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New Teachers, Professional Knowledge and
Educational Reform in New Zealand

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University

October, 2007
I certify that the thesis entitled:

New teachers, professional knowledge and educational reform in New Zealand

submitted for the degree of:

Doctor of Philosophy

is the result of my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

I also certify that any material in the thesis, which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any university or institution is identified in the text.

Full Name...........................................................................................................................................

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Date.......................................................................................................................................................
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List of acronyms

ACENZ  Association of Colleges of Education in New Zealand

APNZ  Association of Polytechnics of New Zealand

EFTS  Equivalent full time students

ERO  Educational Review Office

ITPNZ  Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics, New Zealand

MMP  Mixed member proportional

MOE  Ministry of Education

NAGs  National Administrative Guidelines

NCEA  National Certificate of Educational Achievement

NEGs  National Educational Guidelines

NZQA  New Zealand Qualifications Authority

NZTC  New Zealand Teachers Council

NZVCC  New Zealand Vice Chancellors Committee

PBRF  Performance Based Research Fund

PRT  Provisionally Registered Teacher (in first two-four years of teaching)

SES  Special Educational Services

TEFANZ  Teacher Education of Aotearoa, New Zealand

TEI/TEO  Tertiary education institution/organisation

TLRI  Teaching and Learning Research Initiative

TRB  Teacher Registration Board
## Glossary of Māori terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Māori term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hapū</td>
<td>Sub-tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hikoi</td>
<td>A march or walk; in recent times it refers to a long protest or political march, sometimes beginning in the far north and ending at Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwi</td>
<td>Tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaupapa Māori research</td>
<td>Research with a Māori theoretical framework or Māori-centred research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>Indigenous people of New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marae</td>
<td>Meeting ground. This term is frequently used to refer to the wharenui rather than the ground itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakeha</td>
<td>This term refers to New Zealanders of European origins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pōwhiri</td>
<td>Traditional Māori welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangata whenua</td>
<td>Literally ‘people of the land’, that is, the Indigenous or local people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Kauhua</td>
<td>A research project and professional development programme aimed at addressing low achievement of Māori students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Kōtahitanga</td>
<td>A research project about the impact of teaching practices on Māori student achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te mana kōrero</td>
<td>A teacher professional development programme aimed at addressing concerns arising from Te Kōtahitanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te reo Māori me ona tikanga</td>
<td>The Māori language and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikanga Māori</td>
<td>‘ways Māori’ or Māori customs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tino rangatiratanga</td>
<td>Māori self-determination and authority of their own affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tītiro o Waitangi</td>
<td>The Treaty of Waitangi – a treaty signed by the British Crown and the tribes of New Zealand throughout the year of 1840; this founding document set out the agreement for settlement by British subjects in the 19th Century and the ways in which governorship was to be carried out by the British; it is used to resolve disputes about ownership of Māori land and resources via the Waitangi Tribunal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whānau</td>
<td>(Extended) family; sometimes including those unrelated by blood but as close as family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whare wānanga</td>
<td>Tertiary educational institutions which draw on philosophy and practices of pre-European institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wharenui</td>
<td>Meeting house</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

_Acknowledgments_ ...................................................................................................................... i

_List of acronyms_ .......................................................................................................................... ii

_Glossary of Māori terms_ ........................................................................................................... iii

_Table of Contents_ ....................................................................................................................... iv

_Abstract_ ........................................................................................................................................ viii

**Chapter One: Introduction** .......................................................................................................... 1

**Introduction** ..............................................................................................................................

_A snapshot of the New Zealand educational context_ .................................................................... 5

- Overview of the current education system .................................................................................. 5
- The political, social and economic context of education ............................................................. 7
- A personal/professional note ....................................................................................................... 10

_Equity and accountability in New Zealand education_ ................................................................. 11

_This study_ ...................................................................................................................................... 18

- The structure of this thesis ......................................................................................................... 19

**Chapter Two: Research on professional knowledge and new teachers: A review** .................... 23

**Teacher preparation and induction** ......................................................................................... 23

- Transfer of knowledge from pre-service education to teaching practice .................................. 24
- Early years of teaching ................................................................................................................ 26

_Diversity, teacher education and beginning teachers_ ............................................................... 29

- Teaching in diverse communities ............................................................................................... 29
- Preparing teachers for diversity ................................................................................................... 33
- New teachers’ negotiation of teacher education rhetoric ............................................................ 38
- Teacher subjectivity and discourses of social justice ................................................................. 40

**Teacher professional knowledge** ............................................................................................ 41

- Characterising and structuring teacher professional knowledge ............................................... 42
- Teacher professional knowledge as contextual and reflective .................................................... 44
- Teacher conceptions and experience ......................................................................................... 47
- Professional knowledge and professional identity ....................................................................... 48

**Conclusion** .............................................................................................................................. 54
Chapter Three: Methodology and research design

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 56

Narrative inquiry ................................................................................................................................ 59
  Interpretations and adaptations of narrative inquiry ............................................................................. 61

Interviewing and other field texts ........................................................................................................ 64

Data analysis: Reading data as text/writing as inquiry ......................................................................... 67
  ‘Making a mess with method’ .................................................................................................................. 68
  Reading data as text ................................................................................................................................. 69
  Writing as a method of inquiry ................................................................................................................ 71

Research procedure ................................................................................................................................ 72
  Participants: access, selection, recruitment ............................................................................................ 72
  Ethical issues ........................................................................................................................................... 77
  Interviewing the teachers ......................................................................................................................... 80
  Questions of validity ............................................................................................................................... 84

Chapter Four: New teachers negotiating discourses of social justice, equality and difference

Introduction .............................................................................................................................................. 88

A critical analysis of selected and influential debates about social justice, equality and difference
  Equality of opportunity, equality of outcomes and equity ...................................................................... 90
  Difference and equality ............................................................................................................................ 92
  Systems of thinking about difference .................................................................................................... 95
  Justice and difference .............................................................................................................................. 98

Educational ‘myths’ of equality in New Zealand ..................................................................................... 101
  ‘Survival of the fittest’ versus ‘equality of opportunity’ ........................................................................ 101
  Equity, marketisation and accountability—conflicting discourses? ....................................................... 105

Negotiating discourses of social justice, equality and difference ............................................................ 107
  An ethos of fairness ................................................................................................................................. 109
  Categories of difference .......................................................................................................................... 117
  Reframing difference ............................................................................................................................... 128

Implications for practice ......................................................................................................................... 137

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................... 139
Chapter Five: Professional identity formation of new teachers 141

Introduction ................................................................. 141
Professional identity and subjectivity .................................. 142
Identity formation in ‘conversation’ with others .................... 146
  Pupils’ self-perception ..................................................... 147
  ‘Generational’ subjectivities .............................................. 150
  Professional identities changing over time ........................ 158
Identity formation in communities .................................... 160
Identity formation and contested socio-cultural and professional spaces .......... 163
  Spirituality, curriculum and culture .................................. 164
  The Tiriti o Waitangi and education for Māori ....................... 171
  The intersection of ethnicity, gender and curriculum .............. 175
Implications for practice .................................................. 181
Conclusion ........................................................................ 182

