to change her pedagogical approach to better manage some of the behavioural issues in the classroom:

There are lots of things that I am going to do differently next year. And all that comes down to what is effective learning and what is an effective learning environment; I have realised now that it suits [only] a small portion of students – I did, coming straight from teachers' college all that collaborative, cooperative work and stuff which I think there is definitely a place for, but it is not the only way. (BT 7)

Establishing rapport and having a relationship with their students appeared to be very important for these beginning teachers in order to provide appropriate learning tasks and a conducive working environment. The importance of being connected to students for a beginning teacher is highlighted in the following vignette.
Fostering mutual respect

In her first year of teaching, a beginning teacher had built strong relationships with her students in her own class. She had fostered a culture of mutual respect and empathy. A structured social activity was part of her weekly programme, which allowed for reinforcing the concepts of empathy and mutual respect among students.

My kids, they tend to relate to each other; they treat each other with respect. I have noticed that for some of the children their emotional maturity has increased – makes it easier for me to maintain relationships I have with individual children. It is a special time for us to spend together. (BT 5)

However, in her second year of teaching she did not have a classroom of her own, but shared a junior class with another experienced teacher. She had no input into the planning of their literacy and numeracy programmes, but was in charge of devising programmes for the afternoons. In this arrangement, she felt neither connected to her students nor did she appear to have the same level of professional satisfaction as her first year of teaching.

I think the big difference is that I don’t have the same relationships with the children. I could rely on relationships last year – for example some kids [last year] would feel worse to disappoint me than losing five minutes [of their golden time57]. (BT 5)

This vignette highlights the importance of relationships with students as being a critical factor of her pedagogy, as emphasised by Bishop et al. (2003).

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57 A reward of a preferred activity as part of a behaviour management strategy.
Planning

Planning is the act of organising and arranging teaching and learning situations (McGee & Taylor, 2008). As planning is one of the key aspects of a teacher’s role, the beginning teachers were asked how they planned for diversity in their classrooms. The extent of planning and taking responsibility for the learning of the children with special needs varied between the beginning teachers according to school practices and expectations, together with their own confidence levels.

From the responses gathered from the beginning teachers, it appeared that they perceived that planning was done on a topic basis rather than specifically planning lessons for the range of diversity of students in their classrooms. One of the beginning teachers said that she was unsure what planning for diversity was about:

*I do believe that it [diversity] is individual, but I can’t plan for all. I didn’t even try planning individually. Like in my unit plans and things for maths, I write down what is there and not what I am going to do about it.* (BT 4)

Her planning, as she perceived it, was done for the whole class. Prior to the researcher commencing observations in her class, this beginning teacher said that establishing groups according to the learning abilities of students using diagnostic tests was fundamental to her planning. Once the groups were established and topics

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58 As part of preparing the unit plans, lesson plans and weekly plans.
to be taught were decided, she used the TKI website\textsuperscript{59} to obtain the plans and appropriate activities for each level.

Another beginning teacher wanted to have some understanding of students’ prior knowledge as a starting point for her planning. This knowledge, she said, came through formalised assessments or more informal conversations with students:

\textit{I think the main thing is to check in about the current knowledge or prior knowledge that they have about the subject matter, that is the main thing. I have quite a lot of one-to-one conversations. It is almost pre-assessment but it is very informal, just [that] I know where the starting place is for the planning.} (BT 5)

One beginning teacher\textsuperscript{60} was not fully aware how the school catered to the diverse needs of the students, but she knew that there was a focus on the gifted and talented children in the school:

\textit{I think within each programme there is a lot of planning for not only special needs but also gifted and talented.} (BT 2)

Another beginning teacher appeared to use her own experience as a non-native speaker of English in teaching a science lesson\textsuperscript{61}. She included visual and tactile learning experiences in her planning to optimise the learning of the students, with the knowledge that some of the content and terminologies that she was

\textsuperscript{59} Te Kete Ipurangi is a source of key practical resources for teachers in New Zealand.
\textsuperscript{60} This beginning teacher participated only for two terms in the study.
\textsuperscript{61} Classroom observation – Term 1.
introducing would be unfamiliar to her students, most of who were from a non-
English speaking background.

Beginning teachers also described some ways in which the curriculum could be made available to the diverse range of learners. Knowing how their students learnt was key to engaging them in their learning:

*Make sure you cater to diverse learners by not just using one type of teaching technique – words [work] being written, or oral, and to be able to give learners an opportunity to excel in what they can do. [For students to] be experts in something, be it ICT, sports or any other curriculum area.* (BT 1)

*You just need to know about learning styles. If somebody doesn’t learn very well or their learning style may be kinaesthetic, you just can’t walk in front of them and tell them to sit there and read it. They are not going to get as much out of that as somebody who is a visual learner for example.* (BT 4)

In order to be able to respond to the needs of students who had difficulties with aspects of the curriculum, beginning teachers in some schools received more targeted support from their tutor teachers and peers in addition to the general planning and teaching support.
Professional conversations – 1

**BT**: My Learning Intentions seems to remain the same for a longer period of time. For example I am currently doing reading for expression and that has been ongoing for sometime now.

**Tt**: You can perhaps use it as an umbrella and underneath have LI [learning intentions] such as punctuations – learning to pause at commas and stop at a full stop.

**BT**: (In referring to a particular student for whom she wanted to encourage the level of confidence and mileage in reading) “[the student] is very submissive”.

**Tt**: Blend the two groups and make [the student] the director. Make up cards like cooperative learning cards and one person becomes the director, one the time keeper etc. (Field notes)

Professional conversations – 2

**SL**: What kind of planning does [the student] do before writing?

**BT**: Spider brainstorming. With diary writing we do oral planning.

**Tt**: Perhaps highlight key words which can then be used to write; just keep to one idea and four or five sentences on it.

**SL**: Today just write the start. Then you continue the following day to finish it.

**Tt**: Cue [the student] visually. Perhaps go to SL’s class to be buddied with another student who is just one year up. (Field notes)

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62 Syndicate Leader.
The above examples indicate the nature of conversations that occurred largely in the PRT and syndicate meetings. The focus in these and other professional conversations observed tended to focus on teacher directed processes of ways to teach rather than exploring the “difficulty” from a student perspective.

**Grouping**

The practice of establishing groups within classrooms is not a recent phenomenon (Clarke & Clarke, 2008; Everston, 1989), and the schools in the study appeared to practice ability grouping in preference to whole class teaching (Bonal & Rambla, 1999). The initial set up and organisation of students for learning is a challenging task and an aspect of teaching that some of the beginning teachers perceived they were not well prepared for in their teacher training programme:

*Because you go into schools when you are training and they are in the middle of stuff, you don’t plan. You are there for four weeks; you do your guided reading lesson by lesson.* (BT 4)

As a way of managing the complexities of organising and teaching a class of diverse learners, the beginning teachers established ability groupings in the core curriculum areas of maths and literacy, based on various types of formal\(^{63}\) and informal\(^{64}\) assessments. The students were grouped on the basis of mixed abilities for topic-related learning tasks:

*For maths and literacy yes, they are grouped from their assessment, but in all our topic things we do mixed ability.* (BT 7)

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\(^{63}\) Widely used assessments include the six year net; PAT tests; Running records of graded reading texts; PROBE; STAR; and NUMPA.

\(^{64}\) Mostly used in the New Entrant classes, and include sorting, counting and alphabet identification.
Topic related work is common to all students in my class; groupings exist only for maths and reading. (BT 3)

The groups here are grouped on ability again in maths and reading. But I do buddying for one member of the class who needs buddying. (BT 1)

We do use groups in maths and that is just in line with the Numeracy Project. So start up with everyone altogether and then you start working out where everyone is at and grouping them. (BT 6)

One beginning teacher found grouping to also be effective in dealing with the arrival of new entrants throughout the year:

I have grouped them into their levels of abilities. I try to take the lower, the least ability group who are the very young children. (BT 3)

A beginning teacher, whose syndicate was streamed, taught the middle ability group of students, and encouraged collaborative ways of working within the groups:

I have some whole class teaching and then groups and buddies as well – that is to cater for the lower kind of ability children. I have strong leaders in the groups and it is also encouraging groups to be independent, not individual-independent. (BT 5)

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65 Three senior classes – Years 4, 5 & 6.
The grouping of students was also used to manage behaviours by one beginning teacher, who placed more able students in a lower ability group to provide them with extra teaching time:

*There are few students in the lower level groups who are there more for their behaviour than their ability because I know they need that extra instruction, that extra teaching.* (BT 6)

The practice of ability grouping was further evident when the researcher wanted the beginning teachers to identify up to three things that she could observe in their practices that were examples of catering to the range of diversity in their classrooms. Some of the beginning teachers named tasks that the researcher could observe, such as spelling, writing and reading activities according to the students’ levels and groups. Others wanted the researcher to observe the level of scaffolding in the questions asked, which allowed students with lower and higher abilities to participate equally in the class. One beginning teacher asked the researcher to observe various teaching strategies she used for students in different ability groups in which she included various activities such as work sheets, games and concrete objects, while another wanted the researcher to observe behaviours of students in the different groups. Another beginning teacher wanted the researcher to observe students who worked independently and the ones who needed help. Overall, the observations were directed to the various ability groups in the classrooms, which was the predominant way in which diversity was addressed in the classrooms.

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66 Observations in each of the beginning teachers’ classrooms were during literacy or numeracy time slots and one other curriculum area such as physical education, topic work or arts.
Assessments

The ability grouping of students was based on assessments that were primarily undertaken to gather information about students’ learning (Hill, 2008). The initial weeks for these beginning teachers were filled with the task of completing assessments to assist with grouping students and to inform their planning. Significant amounts of time in PRT and syndicate meetings were spent on discussing assessment of students. The extensive range of assessments that had to be completed was well documented by a beginning teacher:

- Maths PATs – done today.
- STAR – done and marked, data entered.
- asTTle Writing – all completed.
- Schonell Spelling – tested.
- PROBE/Informal Prose – started, will use release time.
- Fractions NUMPA – underway, will use release time67.

Initially this beginning teacher found the extensive testing quite overwhelming, but as the year went on appeared to understand the rationale for the range of assessments:

*We have done so much testing. I find that difficult, in that I haven’t actually been able to have a true kind of programme going because of all the assessments that we have been doing – fitting it in and doing the marking and now all the stuff that is coming out of the assessment and I am like where do I start? It is almost too much.*

67 Field notes.
That [assessment] seems to have balanced itself out now. There are set assessments to do at the end of every unit. I can see that there is purpose for it. Because earlier, when I was in the middle of it I could not see why we were doing all of this. (BT 5)

Although some of the beginning teachers found the assessments time consuming, they nevertheless appeared to consider the process of assessing students to be a prerequisite to begin their teaching process:

I think I am still trying to figure out how to reach each of them. I think that at the moment it is still the major focus – is trying to figure out where they are with their achievement and how to group them accordingly with that in mind. (BT 6)

I am really keen to use assessment to draw from it. Because I think that is the only thing you have got as a teacher. (BT 1)

Another beginning teacher referred to her practice of both informal and formal assessments in her classroom:

We have a lot of things that we do to assess. Often when they first arrive, I will get up my observation book and will do some counting, we will do some seriation, we will just have a play around with some maths objects, so that I can get a feel for them. Because often we don’t do the NUMPA test on them until they have been at school for a couple of weeks, over the freaking out point. (BT 7)
One beginning teacher felt assessments provided her with the information not only of students’ abilities for grouping, but also gave her baseline information from which to track the learning progress of the students:

*Initial assessment is quite interesting and they are all things I have to comment on in the six week observation so it is quite good in the early days so that you knew all the things they could do when they arrived at school. What I like about doing assessments is, you can see the actual learning stuff – “Look you knew one word last month and now you know six, that is fantastic, that is five new words”, really quite positive.*

(BT 6)

For another beginning teacher, assessments were more than formal testing. Though she used summative standardised assessments to group and grade the students in her class, as was the practice in her school, she was more keen to build and strengthen the self-esteem of students, which she felt could not be captured in formal testing situations:

*That [grouping] was based on a test that they did at the start of the unit. You can obviously keep monitoring records, assessments and things but that is not necessarily monitoring. What I am thinking – because a lot of it is about self-esteem, it is something you see over time and throughout the year.* (BT 7)

While her intention to build the confidence and self-esteem of her students was well articulated, in practice she had placed students capable of a higher level of achievement in a lower functioning reading group because of their behaviours. She appeared to have followed the school practice of grouping, together with her own
belief that more teacher time with less challenging tasks (although the students were capable of higher levels of functioning) would provide better learning opportunities for these students.

The process of assessment for grouping learners according to their abilities was one of the primary tasks undertaken by these beginning teachers. Other formative and summative assessments of learning were an ongoing process in their classrooms. When one of the beginning teachers wanted to discuss the portfolio in terms of its content, the tutor teacher explained that PAT scores, Spelling sheets, and STAR assessments were the key data that went into student folders. This accountability for students’ learning may have contributed to the increased emphasis on assessment in the schools.