Chapter Six: New teachers negotiating policy reform: a case in practice 184

Introduction ................................................................. 184
Qualification reform .......................................................... 187
  The National Qualification Framework and the NCEA ............ 187
  Debates about the NCEA .................................................. 191
Teacher professional knowledge and assessment reform ............ 194
  Student motivation .......................................................... 195
  Credentialing of both vocational and academic subjects ....... 200
  Curriculum design ......................................................... 205
  Credibility, reliability and validity .................................... 207
Implications for practice .................................................. 213
Conclusion ........................................................................ 215

Chapter Seven: Conclusion ................................................. 217

The overall questions ..................................................... 217
Findings and contribution .................................................. 220
  Equity and accountability ................................................ 220
  Teacher professional knowledge and identity ....................... 221
  Policy reform .................................................................. 222
Abstract

This thesis examines the professional knowledge of new secondary school teachers in New Zealand, their negotiation of multiple discourses encountered in policy and practice, and their processes of professional identity formation. It is also a study of policy reform. In New Zealand, as elsewhere, recent educational and social reforms have brought about major changes to the way education is managed and implemented. These reforms emphasise market ideologies promoting consumer choice and responsibility, while measuring and monitoring quality and effectiveness. At the same time, the reforms attempt to alleviate social inequality. Teachers’ negotiation of an accountability culture and the dominant equity policies is a major focus of this study.

The study draws upon group interviews held with nine new teachers during the first two years of their teaching careers. The group interviews were designed to elicit extended narratives from individual teachers, as well as promote more interactive dialogue and reflections within the groups. Because the interviews were conducted at different points in their early careers, the study also has a longitudinal element, allowing insight into how teachers’ views are formed or changed during an intense period of professional learning. Analysis of the teachers’ narratives is informed by poststructural and feminist understandings of identity and knowledge and by a methodological orientation to writing as a method of enquiry.

The thesis develops three main types of discussion and sets of arguments. The first examines new teachers’ negotiation of the ‘macro’ context of teacher knowledge formation—that is, their negotiation of an educational policy environment that juxtaposes an equity agenda with accountability controls. In order to historically situate these dilemmas, the particular political, social and educational context of New Zealand is examined. It is argued that teachers negotiate competing political and conceptual debates about social justice, equity and difference, and that this negotiation is central to the formation of professional knowledge. The analysis illustrates ways in which teachers make sense of equity discourses in educational policy and practice, and the apparent contradictions that arise from placing tight accountability standards on schools and teachers to achieve associated equity goals.

The second type of discussion focuses on teachers’ negotiation of the ‘micro’ dimension of professional knowledge, looking closely at the processes and practices that form professional identity. Against stage or developmental models of teacher identity, it is argued that professional identity is formed in an ongoing, uneven and fluid manner and is socially and discursively situated/embedded. It is further argued that professional knowledge and identity are entwined and that this relationship is most usefully understood through analysis of the discursive practices that frame teachers’ working lives and through which teachers work out who they are or should become and what and how they (should) think. This analysis contributes new perspectives to debates in teacher education about teacher preparation and the knowledge required of teachers in current ‘new times’.

The final cluster of arguments brings together these macro and micro aspects of professional knowledge and identity with a case study of how new teachers negotiated a recent educational reform of senior secondary school qualifications in New Zealand. This reform has had a significant impact on secondary schools and on the way teachers, and New Zealanders in general, think about education, achievement and
success. It was found that this reform significantly challenged new teachers to question their beliefs about assessment and justice in education, and what counts as success. This case study draws attention to the tensions between equity, academic excellence and standards-based assessment, and contributes to understanding how teacher professional knowledge forms both in the context of a specific educational policy reform and in relation to educational reform in general.

This study contributes new knowledge to the formation of teacher professional knowledge and identity in an educational climate of change in New Zealand. The findings offer new insights for teacher educators, policymakers and schools into how teachers build, shape and sustain professional knowledge; how they juggle contradictions between a desire for justice, policy imperatives and teacher education rhetoric; the self-constructed, but contingent nature of professional knowledge and identity; and the urgency to address identity formation as part of teacher education and to take account of the dynamic ways in which identities form. These matters need to be articulated in teacher education—both pre-service and in-service—in order to address teacher retention and satisfaction, and teachers’ commitment to equity reform in education.
Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

This thesis examines the professional knowledge of new secondary school teachers in New Zealand, their negotiation of multiple discourses encountered in policy and practice, and their processes of professional identity formation. In New Zealand, as elsewhere around the world, educational reforms carried out over the past 15 years have brought about major changes to the way education is managed and implemented. The reforms have emphasised market ideologies that promote consumer choice and responsibility, and put in place controls to measure and monitor quality and effectiveness. At the same time, these reforms emphasised equity ideologies to alleviate social inequalities. Teachers’ negotiation of the juxtaposition of an accountability culture with the dominant policies of equity, and their professional knowledge and identity formation in this environment forms the focus of this study.

My reasons for choosing to focus on beginning secondary teachers’ professional knowledge are multiple. The recruitment and retention of teachers, in general, has been identified, in several countries, as a growing problem in education; for example, in a report funded by the Australian Government (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training, 2002), a UK report commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (Totterdell, Heilbronn, Bubb & Jones, 2001), research in the USA (Gold, 1996; Hebert & Worthy, 2001), and research funded by the New Zealand Government (Ministry of Education, 2002; Renwick, 2001).

In New Zealand, there is particular concern with the recruitment of teachers in secondary schools and in rural areas, and with recruiting Māori and Pasifika teachers into the teaching profession. Over the last seven or so years, in recognition of these recruitment concerns, the New Zealand Government has introduced various initiatives. These include a special allowance aimed at attracting secondary teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas, financial assistance to attract teachers to rural areas, scholarships to attract Māori and Pasifika teachers, removal expenses to attract New Zealand has a large population of Pacific Islands people—sometimes known as Pasifika peoples—coming mostly from Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Fiji, Tokelau, Niue.
Zealand teachers home from abroad, and financial assistance for teachers to travel to job interviews in hard-to-staff areas.

While the recruitment measures appear to have had some degree of success, there remains particular concern about the retention of secondary teachers and especially the retention of new or young teachers in many schools, and of middle management staff (Cameron, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2002). Policy directions in New Zealand are beginning to focus on this and funding is now being directed to research in this area. This includes a scoping exercise (Cameron & Baker, 2004), a project to examine new teachers’ conceptions of their pre-service teacher education experience and a study in progress examining the experiences of third to fifth year teachers’ (Cameron, Baker & Lovett, 2006). There are also some moves to improve provision of induction for beginning teachers, such as the development, by the New Zealand Teachers Council and the Ministry of Education, of an induction kit for schools (Ministry of Education, 2005d).

This study is offered as a contribution to understanding the formation of teacher professional knowledge and identity, within this educational climate of change and challenge. The study complements the more descriptive research such as that identified above, which focuses on teacher experiences and schooling practices for inducting new teachers. Findings from this study provide insights for teacher educators, policymakers and schools into how teachers build, shape and sustain professional knowledge. As such, it also indicates possible directions for policy and practice in the education of new teachers.