**Responsiveness to cultural diversity**

The response to cultural diversity appeared to depend on the extent of beginning teachers’ perceptions of its prevalence in the classrooms. Use of culturally relevant texts for reading had been viewed as important by a beginning teacher in her initial school, as her classroom was multicultural:

*We have got Pacific Island, Pākehā, Cook Island Māori, Chinese, Thai and Greek. You are never going to find something about all of those things in one book. Over the course of the term hopefully we have done something.* (BT 1)

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68 PRT meeting – Term 1, 2008.
However, she did not feel the same need to source culturally relevant learning materials in her current school, as there were only three non-Pākehā students in her class. Nevertheless, it was important to her to acknowledge and build cultural knowledge amongst her students:

There is one student who is quite aware of her Māori culture, just little things like today at prayer, we sang Te Aroha and she said, “Oh! My mum knows that song”. “Oh! yeah, I am sure she does; I think she knows some other songs as well”. Just encouraging and sharing. (BT 1)

Two beginning teachers had started using Māori words and phrases in their day-to-day teaching. One of them wanted to increase her ability to use more te reo69 in her classroom, while another beginning teacher was seen as a leader among her peers in the use of Māori language in her practice:

I really do want to get more te reo into my classroom. (BT 7)

She has become a natural leader from the front with te reo within our team – she has become a model of practice. (Tt)

The remaining beginning teachers did not make specific reference to cultural responsiveness in their pedagogical practices, when interviewed a year later.

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69 Māori language.
Perceptions of learning to teach

The experiences of their first year of teaching and the resulting confidence appeared to have allowed these teachers to reframe their initial approach to teaching (Russell & Munby, 1991). Subsequent to their familiarisation with the students as the year went on, it appeared that the beginning teachers gained the confidence to adapt their lessons and were able to accommodate serendipitous learning situations:

*Like today I had the word Hanna. I was trying to point out the difference, as we were going to do our six year net, between a letter and a word. So the idea was that they circle the letter “H” in one colour (black) and they circle the word “Hanna” in blue; but [what] I didn’t realise was that there were lots of words inside that and they had circled “an”, “a” and “Anna” and then one girl said “na” like “na, I am not going to do it”. So it was really interesting.* (BT 1)

Beginning teachers perceived that their abilities to be flexible in response to the learning needs of the students had increased during the year. One beginning teacher perceived that her meticulous planning at the beginning of the year had to be discarded to make it more adaptable for the actual needs of her students:

*I don’t plan ahead. Because when I did that I had to almost have to throw the plan out and start again. [Now], I probably plan in less detail to start off with.* (BT 5)

Two beginning teachers felt that they were now more aware of the need to adapt learning to the dynamic nature of students’ interests:
Thinking about that particular day, what the kids might need for example if it is hot, or if they are interested in something – I think I have got better at that in the second half of the year. I think I have become more aware of how the kids see things differently. (BT 1)

Realising that I have to do things differently. Just that one thing does not suit all of them. That sometimes I do have to spend more time with some, or do something differently with someone else, or explain it differently, or write it or draw it for different kids; to make sure they get it, understand it. (BT 4)

Another beginning teacher was certain that she had to change her ways of planning in the second year:

*I do think that my planning needs to be much tighter next year in terms of knowing if they work, rather than saying as a group you are going to do this, as an individual you are going to do this and then in the group you put it together.* (BT 7)

This beginning teacher’s reflection on her pedagogical practices was also observed during classroom observations by the researcher. The group work often did not allow the participation of all students. Particularly, participation of some students who were not from the predominant cultural group was minimal during oral discussions.

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70 Classroom observations – Term 2 & 3.
Two of the beginning teachers, however, did not appear to feel it was necessary to change the content of their planning, but felt more confident in implementing them differently. One beginning teacher had understood the importance of involving parents in the learning of their children:

*Since I already developed numeracy and literacy plans last year with learning intentions, I will be using the same units this year, maybe making very minor adjustments to keep up with any new research findings. [However], the new strategy I am planning to use this year is to involve parents more in children’s learning.* (BT 3)

*I know what I am doing with the planning and I am not going to change that. Just making it, less work and more easier, so that I have more time to think about students. Like not spontaneous, but responsive I guess is the word.* (BT 1)

Another beginning teacher, who shared the responsibility of teaching a student with special needs with her tutor teacher, gained confidence in her planning for learning through regular modelling by the tutor teacher. As the year progressed, there was increased participation of the student with special needs in her class programmes:

*She [the student] has come a long way; her language is coming along fine.* (BT 1)

Overall it appeared that the act of planning lessons was an evolving process among these beginning teachers. They appeared to adapt and adjust their planning
and teaching to be more responsive as they gained a better understanding of the learning needs of their students.

In addition to changes in the ways they planned, some beginning teachers wanted to make changes to their grouping strategy to improve some of the pedagogical outcomes for the students. One beginning teacher found that her collaborative grouping did not produce the expected results in terms of meeting the academic learning needs of all her students. She was certain that she would take a more mixed approach of alternating between individual and group work in her second year of teaching:

\[I\ have\ found\ that\ lot\ of\ the\ group\ work\ has\ ended\ up\ [with]\ two\ people\ doing\ all\ the\ work\ and\ two\ people\ doing\ none.\ So\ making\ sure\ that\ the\ group\ collaborative\ work\ is\ more\ structured\ and\ giving\ them\ as\ individual\ opportunities\ to\ go\ off\ and\ do\ something\ that\ they\ really\ want\ to\ [do].\ (BT\ 7)\]

The sheer number of groups in her class proved a pedagogical challenge for another beginning teacher, who had seven reading groups. She found it impossible to devote individual reading time for each of the groups:

\[I\ can't\ see\ all\ children\ [for\ reading];\ I\ have\ no\ time.\ (BT\ 4)\]

Another beginning teacher found cross grouping\(^{71}\) to be a challenge despite her collaborative and group learning approach to pedagogy:

\(^{71}\) Students from two or more classrooms from the same syndicate level are grouped together based on their ability levels.
I also have my maths class to engage with and that takes a different level of energy on different days. They all have their own class rules and then they have to get used to my rules. (BT 5)

Some of the strategies suggested to them by their tutor teachers to enhance the effectiveness of the groups in their classes included: reorganisation of the timetable, and extra support through a reliever or teacher aide to share the reading tasks of the various groups.\(^{72}\)

While planning to be responsive to the diverse nature of their classes was an evolving process for the beginning teachers, there was a range of perceptions regarding the extent of professional support they received within their schools for planning lessons. Some beginning teachers perceived a lack of involvement in the planning process, and felt they were left to their own devices with little guidance:

*We kind of do our own things. There is not, like we don’t plan together and we don’t do a lot together, so we are to a certain extent left to our own devices almost. The long term plan for some things we do it as a syndicate, but mostly individual. Kind of what I am doing is working; so cool and I will keep doing that.* (BT 4)

*I think planning will be my big focus, just to really try to plan ahead; that is something that hasn’t happened this year. I was handed units and told it started on Monday, which I found very difficult to get my head around.* (BT 7)

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\(^{72}\) Observation notes from PRT meetings.
One beginning teacher, though, explicitly acknowledged the supportive nature of her peers:

*We do a lot of the planning syndicate-wide; sharing resources, and [discussing] what works and what doesn’t. Our SEN\textsuperscript{73} teacher, she will support me with anything, any kind of questions or advice, release time for me to do stuff [with the student who has special needs], she will release me if I need that. And just the day-to-day support it is like, I have this child who would, I had thoughts about, should be performing at this level. Have you got any ideas?* (BT 5)

For another beginning teacher the process of enculturation occurred swiftly as a natural sequence of learning to teach:

*I have just kind of been subsumed into the school. I guess I feel very much at home here and I guess some of the things I am more aware of doing like, watching out for those kids, that extra aroha or support to do the right thing. And in making those same kinds of comments that [tutor teacher] would make.* (BT 6)

Despite the extent of support within schools, some of the beginning teachers seemed to attribute their lack of preparedness and knowledge in certain aspects of diversity to their teacher education programme:

*I think what would have been useful at teachers’ college for primary teacher training; they include more detailed information about developmental pedagogy. Because I think we spend a lot of time wading

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\textsuperscript{73} Special Education Needs.
through curriculum documents, planning sheets, but research is saying we don’t know how to teach the dyslexic children effectively – for example, Down Syndrome, Autism, ADHD – we don’t really hear anything about any of those things, and they all come under the banner of diversity. (BT 1)

I think at teachers’ college you get bombarded with all the theory months before you go into a school. And then you go into a school, and you think, oh god! That doesn’t work. They didn’t say that they will answer back. (BT 4)

But three beginning teachers also felt that there were practical aspects of teaching which could be learnt only through on the job experiences, and that it was not possible for a teacher training programme to anticipate each and every classroom scenario:

I don’t know it could have been different. I think a lot of the stuff that I found out since starting I could only have found out by taking a flying leap and landing flat on my face. You know there are some lessons that you need to learn by making mistakes. I think that I was [as] well prepared as I could have been. I probably felt that I wasn’t well prepared, and I know I didn’t feel very well prepared, but I think actually I don’t know that it could have been different. (BT 6)

Coming straight from teachers’ college all that collaborative, cooperative work and stuff which I think there is definitely a place for, but it is not the only way. I always thought that what I would like was a
vibrant classroom and chatty and they [the students] moved around [and] talked. I have realised now that it suits a small portion of students and there are lots of students and probably most of them, probably all of them sometimes just need to work in absolute silence, which I thought I would never say, to get certain things done. There are a lot of students who prefer working on their own. (BT 7)

I think knowing that I didn’t need to do it all on my own. Why didn’t anyone teach us this? I don’t want to be going round and asking and I don’t want people to be thinking that I had no idea what I am doing actually. But then I think the realisation later on that I didn’t need to know to all of that stuff and it is okay to go and ask people. (BT 4)

Over a period of 12-18 months, the beginning teachers had slowly worked towards the realisation that “learning to teach” in the role of a teacher was an ongoing process, and at times very different to their successful practicum experiences. Their perceptions of learning to teach were increasingly focused on the learning abilities of their students that began to overshadow other dimensions of diversity including culture.

Summary

In their approach to planning, grouping and assessment, these beginning teachers appeared to conform to the practices of their schools. PRT meetings and syndicate meetings allowed for focused support, particularly in the areas of national priorities – literacy and numeracy (Hipkins, 2007). While planning, grouping and assessment practices of the beginning teachers focused on the unitary dimension of
the learning needs of the students, the content of planning further reinforced the practice, as it was centred on the levels of the curriculum in reading, writing and maths.

Through the process of ability grouping, the beginning teachers perceived that they were fulfilling their primary roles of meeting the learning needs of their students. While they acknowledged the presence of other aspects of diversity in their classes, particularly in terms of culture, non-English speaking backgrounds, and socio-economic status, in actual day-to-day teaching, it was the aspect of different individual academic learning needs that seemed to influence their pedagogy. It appeared that the beginning teachers’ cultural responsiveness was determined by their perceptions of the nature and extent of cultural diversity in their classrooms. The emphasis and ongoing focus on mainly standardised assessments during professional meetings further strengthened the focus on the dimension of academic learning abilities of individual students. Though the level of support was perceived to vary, teachers appeared to be making changes to their pedagogical approaches based on their growing knowledge of the students’ learning and with the professional support of their mentors. The experiences in their initial period of teaching appeared to have influenced the ways in which they were beginning to re-conceptualise some of their pedagogical practices.

A strong theme emerged in the perceptions of these beginning teachers after a year and more of learning to teach. The dimension of academic learning as an aspect of diversity dominated their practices as they began to absorb the existing culture of their schools. In fact, their planning and enactment of curriculum was focused on the academic abilities of students obscuring other aspects of their diversity in their day-
to-day practices. Professional conversations during planning of lessons and units were content-based with a lack of explicit focus on various aspects of student diversity that needed to be considered. The continuous focus on assessment and content planning appeared to have narrowed the beginning teachers’ perceptions of diversity into a unidimensional feature in students.

The final chapter that follows will discuss the factors that influenced a change in stance of the initial perceptions and orientations of these beginning teachers towards diversity in an attempt to answer the research question – Do school practices, policies and culture influence beginning teachers’ beliefs and attitudes on student diversity?
Chapter Seven:

Discussion

This final chapter draws together the analysis of the seven beginning teachers’ perceptions of their dispositions and orientations towards student diversity across their first 6-18 months of teaching. In answering the research question, *Do schools’ cultures, practices and policies influence beginning teachers’ beliefs, attitudes and practices in relation to student diversity?*, the discussions centre on what they knew about student diversity when they began teaching and what they learnt in their early stages of learning to teach. The perceptions of these beginning teachers’ stance towards diversity over time are discussed both within the context of existing literature and with regards to the implications for future research. The following two questions guide the discussion:

1. *What were the initial dispositions and orientations of beginning teachers towards student diversity?*

2. *How did schools’ ethos shape the beginning teachers’ initial dispositions and orientations to diversity and their pedagogical practices?*

This study defines diversity as a phenomenon that rejects the notion of a “normal group” (Alton-Lee, 2003) and includes students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures (Ainscow & Booth, 2000; Meyer et al., 1998). In the unpacking of the major research objective, the terms “dispositions” and “orientations” have been used: dispositions refer to the tendencies in which people act in particular circumstances
based on their beliefs (Villegas, 2007); attitudes are examined in the context of “orientations”, which describes the positioning of these beginning teachers.

**Initial perceptions of diversity**

1. *What were the initial dispositions and orientations of the beginning teachers towards student diversity?*

Beginning teachers are not passive actors that slip into a new role (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002); rather they are inseparable from their personal biographies, knowledge framework, beliefs and attitudes to teaching (Bonal & Rambla, 1999; Lortie, 1975; Wideen et al., 1998). Likewise, the seven beginning teachers’ dispositions and orientations towards student diversity were shaped by a variety of experiences – family, education including initial teacher education programmes, their new classrooms and, for some, their work experiences prior to embarking on a teaching career. Among those, the beginning teachers perceived their initial teacher education and their practicum experiences as being pivotal in shaping and broadening their knowledge of the extent of diversity in schools and classrooms (Causey et al., 2000).

At the beginning, three of the seven beginning teachers ascribed the terms *uniqueness* and *individuality* to explain their understanding of diversity. Three others, who also ascribed the term *individuality*, explained that *individuality* was about the *differences* that existed among individuals. The notion of individual differences underpinned the way these beginning teachers described their perceptions of diversity. As the beginning teachers unpacked their perceptions of some of the key
dimensions of diversity, it became apparent that the beginning teachers’ global
definition of uniqueness and individuality was a simplified way to define a complex
phenomenon. At the time they began teaching, the dimensions of culture and
academic learning abilities were the two most identified dimensions of diversity,
with culture perceived to be at the core of individual differences. With the exception
of one beginning teacher, there was an acknowledgement of the strong cultural focus
of their ITE in raising their awareness and initial understandings of diversity (Lenski
et al., 2005; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006). Though from different cohorts,
these beginning teachers were from the same ITE programme and six of them
attributed their increased awareness of cultural aspects of diversity to their ITE
programme. For two of the beginning teachers who had very mono-cultural life
experiences, the ITE programme had not only exposed them to cultural diversity, but
had also significantly raised their awareness and understanding (Sleeter, 2001). The
extent of impact that the cultural component of their ITE programme had on these
beginning teachers contrasts with earlier strong indications in literature of the
minimal effect that teacher education programmes have on the beliefs and attitudes
of trainee teachers (Raths, 2001; Wideen et al., 1998).

However, there were varying perceptions on the cultural curriculum of their
ITE for two beginning teachers. One of them perceived that the focus of the cultural
component of the ITE programme should have been broader than Māori and Pasifika
cultures; the other beginning teacher, who was the only Māori participant in the
study, perceived it to be tokenistic. Based on the different perceptions even within a
small sample size, it could be argued that infusing cultural components in ITE
(Zeichner, 2003), though necessary, may not be sufficient in itself.
Another dimension of diversity that the beginning teachers were oriented to in their practicum, and particularly after a term and more in classrooms, was that of the academic learning abilities of students. Two beginning teachers in Year 1 classes perceived diversity in their classrooms was having students with a “range in academic ability”. Three others said that diversity in their classes was to do with a range of “learning needs”. Two beginning teachers mentioned that they had non-native speakers of English in their classes that added to the range of learning needs, while two others referred to specific curriculum areas such as Literacy, Numeracy and Writing when they discussed students’ varying abilities.

None of the beginning teachers in these early stages of beginning to teach mentioned gender as a dimension of diversity. While spirituality was mentioned as an aspect of diversity by two beginning teachers only one of them identified socio-economic status as a dimension.

Overall at the beginning of the study, these beginning teachers perceived diversity as “social categories” (Milner et al., 2003) but the categories of dimensions of culture, learning abilities and spirituality were subsumed in their perceptions of uniqueness. This global notion of diversity seemed to give them a feeling of homogeneity and structure while they were coming to terms with the various demands of being a teacher (Goddard & Foster, 2001; Lortie, 1975). These beginning teachers appeared to be signalling that students’ identities were distinct and personal, rather than being an intersection of multiple dimensions. They were describing diversity “in terms of social phenomenon rather than as issues centrally related to the content they were teaching” (Milner, 2005, p. 781). However they perceived the phenomena of diversity, they were keen to respect and value all these distinct and
personal differences and provide learning contexts that were responsive to the needs of all the students in their classes (Kuzmic, 1994; Rust, 1994). Their sense of preparedness was in contrast to the studies by Bornholt (2002) and Paine (1990) in which student teachers were hesitant and felt less competent to relate to the diversity of their students, or even questioned the relevance of knowing about diversity (Milner, 2005). With a range of predisposed views and orientations to certain aspects of diversity, these beginning teachers had entered schools with their own priorities and practices. As Flores (2001) observed:

The transition from student to teacher/trainee entails the recognition of the new institutional role and the awareness of a wide array of complex issues related to the organisational, formal and situational dimensions of teaching. (p. 139)

For six of the beginning teachers, the “organisational literacy” (Kuzmic, 1994) of practicum had served a dual purpose – for the principals it was a chance to determine the suitability of the student teachers to their schools’ ways of working and for the beginning teachers it provided the opportunity to experience the ethos of schools and gauge its compatibility with their own belief systems and dispositions (Cameron et al., 2006; Kuzmic, 1994). They had secured teaching positions in schools where they had been placed for their final practicum of their ITE, providing them with an understanding of their school communities (Lenski et al., 2005) and the socio-economic range within them. As for the seventh beginning teacher, while she was not aware of her particular school community, it was similar to one that she always aspired to work in (Kuzmic, 1994; Olson & Osborne, 1991). As a result, there was an acceptance of the socio-economic status of her students.
In the next section, the impact of the schools’ practices on the beginning teachers’ initial perceptions and orientations to diversity will be discussed to answer the second research question. (Data for the next section is primarily from the five beginning teachers who participated from 12-18 months in the full study and a final e-mail response to some aspects of the end of year interview by a sixth novice teacher. The seventh beginning teacher as mentioned in earlier chapters withdrew from the study after the first two terms.)

2. *How did schools’ ethos shape the beginning teachers’ initial dispositions and orientations to diversity and their pedagogical practices?*

While the beginning teachers’ own dispositions, orientations, attitudes and beliefs served as bearings for their practices (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992), a year and more into teaching these beginning teachers’ dispositions to and orientations of diversity were influenced and shaped by their classroom experiences and contextual factors such as personal and professional socialisation (Bonal & Rambla, 1999; Flores, 2001; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Kuzmic, 1994). Three beginning teachers who began with a global notion of diversity as *uniqueness* and *individuality* remained unchanged in their perception of diversity. For two others, their time in classrooms was associated with a broadening of their initial perceptions of diversity to include learning styles, behaviours, mental health and personalities. Despite increased awareness of student heterogeneity, three of the beginning teachers perceived their classrooms to be mono-cultural. Two others saw their classrooms mirroring the multicultural make-up of the school community.
However, 12-18 months later there emerged a pattern of uniformity among these novices when they began discussing diversity in terms of their pedagogical practices. What became apparent was the extent to which these beginning teachers were focusing on and foregrounding the dimension of academic learning abilities in their pedagogy. In describing their knowledge of students, the five beginning teachers linked it primarily to the academic learning abilities of their students. Initially, their way of getting to know the students was through understanding their academic learning needs. They perceived the extent of diversity in their classrooms primarily as differences in academic learning abilities. They had not shifted their focus on the academic learning dimension of students with which they started teaching and were now oriented towards a unidimensional aspect of diversity in their day-to-day pedagogy.

So, why did these beginning teachers, who were aware of the multidimensional nature of diversity following their ITE, narrow their perceptions of diversity? To understand the change in their stance, it is necessary to understand their organisational contexts, structure and their ways of working that determine the beginning teachers’ professional practices (Flores, 2001; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

Factors influencing the shifting perceptions

As elaborated in Chapter Five, the principals and tutor teachers in the study perceived diversity in their schools primarily as the wide range in the academic abilities of the students. It was the school leaders’ perceptions of the extent and nature of diversity that determined the focus of professional practices and ethos in their schools (Riehl, 2000) and served as benchmarks to inform these beginning
teachers’ initiation into classroom teaching. The acknowledgement of cultural
diversity in these schools seemed to depend not on the extent of its presence in
schools, but the perceptions of the school leaders, which in turn shaped the
perceptions of beginning teachers. Whether they had fore-screened the novices or
appointed them without prior knowledge (only one beginning teacher had not been
placed at the school for practicum), the schools provided a nurturing ethos. All the
principals ensured that organised support was available for the beginning teachers
(Bergeron, 2008; Langdon, 2007). As one of the purposes of the beginning teachers’
advice and guidance programmes is to “enable them become fully registered
teachers” (Cameron, Dingle, & Brooking, 2007, p. 3), these novices were
professionally well supported towards the goal of becoming registered. The
principals also ensured that the tutor teachers were from the same syndicate which
provided both personal as well as professional proximity. In providing a nurturing
environment, four principals had ensured that the beginning teachers did not have
students who had learning or behavioural difficulties in their classrooms. This
“sheltered reality” however was not seen as a fair system by the fifth principal.

The tutor teachers saw themselves as conduits for the professional growth of
the beginning teachers and were also very conscious of the managerial responsibility
resting on them to prepare the novices to be fully registered at the end of two years.
As a result of the onus of this responsibility, registration requirements often
dominated many professional conversations along with guiding and “showing” the
beginning teachers their schools’ ways of working. All five schools in the study
ensured that there was support overall for all the beginning teachers in basic survival
skills, of managing classrooms and parents, and covering the curriculum (Goold, 2004; Mandel, 2006) in their first year of teaching.

Influence of pedagogical practices on perceptions of diversity

The induction process plays its part in this socialisation role helping to perpetuate existing beliefs, standards and practices in schools. (Rippon & Martin, 2003, p. 213)

As the principals expected novices to “fit in” (Langdon, 2001), they were also selective in appointing beginning teachers who would fit into the existing culture of the schools (Broadley & Broadley, 2004; Langdon, 2001). Six of the beginning teachers in this study were appointed after intense gaze and scrutiny during their practicum placement. Once appointed, the novices’ formative pedagogy began to mould itself to the existing teaching and learning practices of their schools. They were eased systematically into the practice of establishing groups that basically foregrounded the dimension of academic learning abilities of students over the multi-layers of diversity in every student (Banks, 2002).

In the initial weeks of beginning to teach, all the beginning teachers spent a substantial amount of time doing formal and informal assessments to group the students according to their learning abilities, particularly in the curriculum areas of reading and maths. While all beginning teachers talked about the practice of grouping them according to their abilities, five of the beginning teachers said that ability grouping was needed particularly for reading and maths. Two beginning teachers mentioned that topic related work was spread around groups of students with mixed abilities.
Therefore very early in their practice, groupings according to academic learning abilities formed the frame of reference for the beginning teachers to adapt the classroom programmes. As a result, they began to perceive individual differences among students primarily to be differences in their academic learning abilities, mirroring existing organisational practices which can carry and transmit assumptions and notions of ability as a defining character (dimension) of individuals (Tickle, 2000). They began to conceptualise teaching as following the set of procedures outlined in their induction folders and reinforced in professional conversations. As the year progressed, these beginning teachers perceived that they were becoming effective through applying the prescribed procedures to teach. For two of the beginning teachers it seemed logical to perceive that planning would be an encore in subsequent years using the framework of knowledge they had developed in their initial months of teaching and therefore teaching would be comparatively easier. In terms of planning, the team planning sessions observed by the researcher in the schools revolved around topics and their content. There were no particular discussions during the planning sessions around adapting the contents for the range of student diversity in the classrooms. As one tutor teacher stated, there was an assumption that beginning teachers would adapt the generic plans to meet the needs of their classrooms – “have to do your individual planning to make it work for your children”. In doing so, the beginning teachers maintained a “top, middle and bottom group” approach. If planning for learning is a critical function of pedagogy and is influenced by one’s own theories of learning and teaching (McGee & Taylor, 2008), these beginning teachers’ minds were being set on a course of foregrounding academic abilities of students as the primary dimension of individual differences.
Hierarchy of dimensions?