In exploring teacher professional knowledge, I could have chosen to look at any group of teachers. However, research about early career teachers (especially secondary) is in its early stages. This group of teachers is often positioned as having naïve beliefs and preconceptions about teaching and learning. I view the knowledge of these teachers

---

2 According to Ministry of Education figures, in New Zealand 37% of all beginning teachers leave teaching in the first five years. While 25% of these return after a year’s break, many change schools, frequently leaving those in lower socio-economic areas or those not providing adequate professional guidance for new teachers.

3 This national study is led by Massey University. It is known as the ‘Making a Difference’ (MAD) project and focuses on secondary beginning teachers in their first two years of teaching. The design and conduct of my own study predates the ‘MAD’ project.
differently, and believe that as new teachers they have the potential to offer fresh and distinctive perspectives to professional knowledge discourses. It is frequently during this time in their careers that decisions are made about whether to stay in teaching. As well, this is likely to be a time when teaching philosophies, beliefs and identity are actively shaped, and when teachers approach teaching with enthusiasm and an openness to possibilities. Researching new teachers’ beliefs also enables an exploration of the range of discourses in teachers’ lives because they are experiencing many at once, and usually in intense ways. They hold recent memories of their teacher education; they also face fresh experiences of interacting with school discourses and educational policy. Further, they are likely to be in a strong position to articulate these experiences, as they are new and vivid. Like Britzman (2003), I also argue that the teachers’ biographical and cultural experiences contribute to their professional experiences. For new teachers these prior cultural experiences are likely to be particularly influential because they have yet to gain extensive or direct teaching experiences.

There is, then, a need for research that not only brings the voices and experiences of new secondary teachers into the dialogue, but also examines their negotiation of the dominant discourses they face in the current challenging and changing educational environment of reform. In the present context, as I have suggested, dominant discourses include the mediation of equity principles through accountability measures. In negotiating these policy imperatives, teachers are caught between the contradictions generated by these as well as other related discourses and belief systems they encounter (their own and those of others). These include philosophies of education, social justice and equity, their life experiences, the ‘commonsense’ discourses they encounter in their schools and classrooms, and the rhetoric of teacher education and policy dictates—from both Government and school. At a macro level, this involves, as Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark and Warne (2002) have suggested in another context, a negotiation of policy, ideology and practice. At a micro level, teachers draw on these discourses, beliefs and cultural understandings in the formation of a professional identity or ‘self-making’.

Teacher professional knowledge has been the focus of research in education for several decades. Much of this research focuses on defining or describing a knowledge
base for teachers—what they need to know (for example, Shulman & Shulman, 2004) and on the professional, social and political context in which teachers work (for example, Zeichner, Melnick & Gomez, 1996). Other research is concerned with how teachers can better understand their own work (for example, Schön, 1995) and on conceptions and experiences of student teachers or teachers (for example, Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). More recently, several researchers have applied poststructural and feminist understandings to analyse, for example, the multiple discourses in teachers’ narratives about their work, educational issues or sense of self (for example, Britzman, 2003; Davis & Sumara, 1999; Middleton & May, 1997). This poststructural work also brings to the fore the construction of teachers’ identity in relation to professional knowledge, as discussed by Stronach et al. (2002), MacLure (1993) and Youngblood Jackson (2001).

The majority of this range of research is about student teachers in preservice teacher education programmes, and predominantly concerns primary teachers (studies about secondary and pre-school teachers are less common). This research largely focuses on describing or analysing: specific strategies or interventions for teaching practice (for example, Borko, Michalec, Timmons & Siddle, 1997; Dinkelman, 2000); whether teachers are well prepared during teacher education to teach in culturally and socially diverse classrooms (for example, Gomez, 1996; Nixon, 2006; Sleeter, 2001; Valli, 2000); and the ongoing development of their professional knowledge and practice (Loughran, Brown & Doecke, 2001). The literature about teacher identity tends to view identity as fixed and therefore something that is definable in some way, and which new teachers can aim for, with the help of ‘experienced’ teachers. However, some recent research has begun to take account of the unpredictability and dis-order of teacher knowledge and the fragmented nature of identity (Britzman, 2003; Davis & Sumara, 1999; Stronach et al., 2002). Such work recognises that teacher education takes place in a particular setting and time and with particular people and social histories (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Middleton & May, 1997, 1999; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). It is this kind of approach that I have adopted for this study. Thus I have built a situated analysis of early career secondary teachers in New Zealand at the start of the 21st century. I will now provide a background to the context of my study, followed by an outline of the thesis structure.
Chapter One: Introduction

A snapshot of the New Zealand educational context

Because this thesis is specifically about teachers in New Zealand, I will now provide a snapshot of the educational context for this study. I do not intend to provide an in-depth analysis or to cover all aspects of the New Zealand education system. I have developed this snapshot in order to provide a brief background to education provision in New Zealand and the political, social and economic context in which education is set in New Zealand. Later in this chapter, I will outline policies relating to recent educational reforms with particular attention to equity discourses and associated accountability measures.

Overview of the current education system

The New Zealand schooling system developed out of the British system of the late nineteenth century. Since that time, with the establishment of a free, secular and universal schooling system, the vast majority of New Zealand children have attended state funded schools, whose curriculum is now governed by the Education Act of 1989 and its subsequent amendments.4

Although pre-European Māori had a sophisticated system of education, including higher education institutions, this system was largely dismantled after the arrival of the British (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999). The colonising government assumed responsibility for education of Māori children from early on, beginning with the Native Schools Act of 1867 which aimed to Europeanise Māori, measured initially by their proficiency in English language (Stephenson, 2006). The first Education Act of 1877 covering mainstream education ran parallel with the 1867 Act and many ‘Māori’ schools transferred to the mainstream prior to the final amalgamation in 1969 (Stephenson, 2006). Despite the intent of this legislation and the overriding principle of equality of educational opportunities advocated in the Education Act of 1939 for all

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4 There is no federal system of government in New Zealand, so ‘state’ refers to public sector of the entire country. When I refer to ‘state schools’ I am referring to secular, government funded and regulated schools. State funded schools include both state schools and those with a special character (mostly Catholic) known as ‘state integrated schools’. Alongside the state system are ‘independent’ or ‘private’ schools, which can apply for a partial government subsidy (in 2007 this amounted to $1300-$2000 per student).
children\(^5\) up to the age of 16 years, Māori students have continued to underachieve, according to Government statistics of academic attainment. This remains a significant and controversial topic in contemporary educational reform in New Zealand and I return to it throughout this thesis, notably in my discussion of research literature in Chapter Two.

Tertiary education in New Zealand comprises of what are now known as ‘Tertiary Education Organisations’ (TEOs). These include universities, which offer academic and professional education and qualifications; polytechnics,\(^6\) which have broadened from their earlier focus on trade and technical education to include community programmes and professional qualifications (including degrees), such as nursing, teaching, business studies, information technology and applied arts; private training establishments, which have increased dramatically in number since they became eligible to apply for Government funding in the 1990s and these offer a wide range of trade, community and professional qualifications; whare wānanga, Māori institutions drawing on the philosophy and practices of the pre-European equivalent, and which also offer a wide range of education for Māori including professional education; and colleges of education,\(^7\) whose prime function is to provide teacher preparation and in-service teacher education, but who also now offer post-graduate study and non-teaching qualifications.