Learning to teach involves the integration of “thinking, knowing, feeling and acting” through which teachers learn to critically examine their beliefs and pedagogical knowledge in relation to their students’ identities, and begin to construct effective pedagogy for the diversity their students bring to the classrooms (Feiman-Nemser, 2008, p. 699). In the process of learning to teach, these beginning teachers were guided from the outset to focus predominantly on the dimension of academic learning abilities in their classrooms. In grouping the students according to their academic abilities, these beginning teachers were following the established practices and expectations of their schools (Bonal & Rambla, 1999; Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005). As the beginning teachers had started observing the practice of grouping students according to their academic learning abilities since their practicum, they soon began to conform to the existing practices in their approach to planning, grouping and assessments. Despite substantial research-informed views of educational scholars on the negative impact of ability grouping at the expense of other dimensions of students (Meyer et al., 2007; Sleeter & Grant, 2009), this practice was the preferred pedagogy in these schools particularly in literacy and numeracy, an entire syndicate being “streamed” in one of the schools.

The tutor teachers saw themselves being responsible to explain and embed the existing professional practices of their schools in the repertoire of the beginning teachers. The professional conversations observed in PRT and syndicate meetings too had the potential to reinforce the focus on academic learning. The conversations in these professional meetings tended to focus primarily on the various mandatory tasks to be completed by the beginning teachers in terms of assessments and
documentations, and various other day-to-day administrative activities. The ongoing focus on academic differences during the professional meetings also meant that there was less emphasis on cultural and other dimensions of students – a focus that could result in less equity and access to learning for some students (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Bonal & Rambla, 1999). It was evident that in the process of acculturation, the depth of knowledge about cultural aspect of diversity and its relevance to pedagogy that they had acquired in their ITE was not integrated in their day-to-day practices in four of the schools. In the fifth school, where the school leader explicitly honoured the bicultural nature of New Zealand, the beginning teachers were encouraged to use te reo\textsuperscript{74} words, waiata (songs) and tīkanga in line with the ethos of the school, but cultural dimensions of students did not feature strongly in mentoring conversations around learning. Overall the focus of these schools was geared towards academic learning abilities of students, the day-to-day pedagogical practices of grouping were primarily based on the academic learning abilities of students, and these beginning teachers’ proficiency in learning to teach increasingly depended on their perceptions of being able to embrace the ethos and practices of their schools (Raths, 2001).

The importance of academic learning abilities as a dimension of diversity was not new to these beginning teachers, having encountered the practice of ability-based groupings in their practicum. However, the omni-presence this dimension of diversity acquired at the expense of other dimensions, after 12 to 18 months of teaching, appeared to be a feature of their acculturation process. The “situated perspective of learning” reiterated and reinforced existing pedagogical practices (Timperley et al., 2007), which created a hierarchy of diversity that positioned

\textsuperscript{74}Māori language.
academic learning abilities over other dimensions of diversity. The extent of collaboration and time constraints during professional meetings appeared to be one of the reasons that hindered more reflexive dialogues that examined the underlying orientations of both the beginning teachers and mentors regarding pedagogy for diversity and equity (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005).

What emerged as part of these beginning teachers’ repertoire of learning to teach was a hierarchical notion of diversity; one in which the dimension of academic abilities of students occupied the most privileged position instead of diversity and difference becoming an integral part of their pedagogical practices (Alton-Lee, 2003). With increasing demands on teachers’ professional capacity to show academic gains, the ethos of their schools seem to privilege certain student attributes (Bonal & Rambla, 1999), thus establishing a hierarchy within the various dimensions of diversity.

Influence of school policies on perceptions of diversity

Wider school policies on student diversity did not have a direct impact on the beginning teachers. Aspects of the policy that were deemed relevant for the beginning teachers were perceived to be included in their induction folders; they pertained to matters of what beginning teachers need – curriculum delivery, assessment and behaviour management information (Mandel, 2006). Most of the principals in the study were “gate keepers” who did not want the beginning teachers to be reading school policies and be overwhelmed with information not directly related to their day-to-day teaching.
**Idiosyncratic perceptions of acculturation to diversity**

The process of acculturation is influenced by the intersection of personal (biographical) and situational factors (Flores, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006; Rust, 1999). While literature evidence abounds regarding the idiosyncratic cultures of school context, this study has highlighted the individualistic perceptions of beginning teachers about their acculturation. The beginning teachers perceived themselves to be part of varying professional cultures in their schools as a result of their day-to-day interactions amongst, and relationships with, school staff and students (Hargreaves, 1993). Despite systems being set up in all the five schools to ease the transition into teaching, one of the seven beginning teachers perceived that she had stepped into a school where the collaboration remained “structural” (Williams et al., 2001) in terms of being a mandatory organisational process rather than one of spontaneous collaboration. She perceived the existing pedagogical practices to be conservative and her attempts to infuse novel ways of teaching and learning were not well received; Bullough (1992) identified this as “the desired role makes it difficult to implement the established curriculum” (p. 239). While it can be argued that this beginning teacher did not have prior knowledge of the school and was therefore unaware of the “micro-politics” of it, another beginning teacher who not only had the “organisational literacy” but was also familiar with the ways of being and doing of her tutor teacher through practicum, still perceived the lack of appropriate support for diversity to be problematic. In spite of the perception of having reciprocal professional relationships (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004), she perceived that the guidance she received to be responsive to the extent of diversity in her class was inadequate. As a result, the beginning teacher felt that pedagogy that acknowledges diversity in the class such as cooperative learning, that she was encouraged to use in
her ITE programme, was not effective in her class. She intended to revert to a more
teacher directed learning environment with students working individually on tasks.
There was a sense of disequilibrium in her pedagogical approach, rather than a
“connectedness”, brought about by a perceived lack of appropriate collegial support
and time for critical reflection (Hall & Bishop, 2001; Timperley et al., 2007). Similar
observations were made by Flores and Day (2006) in their study of 14 beginning
teachers in Portugal:

The dilemma between providing students with a pleasant learning
environment which was associated with issues of flexibility and
responsiveness to their needs, versus keeping order in the classroom,
was at the forefront of the teachers’ response. (p. 227)

The idiosyncretic perception of their acculturation became more evident
when another beginning teacher in the same school perceived her acculturation
process to be meeting her expectations that fast tracked the process of her learning
the way we do things here. There was a difference too in their perceptions about the
extent to which they were involved in the pedagogical processes of forward planning
within their syndicate team.

In another instance, one beginning teacher who taught a Year 1 class saw
formal and informal assessments as a critical part of teaching, while another
beginning teacher who taught at a Year 4 level felt that she was overwhelmed by the
amount of assessment data that had to be gathered at the beginning of the year and in
the beginning was unsure of the purpose of these multitude of assessments. Such
individualistic perceptions of existing practices in the study highlighted the fact that
the acculturation process is an intricate intertwining of personal biographies and
micro-politics of the school context that is both interpretative and interactive (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

The varying perceptions of professional nurturance in relation to the diversity of their students underscores the fact that supporting novice teachers to be responsive to pedagogy cannot be a procedural exercise; it needs to be individualised to the novice and their context of teaching. As novices’ professional development occurs concurrently in three different aspects – a personal dimension, knowledge and skills dimensions and the ecological dimension (Vonk, 1995) – their perceptions of learning to teach diverse learners may require deeper examination. If the internationally acclaimed support for beginning teachers in New Zealand schools (Clement 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2005) is intended to build upon the teaching foundations of their ITE programmes (Cameron et al., 2007), then clearly there is an argument to revisit and critically examine the nature and content of conversations that guide beginning teachers in the process of learning to teach (Wang et al., 2004). To enable beginning teachers to be responsive to the complexities of diversity in their pedagogical practices, they require sophisticated and individually tailored professional support. Achinstein and Athanases (2005) argue that to enable beginning teachers to embrace the diversity in the classrooms and ensure equity in the learning process for all students, they need to have pedagogical learner knowledge which is an “amalgam of general pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of learners and contexts” (p. 858). Otherwise, as perceived by two of the beginning teachers, the lack of appropriate professional support could lead beginning teachers to become not only cynical about their ITE training (Causey et al., 2000; Flores &
Day, 2006), but also to accept the existing pedagogical practices in their schools either unquestioningly or as a way of being strategically compliant (Lacey, 1977).

**Implications of the study**

Existing practices of planning and teaching, and idiosyncratic acculturation processes shaped the changing stance of these beginning teachers’ orientations to diversity. Although the beginning teachers had their own dispositions and orientations towards diversity, they had stepped into schools whose ethos included some well-entrenched pedagogical practices. Once appointed, the beginning teachers had to implement the existing curriculum in their schools (Bullough, 1992); they were expected to blend into the culture of their schools. In doing so, these beginning teachers allowed themselves to be guided in ways that were practical and required them to deliver a set of curriculum objectives and assessment tasks. The beginning teachers primarily relied on their tutor teachers and in-school expertise for their professional growth (Flores, 2001). The exceptions were one beginning teacher who had attended a number of external professional workshops and another who had attended one workshop outside school.

For the beginning teachers in this study, the working definition of diversity was primarily focused on the differences in the academic achievement level of their students. This could be as a consequence of schools traditionally being strongly influenced by an individualistic and intelligence-based approach to teaching (Haberman, 1996). As an extension of this practice, four out of the five schools ensured that the beginning teachers did not have students with disabilities in their classes. The only teacher who had a student receiving funding through ORRS had the
support of a specialist teacher who was responsible for the planning and a full time aide to put the learning plan into action. The schools’ actions can be seen as well intended when viewed as their genuine concern to ease beginning teachers into the realities of teaching. At the same time it can also be argued that the “sheltered reality” could be at the expense of developing the beginning teachers’ dispositional repertoire of pedagogical skills of differentiation, perpetuating the notion that when diversity is articulated as the difference between two groups (Bonal & Rambla, 1999), similarities among them tend to get ignored (Tiedt & Tiedt, 2005).

The perceptions of diversity being individualness also tend to merge two opposing concepts of equality and diversity, and mask the need to deal with the social aspects of diversity (Bonal & Rambla, 1999; Delpit, 2006). This limited view can also restrict pedagogical practices to having perceived homogenous groups. Such restrictions could continue to privilege a unidimensional aspect of diversity and continue to foster a hierarchy (as seen in this small sample) that will obscure the complex multiple layers of diversity in every individual. Instead, the recognition that identities of individuals are multiple, overlapping, contextual and changing will need due consideration (Banks, 2008; Meyer et al., 2007). Once this complexity of individualness is understood, responsive pedagogy that places differences and diversity at the core of practices (Alton-Lee, 2003) can become a reality. As Meyer et al. (2007) observe:

*Classrooms must support the diversity of students by responding to each of their identities and by not stereotyping students according to unidimensional and narrow notions of who they are.* (p. 383)
Addressing only one dimension of the student and not taking into account the other dimensions is unlikely to provide appropriate learning contexts that meet the particular needs of students. To make culture seem invisible by utterances such as “I don’t see colour, I only see children” (Delpit, 2006, p. 177) can cause more harm to the self-worth of the students.

Classrooms that are responsive and inclusive of all learners tend to prioritise social and academic interactions among children equally. Therefore if teachers’ pedagogical practices are to encompass the multidimensionality of diversity, it is important to understand the different meanings and interpretations that teachers and school leaders uphold and develop shared meanings that can serve as a solid foundation (Stoll, 2000). To this effect, Bonal and Rambla (1999) call for a consistent and clearer definition of diversity in educational documents that guide teachers’ practices:

—somewhat paradoxically, to raise the status of that educational culture and practice, the pedagogic discourse tries to avoid the definition of what actually and specifically is educational diversity, and how diversity has to be treated. Since teachers are the ones that really have to deal with educational diversity, they have to solve the uncertainty of what can be considered as diversity and which teaching strategies can be used. (p. 310)

However, in New Zealand we can lay claim to Alton-Lee’s (2003) evidence-based definition of diversity, which also underpins this study. In addition, a
framework for culturally responsive and effective teaching has been expounded by Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, and Teddy (2009)\textsuperscript{75} that allows the legitimisation of cultural knowledge. There is also in the New Zealand context a multi-pronged approach to ensure that schools are responsive to culturally diverse learners, Māori and Pasifika learners in particular. The New Zealand Disability Strategy adds weight behind schools ensuring increased participation of students with disabilities. The extent to which these dimensions are integrated in instructional practices is debatable and augurs as a substantive topic for future research given that the principles of equity and inclusion are ensconced in the New Zealand curriculum documents that guide every teacher’s practices (Ministry of Education, 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the complexity of the interactions of the various dimensions of diversity and its implication for pedagogy between novice teachers and those that provide support for their professional growth in their process of learning to teach (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005; Achinstein & Barrett, 2004).

This study also has implications for both initial teacher education and the ongoing professional growth of beginning teachers.

\textit{Pre-service education}

This study, though small in size, has reiterated the importance of studying the initial dispositions and understanding of the complex construct of diversity among student teachers and their teacher educators. The rapidly growing diversity in classrooms has placed ITE with the enormous task of ensuring that teacher trainees

\textsuperscript{75} See Appendix B14 for the Effective Teaching Profile framework.
have a thorough understanding of the phenomena of diversity, and its implications for their pedagogical practices as future teachers (Sleeter & Grant, 2009). This study has shown that ITE programmes can have varying impact on student teachers, highlighting the need for reflexive dialogues between teacher educators and student teachers on their understanding of the complex phenomena of diversity and its implications for their practice.

The impact of practicum on beginning teachers in New Zealand was explored recently by Lind (2004). This study has contributed to further knowledge on the impact of practicum on student teachers and schools. An understanding that a range of perceptions existed about their practicum placements even in this small sample size is also important for teacher education providers. Their experiences during practicum had a long term effect on the beginning teachers, the most significant one being able to identify schools that align with their ways of thinking and being. Choosing schools that match their dispositions and orientations can also perpetuate the “status quo” where beliefs and attitudes can remain unchallenged.

**Extending professional nurturing**

This study also contributes to the discussions around extending university-based support to beginning teachers and their mentors to the first two years of teaching. Teaching in diverse contexts is a complex task and therefore such a complex job requires explicit linkages and continual partnership between teacher preparation and learning to teach as a beginning teacher (Loughran et al., 2001; Kane & Russell, 2003) to “alter the life chances of children” (Cochran-Smith, 2001, p. 3).
It is also important to understand that expanding beginning teachers’ horizons for effective pedagogy for diverse learners is not the sole responsibility of initial teacher education providers as the impact of school ethos has been strongly identified again in this sample of teachers. Although seeds are sown towards preparing future potential teacher candidates to aspects of effective pedagogy for diverse learners during their initial training, the dispositions and orientations of school leaders and staff are equally important to provide the nurturing environment for these practices to grow (Langdon, 2007) and to allow the learnings from ITE programmes to come to fruition. More importantly, this study has highlighted the individualised nature of acculturation required for beginning teachers which will have an impact on the type of mentoring that is made available to them (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008). The extent of diversity in classrooms warrants a change from prevailing practices, and those in the role of supporting novice teachers professionally will require ongoing support that enables them to take a more critical stance of enquiry (Everston & Smithey, 2000; Timperley et al., 2007). This study can contribute to the existing work on training mentors76 and other professional supports for beginning teachers.

While generalisations cannot be made from this small study, it has offered a glimpse into the complex nature of beginning to teach with the intention that it will encourage further and closer explorations situated in the close proximity of practice.

76 For details visit www.teacherscouncil.co.nz.
Conclusion

Literature on beginning teachers is replete with evidence that personal biographies of beginning teachers have a strong influence on the way they perceive their roles and how they learn to teach (Cole, 1990; Flores, 2001; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Kuzmic, 1994). This study has shown that the context of schools and the pedagogical practices in them can potentially have a significant influence on beginning teachers (Bergeron, 2008; Flores & Day, 2006). While the lack of knowledge of wider school policies on student diversity did not directly impact the beginning teachers, their day-to-day teaching for a diverse range of students was influenced and shaped by the existing pedagogical practices in their schools. Despite reporting raised cultural awareness from their ITE programme, they were now in the business of teaching and attempted to watch and learn the “way we do things here”. They followed and mirrored the existing pedagogical practices modelled by their tutor teachers, which seemed to foster a notion of a hierarchy among the dimensions of diversity. While evidence shows that pedagogical practices that integrate the cultural knowledge that “other children” bring to schools are critical for the success of diverse learners (Bishop et al., 2008; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Zeichner, 2003), one could ask if maintaining ability groupings as a way of “homogenising” heterogeneous classrooms has merits over any other alternative pedagogy.

In answering the over-arching research question, *Do schools’ cultures, practices and policies influence beginning teachers’ beliefs, attitudes and practices in relation to student diversity?*, this study has shown that the acculturation of beginning teachers who are entrusted with classrooms similar to experienced teachers (Lortie, 1975) involves learning to “fit in” with the ways of the schools, in
terms of their pedagogical practices. From day one, beginning teachers become responsible for the intellectual, emotional, and social development of a diverse group of students (Kardos et al., 2001). In the fast changing demographics of our classrooms, it is critical that novice teachers are introduced to practices that bring about transformative changes to their dispositions and orientations (Wang & Odell, 2007) that locate students within multiple layers of diversity (Meyer et al., 2009). If the uniqueness and individuality of each student are to truly mirror the complex interplay of multiple dimensions of social categories such as gender, culture, ability, socio-economic status and home experiences, an understanding of pedagogical actions and implications are critical (Gay, 2002; Milner et al., 2003). To create responsive classrooms for all learners, there must be a deliberate and conscious effort to develop pedagogical approaches that weave together the dimensions of critical self-evaluation and reflection, knowing and listening to students and families, tailoring the learning contexts and content that embraces diversity and differences (Bishop et al., 2009; Grant & Sleeter, 2003):

—educators need to create learning contexts within their classrooms; where power is shared between self-determining individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence; where culture counts; where learning is interactive, dialogic and spirals; where participants are connected to one another through the establishment of a common vision for what constitutes excellence in educational outcomes. (Bishop et al., 2009, p. 736)

In addition, viewing diversity as uniqueness can be an oversimplification that can fail to address the multiple and often intersecting nature of diversity, therefore
restricting teachers’ ability to be responsive to the needs of their diverse learners. To address the unique learning needs of individual students, classrooms could provide an enriched environment where all aspects of their individuality are accommodated appropriately (Meyer et al., 2007). The provision of a responsive learning environment requires an understanding of and sensitivity to diversity, and a sophisticated understanding that “for each individual student the intersection of social class, ethnicity and gender can markedly influence cultural practices, preferences and prior experiences” (Alton-Lee, 2003, p. 5). Viewed from a critical pedagogical stance, a restricted notion of being increasingly responsive to a singular aspect of diversity in teachers’ pedagogical practices may need to be revisited for its effectiveness in fostering the educational achievement of all learners. It is no doubt challenging to orient oneself to the interweaving of multiple dimensions amidst deep-rooted perceptions of homogeneity. But the rapidly growing diversity of classrooms and compelling evidence of positive outcomes of connected pedagogy (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop et al., 2009) underscore the fact that “diversity pedagogy” can no longer be optional.

**Limitations of this study**

As a grounded “process theory” (Creswell, 2008, p. 432), this study explains an educational process of events, activities, actions and interactions that occur over time. The limitations of this study fall into two broad categories – sampling and data gathering.
**Sampling**

The beginning teachers, who were a small sample size, were from the same ITE programme, though from different cohorts. Therefore influences of ITE programmes cannot be generalised to other teacher education graduates.

Another limitation to the study was the inability to obtain subjects for the intended period of time. The study had originally proposed to have two beginning teachers as a pilot study and a further four added after a period of six months. The multiple layers of consent required for the study proved to be challenging. As the initial permission to obtain subjects was by contacting schools, some principals felt that participating in a study such as this could be daunting for beginning teachers. In schools where principals were willing, beginning teachers did not feel that they could allocate time to participate in the study. More importantly, beginning teachers tended to be employed initially by schools for a period of 12 months at the most, and this study required their participation for 18 months, which also contributed to the non-availability of subjects. As other New Zealand studies have reported (Cameron et al., 2007; Kane & Mallon, 2006), only two beginning teachers in this study had a permanent position at the start of this study, one leaving the study after the first two terms. The other beginning teachers had job offers that ranged from 6-12 months of employment. A compromise had to be made as a result of which there were varying periods of participation and there were seven beginning teachers in total rather than the six as originally proposed, and their period of participation in the study ranged between 6-18 months. This limitation has also highlighted the fact that beginning teachers require more employment stability for the initial two years as they work towards full registration. The reluctant stance of two of the principals in employing
beginning teachers is of concern, but also underscores the demands of the profession. Increasing diversity in classrooms can be perceived to be demanding thus creating more reluctance to employ and nurture novice teachers.

**Data gathering**

Another limitation resulted from the data gathered from document analysis. In particular no data were available from professional journals. The beginning teachers in the study felt that the professional aspect of their work was being captured in the documentation for registration purposes and therefore did not keep a separate professional journal. The journals they kept were more personal in nature and therefore not accessed as part of this study. Similarly, while information from school policies pertaining to student diversity was accessed, it was not used in the analysis as the beginning teachers were not expected to read or know the school policies in the initial months of their teaching. Therefore the beginning teachers were not familiar with their school policies pertaining to student diversity. Only one of the beginning teachers had looked at the school policy document in connection with behaviour management in the school.

Yet another limitation of this study is that no data were gathered during school-wide professional development sessions taking place in some schools. Schools participating in this study were either currently involved or had only in the previous two years completed school-wide professional development in numeracy which could have contributed to the reduced time allocation on numeracy-based planning during the observations.
Future research

While initial dispositions, orientations, beliefs and attitudes of beginning teachers are important, this study has shown that there are factors within schools that influence beginning teachers. Contextual factors play a critical role in the way beginning teachers start to construct their pedagogical practices (Flores, 2001; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Nias et al., 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989). These factors strengthen their existing dispositions of diversity rather than challenging and offering alternative ways of thinking and being. As the onus of acculturation rests primarily on the tutor teachers, future research is needed to examine the dispositions and orientations of these experienced teachers within the framework of “possibilities and constraints” (Pepperell, 2008) that exist in schools to effect the necessary transformational changes required to be responsive to the growing diversity in classrooms.

There is continuing argument for increasing sophistication in approaches to teacher education (Sleeter, 2008). Yet, exemplary programmes leading to transformative changes to student teachers’ orientations and responsiveness to diversity have been under-researched and this area of study needs further exploration.

Another line of research that needs attention is the impact of practicum placements on student teachers’ initial dispositions and orientations to diversity. To increase our in-depth understanding of the transition from student teacher phase to that of beginning teaching, more longitudinal research is needed from the point of entry of students to teacher training, exploring their dispositions and orientations to
diversity into the first two years of teaching. If students perceive their teacher training to be separate from their classroom practices as beginning teachers (McIntyre, 2009), then longitudinal research is vital to understand the situated learning that happens. To ensure this continuity may require teacher educators to be involved beyond the initial teacher education programme instead of the severance that exists currently, with mentoring and induction seen as reflecting a partnership between pre-service educators and school staff. The partnership approach may require research into the nature and extent of heterogeneity, or lack thereof, that prevail among teacher educators and school leaders, that can in turn have an impact on preparing teachers to meet the growing diversity in New Zealand classrooms.

Understanding school culture and examining the culture of teaching is complicated by the need to infer knowledge, values and norms that cannot be objectively verified (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). School conversations are the medium through which staff evolve shared meanings by revealing their individual beliefs, attitudes and perspectives (Wang & Odell, 2007). More research is required to capture the nature of the conversations in beginning teachers’ acculturation processes that inform and influence their responsiveness to the multidimensional nature of diversity in classrooms.

One of the ways to obtain subjective data was through the perceptions of the beginning teachers. In the early stages of teaching these beginning teachers may have echoed their institutional views rather than delving deep into their own thought processes. A longitudinal approach could overcome the conformity of the “survival” period and lead to better understandings of the nature of shift in the stance of novice teachers.
**Final thought**

If quality of teaching is one of the most significant contributors to student learning, then strong foundations around pedagogy for diversity are not a matter of choice but of necessity; these must be fostered through critical and reflexive enquiry-based professional learning for those wanting to take up teaching as a career. Nieto (2000) sums it all up by saying that if schooling for the growing diversity of learners is to be effective, then teachers should learn the realities of their students.
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Appendices

Appendix A1

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PROSPECTIVE BEGINNING TEACHERS

Dear ----------

My name is Vijaya Muralidharan and I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in the School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education. In my research I intend to explore the influence of school culture and practices on the beliefs and attitudes of beginning teachers towards diverse learners. In particular, I intend to explore ways in which the policies and practices of the school shape and influence your personal and professional growth.

The classrooms of today mirror the social reality of increasing diversity in our society. By participating in this study you will be contributing to a growing body of literature that can inform teacher education programmes and improve teacher induction practices.

I would like to study in depth, your day to day experiences, your interactions with students, and some key people within the school with whom you will interact frequently in the formative years. Six beginning teachers who have secured full time employment, and willing to participate, will be randomly selected for an 18-month long study as part of this research.

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide you with the details of this study and seek your voluntary participation. The research will include a pilot study with
two beginning teachers commencing in term 3, 2006 which will be followed by a study of four more beginning teachers in term 1, 2007.

The research will follow a case study approach. The initial interview will last up to an hour. It will be conducted within the first two to four weeks of your employment at a time convenient to you. The interview will explore your current beliefs and attitudes towards diversity, and what you perceive to be important within the school for your personal and professional growth. There will be half hour follow up interviews at six monthly intervals and one interview of up to 45 minutes at the end of the research period.