The freeing up of the market in higher education (to be discussed below) has allowed all TEOs to offer any type of qualification, if they have approval from their overarching body and the industry stakeholder (for example, the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) for teacher preparation programmes).\(^8\) TEOs are now

\(^5\) Clarence Beeby, Director of the New Zealand Department of Education during the 1940s, set this philosophy in place with the statement of the Labour government’s broad educational ambitions he drafted in 1939 for a speech by the (then) Minister of Education, Peter Fraser (Fraser became Prime Minister the following year). This statement proclaimed that every child had the right to free education and therefore to achieve to their full potential. This much-used statement is recorded in the Appendices of the Journal of the House of Representatives (AJHR), E-1, p. 2, 1939.

\(^6\) In New Zealand, the terms ‘polytechnic’ and ‘institute of technology’ refer to the same type of tertiary institution, so I use the former to include both.

\(^7\) These will all have merged with university Faculties of Education by 2010. However, many early childhood teacher education diplomas and degrees continue to be offered in other types of TEO.

\(^8\) The overarching bodies referred to here are: The Vice Chancellors’ Committee (NZVCC); Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics, New Zealand (ITPNZ); the Association of Colleges of Education
provided with funding based on an estimated number of equivalent full time students (EFTS), rather than from central Government funds as they were previously. However, since 2003, funding has also been provided by means of the performance-based research fund (PBRF) for university and other degree teaching organisations which participate in the scheme. Prior to this, research was funded by Government, along with the EFTS funding associated with degree programmes. In terms of teacher education, this has meant that pressure has been placed on the balance of time and the content of the curriculum. For example, primary teacher education has now been reduced from a four year to a three year degree, and increasing pressures on teachers, along with the increased number of teacher education students, has led to fierce competition for teaching practice placements in schools.

**The political, social and economic context of education**

Since 1990, major changes have been imposed upon teachers in New Zealand, in terms of how education, curriculum, qualifications and schools are managed. These changes have, for the large part, come about as a result of global reforms, which have impacted on the economic policies of successive New Zealand governments since the mid-1980s. As this study is about teacher professional knowledge in an environment of educational reform, I will now provide a brief background to these economic changes, followed by a discussion of key changes in education in New Zealand, particularly in the past 15 years.

Because of the relatively small physical size of New Zealand and its small population (4.2 million at the 2006 census), the country is ruled by one house of parliament, and does not have a system of state or provincial government, as is the case in Australia, the United States and Canada. The election process, until 1996, was based on the ‘first-past-the-post’ system, whereby the party winning the highest number of electoral seats became the Government for the following three years. The minority party (or occasionally parties) formed the opposition. In a referendum held in 1993, New Zealanders voted to change the electoral system to mixed member proportional (ACENZ); and the Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The NZTC is responsible for the registration, disciplining and deregistration of teachers, professional leadership and approval of teacher preparation programmes. Teacher registration is compulsory for all primary and secondary teachers, and is being phased in as a requirement for early childhood teachers, who teach children aged 0-5 years.
representation (MMP) and since the first MMP election in 1996, many smaller political parties have gained seats in parliament. While each government since then has continued to be led by either of the two major political parties they have been forced to form coalitions or make agreements with one or more of the minor parties to govern effectively for their three-year term of office.

Since the early twentieth century, New Zealand politics has been dominated by two political parties—the National Party and the Labour Party. While the policies of the former have largely been more conservative than those of the latter, in practice both tended to follow middle-of-the-road, centrist paths up until the mid-1980s. Until this time, New Zealand had a centralised welfare state with a large public sector, including education—with the state having a ‘grandmotherly role of guidance and governance’, referred to as Keynesian (Olssen, 2001, p. 1). In the late 1980s, the Government’s role changed dramatically to a ‘neo-liberal’ one. In 1984, after the Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon (National) made the unilateral decision to call a snap election, the incoming Labour government discovered that the country’s finances were in crisis, following a long period of overseas borrowing by previous National governments. The reformers in the new Labour government of 1984-1990 declared that, with the country near bankruptcy, the dependence of individuals on the state was a drain on the economy (Snook, 2000). They proposed that, rather than continuing with this dependency, a combination of a philosophy of individualism, competition and entrepreneurialism was the way to economic recovery. Under the influence of the New Zealand Treasury and Minister of Finance, Roger Douglas, a new regime of economics (that came to be known, nationally, as ‘Rogernomics’) was introduced to the country. The impact of these policies, and those of the subsequent Minister of Finance, Ruth Richardson of the 1990-1993 National government was dramatic. It changed the way education and teacher education have been constructed since then.

9 The New Zealand Labour Party, which claims to hold centre left political views, is similar to the Australia Labor Party (although the trade union pathway to parliament is no longer as strong in New Zealand). The current National Party, with its centre right policies, is similar to the Australia Liberal Party.

10 It should be noted that most of the reformers driving the 1984-90 Labour Government reforms, including the Minister of Finance, Roger Douglas, later left the Labour Party and formed the right wing ACT party in 1993.
A system that saw education managed by central government was replaced by one which saw education as a ‘private good’, and therefore the responsibility of the individual. As a result, a decentralised management system was introduced in New Zealand, and educational and financial accountability was removed from government and delegated to individual schools and institutions.

The changes in education followed a similar path to those pursued in the United Kingdom during the 1990s. While the British changes were influenced by a 10 year lead-up of neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies, in New Zealand the reforms were largely neo-liberal (Vulliamy, Webb, Locke & Hill, 2004). These reforms appeared especially severe to teachers and families because the educational practices and systems in schools at the time were so mismatched with the changes proposed (Thrupp, 2005). That is, the traditional bureaucratic structure of the, then, New Zealand Department of Education, with its role of managing education (including teacher education) was replaced by a system that had schools, early childhood centres and tertiary institutions running as self-managing businesses. The Department of Education was dissolved and replaced by fragmented agencies with their own agendas, some working in a contractual way with the Minister of Education. These organisations included: the Ministry of Education (MOE) with responsibility for policy (including developing and imposing national education guidelines and curriculum statements for schools) and funding; the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), responsible for school and some tertiary qualifications; the Education Review Office (ERO), taking over the powers of the school inspectors; the Teacher Registration Board (TRB),\(^{11}\) responsible for registering and deregistering teachers, and approving teacher education programmes; and Special Educational Services (SES),\(^{12}\) who provide services for children in early childhood centres and schools considered to have disabilities affecting their learning (Ministry of Education, 1995).

\(^{11}\) In February 2002 the TRB was dissolved and was replaced by the NZTC taking on extended roles in the discipline of teachers and professional leadership.

\(^{12}\) Early in 2002, SES’s status as a separate agency changed when it became part of the Ministry of Education.
For schools in New Zealand, the reforms meant that they became self-managing businesses, but responsible and accountable for meeting educational standards (set by the MOE, NZQA, ERO and TRB). Whereas previously the regional Department of Education had approved, funded and managed schools’ building and resourcing needs, now schools were expected to meet their own costs and manage an operating budget similar to that of a small business (provided by the Government, based on a school funding formula). Although salaries were intended to be included in the new funding system, this was not implemented in schools immediately and eventually occurred only in a minority of schools. In 2001, the fourth Labour government removed provision for bulk funding of salaries to schools, although it remains in place for TEOs.