Between the first and the final interview, I would like to undertake two observation sessions a term that will include literacy, numeracy and physical education lessons. The specific aspects that will be observed will be negotiated with you at the time of the initial interview.

I would also like to observe two meetings a term that you have with your tutor teacher in the first 12 months and four syndicate meetings that you will be part of during the eighteen month period.

All interview materials gathered with you will be taped, transcribed and shared with you.

During the interviews, I will be writing descriptive field notes on the setting, time and other relevant details. These will be made available to you along with the transcripts.

No real names of the school or participants will be used at any time and all identifying details will be omitted. You can withdraw from the study at any time up until the final analysis is undertaken. Your identity along with the identity of other staff involved and the school will not be revealed either in the thesis or any other publication that arises out of this study. I assure you of confidentiality at all times.

A summary of my research findings will be made available to you at the end of the study.
This research has the approval of the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee. Should you have any concern about the study please contact Prof. Luanna Meyer at Victoria University of Wellington by e-mailing her on luanna.meyer@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04 - 463 9598.

If you would like to be part of this study please sign the enclosed consent form and return it to me in the enclosed self addressed and stamped envelope. You are under no obligation to participate.

Many thanks,

Vijaya M. Dharan

Contact details of the researcher
e-mail: muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz
Appendix A2

Diversity, School and Beginning Teachers

STUDENT TEACHER CONSENT FORM

I have read the attached letter to prospective beginning teachers and am aware of what is involved. I understand that:

• I will be one of 6 beginning teachers involved in the study
• I will be interviewed four times during the eighteen months of the study
• My classroom will become a focus for observations of specific aspects that will be negotiated at the first interview 12 times during the study
• All interviews will be taped and transcribed
• I have the right to correct any errors or omissions in the transcriptions of my interview
• I can have a pseudonym to protect my identity and neither my school nor I will be named or able to be identified in the report.
• I can withdraw from the project at any time up until the analysis of the final data.

I confirm that this is my first teaching position and I am a provisionally registered teacher. □

I agree to participate in the study explained in the Information sheet. □

I agree/do not agree to the interviews being audio-taped. □

I wish/do not wish to receive a copy of the summary of findings. □
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This research has been approved by the Ethics committee of Victoria University.
Researcher: Vijaya M Dharan
Appendix A3

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PROSPECTIVE PRINCIPALS

Dear ------

My name is Vijaya Muralidharan and I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in the School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education. My topic of research is the acculturation of beginning teachers. Specifically I am exploring the influence of school culture and practices on beginning teachers beliefs and attitudes towards diverse learners.

I would like to seek your permission to participate in the above research as you have employed a full time beginning teacher.

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide you with the details of my research. The research which will be undertaken over an 18-month period will follow a case study approach. It includes a pilot study with two beginning teachers commencing in term 3, 2006 which will be followed by a study of four more beginning teachers in term 1, 2007.

The study will examine ways in which school policies and practices shape and influence the practices of beginning teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners. The research will involve an initial interview with your beginning teacher (to be named) that will last for an hour. There will be an half hour interview at the end of every six months, and at the end of the research period, to explore his/her learning during the first eighteen months of teaching.
Between the first and the final interview with the beginning teachers, I would like to undertake twelve in class observations, to observe specific aspects of teaching and learning which will be negotiated with the beginning teacher at the time of the initial interview. I would also like to observe two meetings a term between the tutor teacher and beginning teacher (to be named), and four syndicate meetings that the beginning teacher (to be named) will be part of.

As the leader of the school, I would like to interview you as part of the study. I also seek your permission to interview the tutor teacher. (to be named). These interviews will take up to half an hour each. I will be sending a separate information sheet to the tutor teacher once I get the contact details of you.

I would like to audio-tape all interviews if participants are willing. All audio-taped information will be transcribed and shared with participants.

I would appreciate you obtaining permission from the relevant syndicate staff for the four observation sessions.

I would like to observe any special school assemblies during the period of the study.

I would also appreciate having permission to review the school charter, policies, strategic plans and any other document that you see as relevant and related to diversity of students in your school. I will be examining the current and previous Education Review Office reports that are available on the public domain.

I assure you of confidentiality at all times. No real names of the institution or people participating will be identified at any time.

On receiving your acceptance to be part of the research study, I will provide all participants with the necessary information about the study and the relevant consent forms. There is also a parent information sheet particularly for parents of students in the classroom of the beginning teacher (to be named).

Should you have any query about the above study, please contact my Supervisor, Dr. Luanna Meyer, Professor of Education (Research), Victoria University of Wellington. You can e-mail her at luanna.meyer@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04-4639598.
Please e-mail me your willingness at muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz and I will arrange an appointment to meet with you in person and organise the time schedules. I will bring along informed consent forms for all participants. Alternatively, you can call me on 021 2292030.

Looking forward to your participation.

Warm regards

Vijaya M. Dharan
Appendix A4

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INFORMATION SHEET FOR TUTOR TEACHERS

Dear ------

My name is Vijaya Muralidharan and I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in the School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education. My topic of research is the acculturation of beginning teachers. Specifically I am exploring the influence of school culture and practices on beginning teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards diverse learners.

This letter is to invite you to participate in the above research as the tutor teacher of - -----------, (to be named) who has agreed to be one of the six beginning teachers participating in the study.

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide you with the details of this study. The research which will be undertaken over an 18-month period will follow a case study approach. It includes a pilot study with two beginning teachers commencing in term 3, 2006 which will be followed by a study of four more beginning teachers in term 1, 2007.

The study will examine ways in which school policies and practices shape and influence the beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices of beginning teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners. The research will involve an initial interview with the beginning teacher (to be named) that will last for an hour. There will be half hour interviews at the end of every six months and one interview at the end of the research period to explore their learning during the period of the study.
As part of my data collection, I would like to interview you as the tutor teacher at the beginning of my study. The interviews will take up to half an hour. I would also like to observe twice a term, a meeting that you have with the beginning teacher for the first four terms.

I would like to audio-tape the sessions with your permission. All audio-taped information will be transcribed and shared.

During the interviews, I will be writing descriptive field notes on the setting, time and other relevant details. These will be made available to you along with the transcripts.

Between the first and the final interview with the beginning teachers, I would like to undertake twelve in class observations, to observe specific aspects of teaching and learning which will be negotiated with the beginning teacher at the time of the initial interview.

In addition I have also sought permission from your principal for observing four syndicate meetings.

I assure you of confidentiality at all times. No real names of the institution or people participating will be identified at any time.

Should you have any query about the above study, please contact my Supervisor, Professor Luanna Meyer, Professor of Education (Research), Victoria University of Wellington. You can e-mail her at luanna.meyer@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04-4639598.

Please e-mail me your willingness at muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz and I will arrange an appointment to meet with you in person and organise the time schedules. I will bring the informed consent form along.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely,

Vijaya M. Dharan
Appendix A5

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

TUTOR TEACHER CONSENT FORM

I have read the information sheet and have also had the details of the study explained to me. I have been provided with the opportunity to discuss my involvement with my principal. I also understand that I can ask for further clarification at any time.

I also understand that I have the right to refuse to be part of the study at any time.

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

I agree/do not agree for the interview and observation sessions to be audio-taped.

I agree to participate in this study within the parameters of the information provided.

I wish/do not wish to obtain a summary of the final report.

Signed

Date

Name:

School:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Contact details of researcher

e-mail: muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz
Appendix A6

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INFORMATION AND CONSENT SHEET FOR PARENTS

Dear ------

My name is Vijaya Muralidharan and I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in the School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education. My topic of research is the acculturation of beginning teachers. Specifically I am exploring the influence of school culture and practices on beginning teachers beliefs and attitudes towards diverse learners.

The school and the beginning teacher (to be named) have volunteered to participate in this research which will be undertaken over an 18-month period.

During the study, I will be undertaking observations in ---------- (beginning teacher’s name to be inserted) class. The purpose of the observations is to examine teacher practices and not focused on individual students.

**There will be no video or audio taping involved during these observations.**

I assure you of confidentiality at all times. No real names of the institution or people participating will be identified at any time.

Should you have any query about the above study, please contact my Supervisor, Professor Luanna Meyer, Professor of Education (Research), Victoria University. You can e-mail her at luanna.meyer@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04-4639598.
Please sign and return the slip below to the school. If you do not consent no data will be included for your child at any time. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that you have agreed.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely,

Vijaya M. Dharan

Contact details of researcher: muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz

Please detach and return before

I agree/do not agree with the researcher observing the class. □

Signed: Date:
Appendix A7

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INFORMATION SHEET FOR SYNDICATE TEACHERS

Dear ------

My name is Vijaya Muralidharan and I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in the School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education. My topic of research is the acculturation of beginning teachers. Specifically I am exploring the influence of school culture and practices on beginning teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards diverse learners.

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide you with the details of this study and seek your permission for observation. The research which will be undertaken over an 18-month period will follow a case study approach. It includes a pilot study with two beginning teachers commencing in term 3, 2006 which will be followed by a study of four more beginning teachers in term 1, 2007.

The study will examine ways in which school policies and practices shape and influence the beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices of beginning teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners. The research will involve an initial interview with the beginning teacher (to be named) that will last for an hour each. There will be half hour interviews at the end of every six months and one interview at the end of the research period to explore their learning during the period of the study. It will also include classroom observation twice a term and two meetings a terms between the tutor teacher and "--------" (to be named).
In addition, as part of my data collection, I would like to observe four syndicate meetings, one each term of which ------------------------ (to be named) the beginning teacher participating in this study is part of.

During observation, I will be writing descriptive field notes on the setting, time and other relevant details. Only information pertaining to student learning will be recorded in my field notes.

I assure you of confidentiality at all times. No real names of the institution or people participating will be identified at any time.

Should you have any query about the above study, please contact my Supervisor, Professor Luanna Meyer, Professor of Education (Research), Victoria University of Wellington. You can e-mail her at luanna.meyer@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04-4639598.

You can inform your principal of your willingness or e-mail me at muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz

I will arrange an appointment to meet with you in person and organise the time schedules. I will bring along the informed consent form for all participants.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely,

Vijaya M. Dharan
Appendix A8

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

SYNDICATE TEACHERS CONSENT FORM

I have read the information sheet and have also had the details of the study explained to me. I have been provided with the opportunity to discuss my involvement with my principal. I understand that I can ask for further clarification at any time.

I also understand that I have the right to refuse to be part of the study at any time. ☐

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained at all times. ☐

I agree/do not agree for the observation sessions to be audio-taped. ☐

I agree/do not agree to participate in this study within the parameters of the information provided. ☐

I wish/do not wish to obtain a summary of the final report. ☐

Signed
Name:
School:
Telephone:
E-mail:

Contact details of researcher
e-mail: muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz
Appendix A9

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

- Three aspects of teaching and learning will be observed during each of the observation sessions.

- A functional definition of the aspects will be agreed upon with the beginning teacher at the time of the initial interview and subsequent follow up meetings.

- At no given time will the researcher intervene in lesson planning, delivery or student feedback.

- At no time during the study will the researcher volunteer or be subjected to assist the beginning teacher to manage, teach or mind the students.

- The only time the researcher will intervene is in case of likely physical harm to students.

- At no time during the study will the researcher interrupt the lessons by engaging in a conversation with the beginning teacher.

- The researcher will not be drawn into any school performance appraisal issues.

- A copy of the protocol will be provided to the principal and the participating beginning teacher.

This research has been approved by the Ethics committee of Victoria University of Wellington.

Researcher: Vijaya M. Dharan
Appendix A10

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

PROTOCOL FOR OBTAINING THE SAMPLE

Step One - All school principals in the Greater Wellington area will be e-mailed with a request seeking voluntary participation by Victoria University of Wellington, School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education.

Step Two - The researcher will contact the principals of two schools who volunteer to participate and present details of the study.

Step Three - The researcher will then contact the beginning teacher by sending a letter to seek their willingness to participate in the study.

Step Four - Once the beginning teacher volunteers to participate in the research, written informed consent will be obtained from the principal, beginning teacher, tutor teacher and syndicate teachers. Consent will be sought from cultural leaders (kaumatua, kuia) where appropriate.

Step Five - Parents of students in the beginning teachers’ classes will be sent a written consent form before the research commences.

Step Six - All six beginning teachers will be chosen from schools located within the Central South region, preferably in the Greater Wellington area. The first two schools where both the principals and beginning teachers agree to participate will be chosen for the Pilot study. A similar process will be followed for obtaining the remaining four case studies.
Appendix A11

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INITIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE TO BE USED WITH BEGINNING TEACHERS

(Subsequent interview guides will be developed based on data gathered).