The market model has, perhaps, changed the way power operates, in terms of decisions about funding, curriculum development and delivery, and operational matters. ‘Competition’, a central construct of this market model, forced educational institutions to work in isolation, to develop programmes meeting national standards as well as to compete to attract students. Furthermore, institutional marketing costs – in terms of time and funds spent—have risen, while overall funding provided by the Government has dropped. All these changes have had a powerful impact upon teacher education, for example by increasing competition between providers for school placements and increasing accountability standards. This affects the experiences of new teachers, who enter a dramatically changed (and changing) teaching sector.

A personal/professional note

During this period of reform, I have worked in two polytechnics and a university, following a period of time as a secondary teacher that was largely prior to the main reforms. For the majority of that time I have been a teacher educator and, for six years from 1998 until 2004, managed a small graduate diploma in secondary teaching. During this time, I was closely involved with most aspects of each student’s

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13 However, recently the Tertiary Education Commission, formed under the current Labour-led government, has required groups of TEOs within a region to work together to reduce doubling up of similar qualifications.

14 This is similar to the Australian Graduate Diploma in Education and is an additional year added on to degree (or equivalent qualification).
professional development as a teacher. I was very interested in this process and what it was that made the teachers who and how they were. I developed my approach to professional studies based on research in the field, my observations, student teacher responses to my teaching and my strongly engrained belief in social justice and the need for teachers to work effectively and compassionately with diverse student populations. I also had maintained contact with a number of graduates for two or more years after they began teaching, and their stories of their experiences as early career teachers and how these did and did not connect with their learning in teacher education became of interest.

At this time, teacher education in New Zealand was in rapid transition because of the new legislation, leading to an increase in the number of teacher education programmes, and the move to teaching degrees (previously only diplomas or graduate diplomas were offered). I served on a number of national committees and fora that worked on teacher education issues.\textsuperscript{15} This was rewarding, in that we had significant influence over the development and implementation of some Government policies and because we engaged with current debates and research about quality teacher education practices. At the same time, the effects of a competitive market (and teacher education personalities in a small country) sometimes provided antagonistic or secretive alliances and relationships. This highlighted for me some of the political and professional effects of education reform.

The increase in accountability measures (and associated controls and paperwork) has been enormous since I began teaching in the early 1980s, as have the requirements for educational institutions to redress inequitable outcomes. In the next section, the expectations placed on secondary teachers in particular are examined.

**Equity and accountability in New Zealand education**

The teachers in this study, alongside their contemporaries, have had a huge number of expectations placed on them as a result of educational reforms. National Educational Guidelines (NEGs), developed since the 1989 Education Act, include national

\textsuperscript{15} The Teacher Education Forum of Aotearoa New Zealand, a Secondary Education Coalition with teacher educators, teacher unions and government agencies, and the Association of Polytechnics New Zealand teacher education subject forum.
curricula to be implemented from early childhood education through all schools up to Year 13 (the final year of schooling). These NEGs also include National Administrative Guidelines (NAGs) that specifically require teachers and schools to perform in terms of student success, to meet the diverse needs of students (including Māori and Pasifika students, those with special educational needs, the gifted and talented, and students from a non-English speaking background), and meet Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) commitments of partnership, participation and protection. Schools are held accountable to evaluation indicators related to these matters, through five yearly reviews by the Education Review Office. At the same time, teachers are still, perhaps paradoxically, expected to be autonomous in the classroom while facing intensified accountability requirements and evaluation of their professional judgements. Furthermore, they are appraised against a set of professional standards agreed between the Government and the teacher unions. Secondary school teachers are also expected to contribute to decisions about the assessment criteria and standards of the national qualification—the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)—as well as prepare and mark the nationally moderated internal assessment components of the NCEA for their students. This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

In all areas of education—from early childhood to tertiary—the reforms since the 1990s have meant a devolution of control from government to ‘provider’. For example, while many operational decisions, the delivery of the national curriculum, and funding decisions have devolved to schools—institions make staffing and student selection decisions—controls remain with government, such as, the total amount of funding provided, approval of courses and quality measures (Jesson, 2000). At the same time, there are requirements imposed for improving outcomes for all sectors of society (for example, the educational achievement of Māori, and the

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16 In New Zealand schooling begins for most at the age of 5 years beginning with Year One. Secondary school begins at the age of 13 years with Year 9 and goes through until Year 13. Thus these years equate to Victorian schools’ Years 8-12.

17 The Tiriti o Waitangi was signed in 1840 between Indigenous Māori tribes and the British Crown. While New Zealand does not have a constitution, this treaty serves as a founding document and impacts on all legislation and policy.
improvement of literacy and numeracy levels). This is what I refer to in this thesis as equity outcomes or an equity agenda.

The majority of the reforms may be seen as a response to both new-right views and those of the radical left (Simon, 2000). On the one hand, equity has become a key principle in education in New Zealand—a focus typically aligned with the political left. On the other, there is an emphasis on efficiency, and standards and accountability—a focus more typically associated with the new right. Because of the major equity agenda in New Zealand education policy, a key issue for this thesis is how the teachers work out such equity imperatives in an accountability environment. A further key issue is how their negotiation of divergent political and conceptual debates contributes to their professional knowledge and identity formation.

I will now examine some of the policies, statements and strategies specifically related to equity, diversity and accountability that impact on teaching in New Zealand.

The New Zealand Education Act 1989 (with its numerous amendments) is subtitled ‘An Act to reform the administration of education’ (www.minedu.govt.nz). As discussed earlier, it emerged from massive neo-liberal economic reforms of the 1980s that largely overturned the welfare state that had existed in New Zealand for 50 years. This Act reflects global trends to commodify education, but at the same time attempts to address growing concerns about unequal educational outcomes for some students – thus setting up what I am describing as a juxtaposition of accountability measures with equity expectations in New Zealand education. In response to this legislation, there are numerous policies, initiatives and strategies in place to address issues of equity, especially in relation to education for Māori and Pasifika students, literacy and numeracy and special needs education (for students with disabilities and for gifted and talented students). There are also corresponding standards for which schools and teachers are held accountable. I will now outline a selection of the key statements that represent imperatives for teachers in this study, in their negotiation of equity policies.

The Act clearly states the requirement for schools to include in their charter the following aims:
(i) the aim of developing, for the school, policies and practices that reflect New Zealand’s cultural diversity and the unique position of the Māori culture; and

(ii) the aim of ensuring that all reasonable steps are taken to provide instruction in tikanga Māori (Māori culture) and te reo Māori (the Māori language) for full-time students whose parents ask for it.

(Education Act 1989, Section 61, 3a) (New Zealand Government, 1989).

Furthermore, the National Educational Guidelines, as defined by the Education Act, include several strong statements relating to improving outcomes for all students. As discussed earlier, these guidelines include the National Educational Goals, the New Zealand Curriculum, and the National Administration Guidelines. For example, the NAGs, which provide direction to schools and are a basis for accountability reviews by the Education Review Office (ERO), decree in NAG 1:

Each Board, through the principal and staff, is required to: …

(iii) on the basis of good quality assessment information, identify students and groups of students:

(a) who are not achieving;
(b) who are at risk of not achieving;
(c) who have special needs [including gifted and talented] and
(d) aspects of the curriculum which require particular attention;

(iv) develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students and aspects of the curriculum identified in (iii) above;

(v) in consultation with the school’s Māori community, develop and make known to the school’s community policies, plans and targets for improving the achievement of Māori student;

(www.minedu.govt.nz)

This is a key imperative for teachers and schools in their strategic and curriculum planning, and impacts directly on teachers.

Furthermore, in its foundation principles, the New Zealand Curriculum Framework states, in relation to diversity and the Tiriti o Waitangi, that:

The New Zealand curriculum: …
• provides all students with equal educational opportunities;

• recognises the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi;

• reflects the multicultural nature of New Zealand society …


These principles are also reflected in the individual curriculum documents for each area of learning, and impact directly on schools and teachers, as they plan and deliver programmes and courses that must be developed in accordance with the national curriculum. Teachers are familiar with these documents, which set out the achievement standards for each level of learning (up to Level 8 for the final year of schooling), which pupils are expected to attain. School programmes of learning incorporate these and related learning outcomes and assessments. At senior secondary school, this also includes assessment standards set for national standards and qualifications. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

To fulfil the statutory commitments of the Education Act (and other related acts) the Ministry of Education annually produces various strategies and initiatives. For example, in its Statement of Intent (Ministry of Education, 2005c, 2006), the Ministry expresses concern regarding its equity policies:

While average educational achievement in New Zealand is high by international standards, we still have one of the widest gaps between our highest and lowest achievers.

Examination of who is over-represented in this group shows it includes:

• people from a range of ethnic and lower socio-economic backgrounds

• a disproportionate number of Māori learners

• a disproportionate number of Pasifika learners

• young children who miss out on the opportunity to participate in quality early childhood education

• groups who are not participating in compulsory education

• large numbers of students who are leaving school and tertiary education without qualifications
learners with special education needs, disabilities and people for whom English is a second language (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 17).

The Ministry’s schooling strategy (Ministry of Education, 2005a), which is one of the strategies intended to address concerns raised in successive Statements of Intent, identifies key focus areas for Māori education, Pasifika education and special education, aimed at addressing what it sees as a gap between those students succeeding in the education system and those trailing behind. This includes strategic goals and priorities related to teaching and schooling. The schooling strategy goal focuses on:

All students achieving their potential: this means significantly improving opportunities and outcomes for students currently underachieving, while continuing to improve outcomes for high and average achievers across all dimensions of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and identity (Ministry of Education, 2005a).

This includes Ministry initiatives such as Te Mana Kōrero, Te Kōtahitanga and Te Kauhau. To achieve this goal, there is an intended focus on (1) schools encouraging nurturing families and whānau, (2) evidence-based practice and (3) effective teaching, as described below:

Effective teaching practices for all students are used and developed by teachers who have appropriately high expectations of all students, and who judge their success by the academic and social outcomes of all their students (Ministry of Education, 2005a).

These policies, statements and strategies indicate just some of the accountability and effectiveness measures that impact on teachers in New Zealand in relation to equity. While they are in some senses specific to New Zealand, especially those related or responsive to the Tiriti o Waitangi and education for Māori, they also sit in an international context of economic and educational reform.

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18 Te Kotahitanga and Te Kauhau are research projects that are investigating the impact of teaching practices on Māori student achievement and the associated professional development programmes for teachers. Te Mana Kōrero is a professional development programme for teachers.

19 This is a Māori term used commonly in New Zealand to refer to the extended family, including immediate family, uncles, aunts, cousins, and anyone else who is part of a person’s community network.
In addition to these Government equity imperatives, teachers and schools also have accountability measures placed on them from a number of agencies, as discussed earlier in this chapter. These standards are aimed at ensuring compliance with the educational policies, including the equity ones discussed above. They include particular reference to competence in working with students from ‘diverse’ backgrounds or those who are ‘different’ from the dominant norm, as well as reference to Tiriti o Waitangi obligations. The standards include:

- The *professional standards* that are part of the employment contract of teachers in state and integrated schools and are used for salary purposes. For new teachers, in their first two years such as those in this study, the competencies are slightly different from those in place for ‘experienced’ teachers, but they are set against the same standards. These include specific reference to Māori education, the Tiriti o Waitangi, diversity and Te Reo Māori me ona tikanga (the Māori language and practices).

- The Educational Review Office (ERO) *evaluation indicators* for education reviews in schools that apply to all teachers, regardless of years in the job. A recent ERO report used these indicators in an evaluation of the subject knowledge and effectiveness of second year teachers (in the first half of their second year) in engaging students in learning (Education Review Office, 2004). A significant number of these indicators relate to teachers’ response to diversity and the Tiriti o Waitangi. Reviews are carried out five-yearly in each school and several of the teachers in this study referred to ERO visits that took place in their schools during the period of this study.

- The New Zealand Teachers Council registers teachers based on a *set of satisfactory dimensions*, including ones that specifically require knowledge of the Tiriti o Waitangi, and Te Reo Māori me ona tikanga, and several that require attention to individual differences in learners. These are attested, at the end of a period of provisional registration (usually two years) and then through regular performance appraisals carried out by schools. All the teachers in this study were considered to be ‘Provisionally Registered Teachers’ for their first two years, at which point they were eligible to apply for full registration.
The legislation and policies currently affecting teachers have been introduced rapidly over the last 15 years, resulting in major changes to curricula, qualifications and the ways schools are managed and made accountable. This study explores the possibilities for responding to the challenges teachers face with the juxtaposition of market reforms and social justice. This has been done via an examination of the narratives and strategies of the new teachers in the study. Thrupp and Tomlinson (2005) suggest, for example, that what is needed are local solutions based on local contexts. The following chapters examine the specific character of educational reform and professional knowledge in New Zealand, but they also situate these local contexts and dilemmas in relation to global developments and debates regarding educational reform and education for social justice and equity.

I will now outline the scope and arguments of the study and the structure of the thesis.

**This study**

This study examines new secondary school teachers’ professional knowledge and identity in the context of educational reform. The narratives of new secondary teachers in New Zealand are analysed through a broadly poststructural and feminist lens. Nine teachers were interviewed in a series of small group discussions during their first and second years of teaching. In order to develop an analysis of teachers’ professional knowledge and identity formation, these narratives have been interpreted as ‘texts’ with multiple layers of meaning that mediate cultural, social and educational discourses and which shape subjectivities.

I develop three overall arguments:

1. Teachers negotiate divergent political and conceptual debates about social justice, equality and difference, which are mediated through accountability standards, teacher education and their own cultural values. This negotiation is central to the formation of their professional knowledge. My analysis illustrates ways in which teachers make sense of equity discourses in educational policy and practice and how they juggle these policies alongside their personal beliefs and the professional commonsense philosophies they encounter in their schools, during teacher preparation and in their personal lives.
2. Professional identity is entwined with professional knowledge formation as teachers’ individual subjectivities are produced within the professional, social and cultural discourses they encounter. This thesis analyses how the teachers dealt with a range of subject positions and how they construct their teaching identity as part of the formation of professional knowledge.

3. An equity agenda does not transfer seamlessly into education reform. A specific case in practice is developed of teachers negotiating a recent policy reform of senior secondary school qualifications. This reform has had a significant impact on how teachers think about education, achievement and social justice. It challenged teachers to question their beliefs about assessment and justice in education, and what counts as success. This analysis illustrates how teacher professional knowledge and identity form in practice, and in the context of a specific educational reform.