Step One: Introduction

- Personal introduction with a brief summary of background, experience and the particular interest in the topic.
- Explanation of the purpose and nature of study
- Clarify any doubts, concerns about the study, methodology that may arise.
- Discuss issues of confidentiality and validity: obtain consent for audio-taping the interview.

Check if the beginning teacher is comfortable with the setting, timing and purpose of interview. (Remind them that they can request the tape recorder be turned off at any stage in the interview).

Step Two: Background

Prompts may take the form of the following questions:

Can you share with me how you decided to become a teacher?

_Probes – What/who were the motivators?

What were your views, thoughts, perceptions on teaching and learning prior to teacher training?
(Probe) How had they conceptualised their classroom – in terms of students and themselves

Are there any key life experiences including teacher training that have shaped the way you think about teaching and you being a teacher?

What has been your experience as a student teacher in terms of the course both theory and practical aspects. Did it affirm or clash with any of their held beliefs and attitudes on teaching and learning?

How aware were you of the diversity that existed among students in schools today?

Did the practical aspect of your training heighten, change or influence your thinking around student diversity?

Probe – if not the school based practicums what else in your course influenced your awareness of student diversity

What has been your general experience during placement?

Did you have any “mental picture” of how you classroom would look like and function?

What are some important values and beliefs you hold in teaching the diverse range of students you are likely to encounter?

Step Three: Present

Can you describe your classroom as you saw it on your first day of teaching?

Is it what you had envisaged? (Did it match your “mental picture”?). If not, what was different? What do you want to do about it initially?

How would you describe the students in your class?

(Probe: In particular can you explain the nature of diversity of students in your classroom). Relating to their experience as student teacher
What do you see as being important inschool support for your personal growth, and professional growth?
*Probe: Types and nature of support and for what?*

Particularly, do you see yourself needing support in terms of the range of student diversity? Who would you rely on to provide you with this support.
*(Probe – do you think tutor teachers can assist? do you feel syndicate meetings will offer some assistance? any other?)*

How would you go about getting the required support?
*(Probe – in school, courses, professional reading)*

How would you record your professional and personal learning? How would you know if you were doing things differently or effectively? i.e. getting better in what you do?
*(Probe – for example personal diary, reflective journal, improved lesson plans, systematic notes of professional meetings ). Importantly participation and engagement of all students.*

**Step Four: Permission**

Refresh the beginning teacher about classroom observations which will be followed by the question:

“If I were to be an observer in your class what aspects would I be looking at that will highlight the practice of including all students in learning activities? How will I see it in action?

*(Probes – class room arrangement, method of instructions, nature of follow up, level of student engagement)*

Can we for the sake of my observation pick three aspects – (This can differ between the six beginning teachers)

I will then seek their permission to observe the three specified aspects after describing them in functional and observable terms in three different curriculum areas – literacy, numeracy and physical education.
Permission will be obtained during the interview where audio-taping of aspects of observation is required.

I will explain that student responses will not be audio-taped but will be summarised in my notes.

Seek permission during this interview to examine the lesson plans for the lessons observed.

Seek permission for a brief feedback session following observations wherever necessary at a convenient time.

**Step Five: Closure**

Clarify how the beginning teacher is feeling about the interview and subsequent arrangements. Are there any other relevant information that I need to know?

Set date and time for further interviews and observations.

Specify time limit to send transcriptions.

Leave my contact details.

(These questions are for guidance purpose only and do not follow a linear sequence).
Appendix A12

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

RECORDING SCHEDULE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS FOR TUTOR TEACHERS

Recording schedules not only allows for face-to-face interactions but also maintains the focus of the interview while allowing for some open ended questions (Merriam, 1998; Gillham, 2000).

Part A.

Name:

School:

Position:

Responsibilities within the school:

Part B.

Brief history of who they are, their teaching history, their drive, their motivation and aspirations as teachers and learners.

Followed by specific questions on diversity of students

- What is the extent of diversity among students in this school?
  Probe: How would you define diversity among students in this school?
  - How does this range of diversity influence your teaching and learning?
• What do you see as some of the challenges/barriers in meeting the needs of all students in the school particularly for a BT?

• How do you see yourself supporting the BT?
  *Probe: As a tutor, as a senior colleague. Professional and personal development*

• How would you know that the BT(s) is (are) well supported?
  *Probe: Indicators? (for ex: willingness to share; inviting peer critique, opting to observe in other classrooms, happy)*

• What do you think would make the support for BTs more effective and sustainable?
  *Probe: for example: Sharing the tutor teacher role; better time-tabling of meetings. Issues of accountability. What sort of records are kept to monitor progress of BT?*  
  *Eg. Interactive journal; record of meetings etc.*

• Any other critical factors that I may have overlooked that are vital to your role as a tutor teacher?

*There may be additional questions or clarifications that follow from the stream of conversation that cannot be predetermined.*


Appendix A13

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

RECORDING SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

Recording schedules not only allows for face to face interactions but also maintains the focus of the interview while allowing for some open ended questions (Merriam, 1998; Gillham, 2000).

- Introduction
- Researcher background
- Reiterate purpose of the study

Q 1: Opening questions around Principal’s career path in brief leading to current position.

Probes: What is it about the current school that made him/her opt to lead?

What in particular about the community can you tell me? (e.g. diversity, supportive, literate, whānau)

Q 2: Tell me about specific strategies at school level that supports the need of your school community: Is there any policy, strategic planning or other documents that is used to inform you to set up these supports?

At some stage of my research in your school will you be able to share these documents with me?

Q 2b: How do beginning teacher(s) access school policies?

Probes: Is there an expectation that they will be full aware of it
Q 3. Does the extent of diversity you have described present challenges for the school? for teachers and students?

*Probe: How? What are the barriers that create these challenges?*

Q 4. How do you prepare your beginning teachers for breaking the barriers and facing the challenges posed by the extent of the diversity in the school?

*Probe: How do you think the tutor teacher(s) in your school will/can support the BTs?*

Q 5. In an ideal world, if you had sufficient resources, how else would you like to be able to support the BT(s) to respond to the diversity in your school?
Appendix B1

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PROSPECTIVE BEGINNING TEACHERS

Dear ----------

My name is Vijaya Muralidharan and I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in the School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education. In my research I intend to explore the influence of school culture and practices on the beliefs and attitudes of beginning teachers towards diverse learners. In particular, I intend to explore ways in which the policies and practices of the school shape and influence your personal and professional growth.

The classrooms of today mirror the social reality of increasing diversity in our society. By participating in this study you will be contributing to a growing body of literature that can inform improve teacher induction practices and teacher education programmes.

During the academic year 2008, I would like to study in depth your day to day experiences, your interactions with students, and some key people within the school with whom you will interact frequently in the formative years.

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide you with the details of this study and seek your voluntary participation. The research started with a “pilot” study with one beginning teacher in term 3, 2006. Four more beginning teachers were added to the programme in term 1, 2007. You are one of the two beginning teachers who have been included for the study in 2008.
The research will follow a case study approach. The initial interview will last up to an hour. It will be conducted within the first two to four weeks of your employment at a time convenient to you. The interview will explore your current beliefs and attitudes towards diversity, and what you perceive to be important within the school for your personal and professional growth. There will be half hour follow up interviews at six monthly intervals and one interview of up to 45 minutes at the end of the research period.

Between the first and the final interview, I would like to undertake one classroom observation session a term for two blocks of 30 minutes during literacy, numeracy and physical education lessons. The specific aspects to be observed will be negotiated with you at the time of the initial interview.

I would also like to observe one PRT meeting a term during the year and two syndicate meetings that you will be part of during the twelve month period.

All interview materials gathered with you will be taped, transcribed and shared with you.

All notes taken during the interview on the setting, time and other relevant details will be made available to you along with the transcripts.

No real names of the school or participants will be used at any time and all identifying details will be omitted. You can withdraw from the study at any time up until the final analysis is undertaken. Your identity along with the identity of other staff involved and the school will not be revealed either in the thesis or any other publication that arises out of this study. I assure you of confidentiality at all times.

A summary of my research findings will be made available to you at the end of the study.

This research has the approval of the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee. Should you have any concern about the study please contact Prof. Luanna Meyer at Victoria University of Wellington by e-mailing her on luanna.meyer@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04 - 463 9598.
If you would like to be part of this study please sign the enclosed consent form. You are under no obligation to participate.

Many thanks,

Vijaya M. Dharan

Contact details of the researcher
e-mail: muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz
Appendix B2

Diversity, School and Beginning Teachers

BEGINNING TEACHER CONSENT FORM

I have read the attached letter to prospective beginning teachers and am aware of what is involved. I understand that:

- I will be one of 6 beginning teachers involved in the study
- I will be interviewed four times during the eighteen months of the study
- My classroom will become a focus for observations of specific aspects that will be negotiated at the first interview 12 times during the study
- All interviews will be taped and transcribed
- I have the right to correct any errors or omissions in the transcriptions of my interview
- I can have a pseudonym to protect my identity and neither my school nor I will be named or able to be identified in the report.
- I can withdraw from the project at any time up until the analysis of the final data.

I confirm that this is my first teaching position and I am a provisionally registered teacher.  

I agree to participate in the study explained in the Information sheet.  

I agree/do not agree to the interviews being audio-taped.  

I wish/do not wish to receive a copy of the summary of findings.  

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This research has been approved by the Ethics committee of Victoria University.
Researcher: Vijaya M Dharan
Appendix B3

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PROSPECTIVE PRINCIPALS

Dear

My name is Vijaya Muralidharan and I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in the School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education. My topic of research is the acculturation of beginning teachers. Specifically I am exploring the influence of school culture and practices on beginning teachers beliefs and attitudes towards diverse learners.

I would like to seek your permission to participate in the above research as you have employed a full time beginning teacher.

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide you with the details of my research. The research which will be undertaken over a 12-month period, will follow a case study approach.

The study will examine ways in which school policies and practices shape and influence the practices of beginning teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners. The research will involve an initial interview with your beginning teacher (to be named) that will last for an hour. There will be an half hour interview at the end of every six months, and at the end of the research period, to explore his/her learning during the first eighteen months of teaching.

Between the first and the final interview with the beginning teachers, I would like to undertake four in class observations, to observe specific aspects of teaching and learning which will be negotiated with the beginning teacher at the time of the initial interview. I would also like to observe one PRT meeting a term and two syndicate meetings that --- & --- will be part of.
As the leader of the school, I would like to interview you as part of the study. I also seek your permission to interview the tutor teacher. (to be named). These interviews will take up to half an hour each. I will be sending a separate information sheet to the tutor teacher once I get the contact details of you.

I would like to audio-tape all interviews if participants are willing. All audio-taped information will be transcribed and shared with participants.

I would like to observe any special school assemblies during the period of the study.

I would also appreciate having permission to review the school charter, policies, strategic plans and any other document that you see as relevant and related to diversity of students in your school. I will be examining the current and previous Education Review Office reports that are available on the public domain.

I assure you of confidentiality at all times. No real names of the institution or people participating will be identified at any time.

On receiving your acceptance to be part of the research study, I will provide all participants with the necessary information about the study and the relevant consent forms. There is also a parent information sheet particularly for parents of students in the classroom of the beginning teacher (to be named).

Should you have any query about the above study, please contact my Supervisor, Dr. Luanna Meyer, Professor of Education (Research), Victoria University of Wellington. You can e-mail her at luanna.meyer@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04-4639598.

Please e-mail me your willingness at muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz and I will arrange an appointment to meet with you in person and organise the time schedules. I will bring along informed consent forms for all participants. Alternatively, you can call me on 021 2292030.

Looking forward to your participation.

Warm regards,

Vijaya M. Dharan
Appendix B4

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INFORMATION SHEET FOR TUTOR TEACHERS

Dear

My name is Vijaya Muralidharan and I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in the School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education. My topic of research is the acculturation of beginning teachers. Specifically I am exploring the influence of school culture and practices on beginning teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards diverse learners.

This letter is to invite you to participate in the above research as the tutor teacher of - -------- who has agreed to be one of the seven beginning teachers participating in the study.

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide you with the details of this study. The research which will be undertaken over an 12-month period will follow a case study approach. The study will examine ways in which school policies and practices shape and influence the beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices of beginning teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners. The research will involve an initial interview with the beginning teacher (to be named) that will last for an hour. There will be half hour interviews at the end of every six months and one interview at the end of the research period to explore their learning during the period of the study.

As part of my data collection, I would like to interview you as the tutor teacher at the beginning and end of my study. The interviews will take up to half an hour. I would also like to observe once a term, a meeting that you have with the beginning teacher for the first four terms.
The interview will be audio-taped and all audio-taped information will be transcribed and shared. All notes taken during the interviews will also be made available to you along with the transcripts.

Between the first and the final interview with the beginning teachers, I would like to undertake four classroom observations, to observe specific aspects of teaching and learning which will be negotiated with the beginning teacher at the time of the initial interview.

In addition I have also sought permission from your principal for observing two syndicate meetings.

I assure you of confidentiality at all times. No real names of the institution or people participating will be identified at any time.

Should you have any query about the above study, please contact my Supervisor, Professor Luanna Meyer, Professor of Education (Research), Victoria University of Wellington. You can e-mail her at luanna.meyer@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04-4639598.

Please e-mail me your willingness at muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz and I will arrange an appointment to meet with you in person and organise the time schedules. I will bring the informed consent form along.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely,

Vijaya M. Dharan
Appendix B5

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

TUTOR TEACHER CONSENT FORM

I have read the information sheet and have also had the details of the study explained to me. I have been provided with the opportunity to discuss my involvement with my principal. I also understand that I can ask for further clarification at any time.

I also understand that I have the right to refuse to be part of the study at any time. ☐

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained at all times. ☐

I agree/do not agree for the interview and observation sessions to be audio-taped. ☐

I agree to participate in this study within the parameters of the information provided. ☐

I wish/do not wish to obtain a summary of the final report. ☐

Signed ___________________________________________ Date

Name: ___________________________________________
School: _________________________________________
Telephone: ______________________________________
E-mail: _________________________________________
Contact details of researcher

e-mail: muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz
Appendix B6

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INFORMATION AND CONSENT SHEET FOR PARENTS

Dear Parent(s),

My name is Vijaya Muralidharan and I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in the School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education. My topic of research is the acculturation of beginning teachers. Specifically I am exploring the influence of school culture and practices on beginning teachers beliefs and attitudes towards diverse learners.

The school and the beginning teacher (to be named) have volunteered to participate in this research which will be undertaken over an 12-month period.

During the study, I will be undertaking observations in ----------- (beginning teacher’s name to be inserted) class. The purpose of the observations is to examine teacher practices and not focused on individual students.

There will be no video or audio taping involved during these observations.

I assure you of confidentiality at all times. No real names of the institution or people participating will be identified at any time.

Should you have any query about the above study, please contact my Supervisor, Professor Luanna Meyer, Professor of Education (Research), Victoria University. You can e-mail her at luanna.meyer@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04-4639598.
Please sign and return the slip below to the school. If you do not consent no data will be included for your child at any time. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that you have agreed.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely,

Vijaya M. Dharan

Contact details of researcher: muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz

Please detach and return before

I agree/do not agree with the researcher observing the class. ☐

Signed: _______________________________ Date: ____________________________
Appendix B7

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INFORMATION SHEET FOR SYNDICATE TEACHERS

Dear Syndicate staff,

My name is Vijaya Muralidharan and I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in the School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education. My topic of research is the acculturation of beginning teachers. Specifically I am exploring the influence of school culture and practices on beginning teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards diverse learners.

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide you with the details of this study and seek your permission for observation. The research which will be undertaken over an 12-month period will follow a case study approach. The study will examine ways in which school policies and practices shape and influence the beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices of beginning teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners. The research will involve an initial interview with the beginning teacher (to be named) that will last for an hour each. There will be half hour interviews at the end of every six months and one interview at the end of the research period to explore their learning during the period of the study. It will also include classroom observation once a term and one PRT meeting.

In addition, as part of my data collection, I would like to observe two syndicate meetings, one each term of which the beginning teacher participating in this study is part of. During observation, I will be writing descriptive field notes on the setting, time and other relevant details. Only information pertaining to student learning will be recorded in my field notes.
I assure you of confidentiality at all times. No real names of the institution or people participating will be identified at any time.

Should you have any query about the above study, please contact my Supervisor, Professor Luanna Meyer, Professor of Education (Research), Victoria University of Wellington. You can e-mail her at luanna.meyer@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04-4639598.

You can inform your principal of your willingness or e-mail me at muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz

I will arrange an appointment to meet with you in person and organise the time schedules. I will bring along the informed consent form for all participants.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely,

Vijaya M. Dharan
Appendix B8

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

SYNDICATE TEACHERS CONSENT FORM

I have read the information sheet and have also had the details of the study explained to me. I have been provided with the opportunity to discuss my involvement with my principal. I understand that I can ask seek further clarification at any time.

I also understand that I have the right to refuse to be part of the study at any time. ☐

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained at all times. ☐

I agree/do not agree for the observation sessions to be audio-taped. ☐

I agree/do not agree to participate in this study within the parameters of the information provided. ☐

I wish/do not wish to obtain a summary of the final report. ☐

Signed

Date

Name:

School:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Contact details of researcher

e-mail: muralivija@student.vuw.ac.nz
Appendix B9

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

- Three aspects of teaching and learning will be observed during each of the observation sessions.
- A functional definition of the aspects will be agreed upon with the beginning teacher at the time of the initial interview and subsequent follow up meetings.
- At no given time will the researcher intervene in lesson planning, delivery or student feedback.
- At no time during the study will the researcher volunteer or be subjected to assist the beginning teacher to manage, teach or mind the students.
- The only time the researcher will intervene is in case of likely physical harm to students.
- At no time during the study will the researcher interrupt the lessons by engaging in a conversation with the beginning teacher.
- The researcher will not be drawn into any school performance appraisal issues.
- A copy of the protocol will be provided to the principal and the participating beginning teacher.

This research has been approved by the Ethics committee of Victoria University of Wellington.

Researcher: Vijaya M. Dharan
Appendix B10

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

PROTOCOL FOR OBTAINING THE SAMPLE

Step One - All school principals in the Greater Wellington area will be e-mailed with a request seeking voluntary participation by Victoria University of Wellington, School of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education.

Step Two - The researcher will contact the principals of two schools who volunteer to participate and present details of the study.

Step Three - The researcher will then contact the beginning teacher by sending a letter to seek their willingness to participate in the study.

Step Four - Once the beginning teacher volunteers to participate in the research, written informed consent will be obtained from the principal, beginning teacher, tutor teacher and syndicate teachers. Consent will be sought from cultural leaders (kaumatua, kuia) where appropriate.

Step Five - Parents of students in the beginning teachers’ classes will be sent a written consent form before the research commences.

Step Six - All six beginning teachers will be chosen from schools located within the Central South region, preferably in the Greater Wellington area. The first two schools where both the principals and beginning teachers agree to participate will be chosen for the Pilot study. A similar process will be followed for obtaining the remaining four case studies.
Appendix B11

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

INITIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH BEGINNING TEACHERS – 2008

Step One: Introduction to the researcher and the study

- Personal introduction with a brief summary of background, experience and the particular interest in the topic.
- Explanation of the purpose and nature of study
- Clarify any doubts, concerns about the study, methodology used.
- Discuss issues of confidentiality; obtain consent for audio-taping the interview.

Check if the beginning teacher is comfortable with the setting, timing and purpose of interview. (Remind them that they can request the tape recorder be turned off at any stage in the interview).

Step Two: Background

[The interviews are open ended and prompts will take the form of the following questions. These prompts are for guidance only and further probes will depend on the line of conversation based on these broad topics].

- Can you share with me how you decided to become a teacher?
  Probes – What/who were the motivators?
- What were your views, thoughts, perceptions on teaching and learning prior to teacher training?
- Are there any key life experiences including teacher training that have shaped the way you think about teaching and you becoming a teacher?

- What was the extent of your awareness of diversity prior to teacher training?
  *Probe: How would you define diversity?*

- How did your experience as a student teacher (both in theory classes and practicums) heighten, change or influence your beliefs, values and attitudes about student diversity?
  *Probe: How aware were you of the diversity that existed among students in schools today?*

- What was your perception of your classroom, students etc?.
  *(Probe) How did you conceptualise their classroom – in terms of students and yourself. i.e. Did you have any “mental picture” of how you classroom would look like and function?*

- What are some important personal values and beliefs you hold in teaching a diverse range of students?
  *(Probe: Among the things that you have told me so far, is there anything that has had the strongest influence on your values and beliefs in teaching; are there any other influences on your values and beliefs)–*

**Step Three: Starting in the classroom**

- Can you describe your experience in the classroom on your first day or perhaps the first week?
  *Probe: Is it what you had envisaged? (Did it match your “mental picture”?). If not, what was different? What did you want to do about it initially?*

- How would you describe the diversity among the students in your class?
  *(Probe: Relating to their experience as student teacher – Was it different to your earlier experiences – both in theory and during practicums)*
What do you see as being important in-school support for your personal and professional growth? Particularly, do you see yourself needing support in terms of the range of student diversity?

(Probe – What kind of support you think you will need? Who will you rely on to provide you with this support)

How would you go about getting the required support?

(Probe – in school, courses, professional reading)

How would you know if you were doing things differently and it was making a difference to learners? Or effectively? i.e. getting better in what you do?

(Probe – for example personal diary, reflective journal, improved lesson plans, systematic notes of professional meetings). Chief indicator being participation and engagement of all students.

Step Four: Permission

Refresh the beginning teacher about classroom observations which will be followed by the question:

Given the diversity of your classroom as you have mentioned

“If I were to be an observer in your class what aspects would I be looking at that will highlight your teaching practice of including all students in learning activities? How will I see it in action?

(Probes – classroom arrangement, method of instructions, curriculum content, pedagogy, nature of follow up, organisation of students, level of student engagement)

Can we for the sake of my observation pick up to three aspects?

Seek permission during this interview to examine the lesson plans for the lessons observed.

Seek permission for a brief feedback session following observations wherever necessary at a convenient time.
Step Five: Closure

Clarify how the beginning teacher is feeling about the interview and subsequent arrangements and clarify if there are other relevant information that I need to know?

Set date and time for further interviews and observations.

Specify time limit to send transcriptions.

Leave my contact details.
Appendix B12

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

RECORDING SCHEDULE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS FOR TUTOR TEACHERS

Recording schedules not only allows for face-to-face interactions but also maintains the focus of the interview while allowing for some open ended questions (Merriam, 1998; Gillham, 2000).

Part A.

Name:

School:

Position:

Responsibilities within the school:

Part B.

Brief history of who they are, their teaching history, their drive, their motivation and aspirations as teachers and learners.

Followed by specific questions on diversity of students

- What is the extent of diversity among students in this school?
  Probe: How would you define diversity among students in this school?

- How does this range of diversity influence your teaching and learning?
What do you see as some of the challenges/barriers in meeting the needs of all students in the school particularly for a BT?

How do you see yourself supporting the BT?
Probe: As a tutor, as a senior colleague. Professional and personal development

How would you know that the BT(s) is (are) well supported?
Probe: Indicators? (for ex: willingness to share; inviting peer critique, opting to observe in other classrooms, happy)

What do you think would make the support for BTs more effective and sustainable?
Probe: for example: Sharing the tutor teacher role; better time-tabling of meetings. Issues of accountability. What sort of records are kept to monitor progress of BT? Eg. Interactive journal; record of meetings etc.

Any other critical factors that I may have overlooked that are vital to your role as a tutor teacher?

There may be additional questions or clarifications that follow from the stream of conversation that cannot be predetermined.
Appendix B13

Diversity, Schools and Beginning Teachers

RECORDING SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

Recording schedules not only allows for face to face interactions but also maintains the focus of the interview while allowing for some open ended questions (Merriam, 1998; Gillham, 2000).

- Introduction
- Researcher background
- Reiterate purpose of the study

Q 1: Opening questions around Principal’s career path in brief leading to current position.

Probe: What is it about the current school that made him/her opt to lead?

What in particular about the community can you tell me? (e.g. diversity, supportive, literate, whānau)

Q 2: Tell me about specific strategies at school level that supports the need of your school community: Is there any policy, strategic planning or other documents that is used to inform you to set up these supports?

At some stage of my research in your school will you be able to share these documents with me?

Q 2b: How do beginning teacher(s) access school policies?

Probe: Is there an expectation that they will be full aware of it
Q 3. Does the extent of diversity you have described present challenges for the school? for teachers and students?

Probe: How? What are the barriers that create these challenges?

Q 4. How do you prepare your beginning teachers for breaking the barriers and facing the challenges posed by the extent of the diversity in the school?

Probe: How do you think the tutor teacher(s) in your school will/can support the BTs?

Q 5. In an ideal world, if you had sufficient resources, how else would you like to be able to support the BT(s) to respond to the diversity in your school?
Appendix B14

EFFECTIVE TEACHING PROFILE

1. **Manaakitanga** – Caring for students as culturally located individuals.

2. **Mana Motuhake** – Caring about student performance.

3. **Ngā Whakapiringatanga** – Creating a secure and well managed learning environment that allows for pedagogical creativity along side routine pedagogical knowledge.

4. **Wānanga** – Engaging with Māori students learning as Māori through effective teacher interactions.

5. **Ako** – Using a range of strategies for teaching and learning activities and strengthening relationships.

6. **Kotahitanga** – Promote, monitor, and reflect on outcomes that lead to improved educational achievements for Māori students.

From “Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile” (Bishop et al., 2009, p. 737)