The structure of this thesis

This chapter has outlined the rationale for this study, mapped the broad political, social and economic context of education in New Zealand, especially as it relates to teaching, teacher education and new teachers, and noted some of the specific policies, strategies and standards that teachers live with daily. In Chapter Two, I review the dominant themes in the literature on beginning teachers, including research on teacher preparation and teacher induction, understandings of the transfer of teacher knowledge from pre-service teacher education into teaching, research about the early years of teaching and preparing teachers for teaching in diverse classrooms, and research about current teacher education agendas. I provide a snapshot of understandings and common approaches to professional knowledge and argue for an alternative approach to studying teacher professional knowledge. I then explain my understanding of teacher learning as involving a negotiation of competing professional knowledge discourses, alongside their personal beliefs and philosophy, their teacher education experiences and their professional lives. This is explained as a working through of tensions created by encounters with dilemmas and contradictions arising in the intersection of policy, practice and ideology. As I have argued above, in New Zealand this centres on a negotiation of equity policies, which have dominated
education and schooling since the major reforms of the 1990s and early 21st century, as mediated through related accountability standards.

Chapter Three begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework developed in this study, which draws on poststructuralist and feminist theories. In this context, I argue for poststructural and feminist understandings of narrative methodology, interviewing and data analysis. I detail my argument for reading the teachers’ interviews as ‘text’ and my use of writing as a method of inquiry. Finally, the design developed to carry out this research is explained, including the recruitment of participants, ethical considerations, and the conduct of the interviews.

Drawing on feminist debates about justice, Chapter Four first examines the shifting understandings of social justice, equality, difference and diversity found in the research literature and in educational social policy. This includes a discussion of influential debates about equality, difference and equity; categories of difference; and distributive, recognitional and associative justice (Burbules, 1997; Fraser, 2005; Scott, 1994; Young, 1990). I argue that elements of these various political and philosophical understandings have infiltrated the professional discourses that teachers negotiate in their teaching—especially in an educational environment that calls on teachers to balance equity and accountability policies. Then, as a way of further contextualising their thinking, I examine dominant trends—political, social, cultural—in relation to understandings of equality in New Zealand education, in which these teachers operate, and in which they received at least some of their own education. This includes an analysis of diversity policies and strategies in education in New Zealand, aimed at what I see as equity outcomes and the accountability measures through which these policies are mediated. This analysis draws on Stronach et al.’s (2002) proposition that teachers juggle the dilemmas and contradictions created by such a juxtaposition. The narratives from the teachers’ interviews are then examined to illustrate how conflicting political and conceptual debates and policies are negotiated by new and practising teachers. Three main themes emerged from these interviews: an overriding ethos of fairness and a philosophy of the inclusion of difference; their understandings and ambivalences in addressing policies that are largely based on categorical understandings of difference; and some ways of understanding difference that could lead us forward in our thinking, away from deficit theorising. As such, this
Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of the macro context of teacher professional knowledge formation.

In Chapter Five, the shaping of teacher professional identity is examined, in the context of the complex, sometimes conflicted discursive social, historical and cultural environment in which they work. The chapter is in three major sections and provides an analysis of the micro dimension of teacher professional knowledge formation. It begins with a discussion of contemporary understandings of professional identity and subjectivity, particularly as they relate to teacher identity. I draw on notions of identity as discursively constructed as well as involving processes of self-fashioning, arguing that we learn who we are and how to think and behave through discursive practices (Weedon, 1999). Teacher identity formation, it is argued, is therefore integral to the shaping of professional knowledge—early career teachers are engaged in both meaning-making (examined in Chapter Four) and self-making (the focus of Chapter Five). The second section of the chapter is an analysis of how teachers’ encounters with the subjectivities of others—pupils, colleagues and so on—contribute to their own identity formation. It draws on Bjerrum Nielsen’s (1996) concept of the magic writing pad, which imagines identity as a kind of palimpsest which has the ‘imprint’ of both older and newer discourses. The older discourses are never completely erased, and their traces mingle with the inscriptions of newer discursive imprints. This metaphor conveys the complexity of identity processes by capturing a sense of continuity and change in identity formation, and the layering of emerging subjectivities over existing ones. The final section presents a number of vignettes depicting teachers’ identity formation in relation to social, cultural and professional contested spaces. It draws on the idea that teachers use identity as a way to explain and make sense of themselves and the contexts in which they operate and that particular educational issues can usefully be examined through the analysis of the identity claims of individuals (MacLure, 1993).

In Chapter Six, I develop a case study of teachers negotiating a specific, recent educational policy reform, bringing together the macro and micro aspects of the shaping of teacher professional knowledge and identity. The aim of this case study is to extend arguments developed in previous chapters via a detailed study in practice of a contemporary and much contested educational reform in New Zealand. This
analysis highlights the ways in which teacher professional knowledge involves a negotiation of competing discourses and a working through of dilemmas and contradictions of practice. For this case study, I have taken a major policy reform that all New Zealand secondary teachers have recently had to implement—the introduction of the new senior qualification, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA).

Chapter Seven summarises the findings and contribution of this thesis to the fields of research on teacher education and professional knowledge. It highlights new insights into how teachers build, shape and sustain professional knowledge in the context of educational reform. It also points to the urgent need to consider identity formation in teacher education. Implications for teacher retention, satisfaction and commitment to social justice in education, and for teacher education and policymakers are outlined, and areas of further research are identified.

In the following chapter, I review some of the dominant themes in research on teacher education, early career teachers, and teacher professional knowledge and identity.
Chapter Two: Research on professional knowledge and new teachers: A review

This thesis explores the professional knowledge of beginning secondary teachers in the context of educational reform in New Zealand. This chapter reviews relevant research literature with three main purposes in mind—first, to identify dominant and emerging themes and arguments in this literature; second, to expose silences as well as gaps in the existing research and trends that warrant further exploration; third, to show where my research is located in relation to this literature and to delineate the contribution this thesis aims to make to the field of teacher education and teacher professional knowledge.

In summary, this review has three main foci: debates in the literature about teacher preparation—both pre-service and in the early years of teaching; research on diversity, teacher education and beginning teachers; and theoretical discussions of how teacher professional knowledge is constituted. I outline how my study builds on emerging, reconceptualisations of teacher professional knowledge by analysing teachers’ negotiation of policies and cultural practices as well as the formation of their professional identity.

Teacher preparation and induction

Clearly, a number of different bodies of research intersect with the topic of teacher professional knowledge. Teacher preparation and induction programmes for new teachers are not the direct focus of this study, but they have been the subject of much research and are influential in the overall field of research on beginning teachers. Furthermore, there are a number of themes and debates in this literature that directly connect with my topic.

Much of the research on initial teacher education (including induction and support for beginning teachers) has arisen from concern about attrition, motivation and commitment of new teachers, and in response to criticisms of pre-service teacher education programmes and, more recently, induction programmes. It has also been prompted by teacher educators’ themselves developing of a body of research about (student) teacher learning, teacher education programmes and, in the last few years, their own professional practices. Most of this research concerns pre-service teacher
education, but there is also a growing body of literature about the early years of teachers’ lives and work, which I summarise below.

**Transfer of knowledge from pre-service education to teaching practice**

A key focus of studies about beginning teachers internationally is the ‘effectiveness’ of initial teacher education—both pre-service and induction programmes for early years teachers. Such studies are frequently responsive or reactive to official discourses—such as evaluation of teacher education programmes and beginning teacher competence or a description of the current experience or provision for beginning teachers (for instance, Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training, 2002; Education Review Office, 2004; Education Training Committee of the Victorian Parliament, 2005; Ministry of Education, 1997; Renwick, 2001; Totterdell et al., 2001). Others include debate about the setting of teacher standards, especially in the USA (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2000). However, for a number of years, research about teacher education has centred on questions about what pre-service teacher education strategies and approaches are most successful for ensuring the transfer of student teachers’ professional knowledge into their teaching practice once they are employed in schools.

To date, the majority of this research has been concerned with ways in which teacher educators have attempted to challenge or change student teachers’ strongly held beliefs about education, schooling and society. Such research examines interventions that take place in the teacher education or school setting, ways of uncovering student teacher thinking and beliefs, and ways of developing student teachers’ understandings of political, cultural and social issues in education. It is usually small-scale, exploring, for example, coursework in teacher education programmes (Sleeter 2001; 2002), or addressing concerns about the practices of teacher education (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). In some cases, this includes the relationships between theory and practice, especially in the practicum context.

Research on student teachers’ beliefs and thinking includes the ways in which teacher educators and teacher education programmes have explicated or challenged student assumptions or personal beliefs, raising student teachers’ awareness of the links
between their beliefs and theories of teaching (Ethell, 1998a, 1998b; Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; Graber, 1996; Graham & Thornley, 2000; Holt-Reynolds, 2000; Trotman & Kerr, 2001). The theory-practice relationship has focused, for example, on teaching student teachers to critique the political and social context of schooling, including engaging them in action research, requiring them to articulate their purposes and justify their actions, and engaging them in reflective conversations about teaching, learning and education that focus on pupils and their learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; Graber, 1996; Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Russell, 2000; Trotman & Kerr, 2001; Valli & Price, 2000; Zeichner, 1996c). More recently, studies have begun to emerge that explore developing student teachers’ understandings of students from backgrounds that are different from their own (Santoro & Allard, 2003; 2005; Seidl & Friend, 2002; Sleeter, 2001, 2002; Valli, 2000).

This literature has generated much debate amongst teacher educators, student teachers and others involved in initial teacher education. It has influenced major policy discussions about teacher education and the preparation of new teachers. It thus forms part of the discursive context that makes up the teacher professional knowledge environment that I am examining. Below, I explore in more detail how some of these ideas contribute to powerful discourses about teacher professional knowledge—for example, those of reflection and narrative.

Another key source for discussion about pre-service teacher education is the practicum\textsuperscript{20} as a means for teacher learning. The aim of the practicum is to gain practical teaching experience in schools. It is also, however, variously regarded as a process for developing student teachers’ ability to change personal beliefs (Trotman & Kerr, 2001; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998), to critically analyse political and social issues of education, to forge links between educational theory and practice and then to transfer this learning into action in the classroom (for example, addressing practical and technical matters—like classroom management—in relation to theories of human development and pedagogy) (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Le Cornu, 1999; Zeichner, 1990; Zeichner, 1992, 1996a). While there is a significant body of educational research that focuses on practicum, there remains debate about its

\textsuperscript{20} Also known as teaching practice or teaching experience.
contribution to teacher learning and knowledge, and whether it is the most effective way to address the dilemmas associated with integrating practical and theoretical knowledge (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; Graber, 1996; Holt-Reynolds, 2000; Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Russell, 2000; Trotman & Kerr, 2001).

The negotiation of teacher professional knowledge by (new) teachers encompasses their experiences and representations of the purpose and usefulness of the practicum, their meaning making from practicum experiences, and practices, beliefs and advice of their associate teachers and the schools in which they were placed. However, my study is less concerned with the ‘institutions’ within teacher education (such as practicum and the theory-practice nexus) or the more ‘technical’ aspects (such as classroom management and planning). Instead it looks beyond the particular form and purpose of these aspects to examine how teachers make sense of them within particular settings and circumstances.

**Early years of teaching**

While extensive research has been conducted with pre-service teachers, far less has been written in New Zealand or elsewhere about the early years of teaching. Of those studies, the majority are typically based on the experiences of between one and ten teachers, over a time span of less than one year, and tend to focus on primary school teachers (for example, Corrie, 2000; Lang, 2001). Debates in the research about beginning teachers to date include: questions about the impact of teacher preparation or induction programmes on teachers’ practice on the job (Goddard & Foster, 2001; Hebert & Worthy, 2001); evaluation and descriptions of the nature of support and guidance for newly qualified teachers—including the structure and components of induction programmes or the lack of programmes or support (Levin, 2001; Perez, Swain & Hartsough, 1997; Williams, Prestage & Bedward, 2001); problems and concerns of new teachers—such as survival, stress and time management (Grudnoff & Tuck, 2002; Lang, 2001; Meister & Jenks, 2000); and the process of skill and knowledge development—for example, in planning and behaviour management (Sardo-Brown, 1996).

A key question that underpins much of the research, and one which also arose in my study is whether learning during teacher education transfers into teaching and whether
Chapter Two: Review of literature

it has a long-term impact on teachers’ commitment and motivation (Baker, Scott & Showers, 1997; Flores, 2001; Sleeter, 2001). One influential line of analysis suggests that learning in teacher education is reversed during teaching practicum or the early years of teaching and that new teachers revert to traditional ways of teaching. This understanding has been referred to by Zeichner and Tabachnick’s (1981) as ‘wash-out’, meaning that even if teacher education programmes promote creative and progressive teaching practices, teachers tend to revert to conservative, traditional ways once they begin teaching, and the impact of teacher education is ‘washed out’. Various explanations are offered in the research for this, including teaching colleagues, the evaluative power over student and new teachers, the ecology of the classroom and school culture (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981).

Another line of analysis described by Lortie (1975) as an ‘apprenticeship of observation’, argues that new teachers are influenced, before they even enter teacher education, by their own experiences as pupils over approximately 15 years of schooling and that, by implication, professional training has little effect.

A further view, advocated by Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) is that both teacher education and schools work together to promote conservative practices. They argue that although teacher education advocates that for teachers to develop individual teaching styles, they and schools both continue to model teacher-centred practices. The contradictions arising from this work powerfully to prevent student teachers from critically analysing their practices.

Zeichner and Tabachnick’s study has been influential and has promoted a great number of studies that examine teacher education practices, as well as some that look at the relationships between schools and teacher education (for example, Dinkelman, 2000; Ethell, 1998a; Loughran et al., 2001). It has also contributed to the overwhelming promotion of reflective practices within teacher education programmes. My question, however, is not whether teacher education transfers into the early years of teaching. Rather, my focus is on the array of influences that new teachers negotiate in the formation of their professional knowledge and professional identity—knowledge from teacher education programmes is one part of this, but not the only part of the shaping process.
Chapter Two: Review of literature

The research on teacher education also links to concerns about rates of attrition, commitment and motivation among new teachers, as discussed above. Researchers propose numerous explanations to account for what makes, or might make a difference to teacher longevity, motivation, job satisfaction and/or professional knowledge growth (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a; Hebert & Worthy, 2001; Levin, 2001; Levin & Ammon, 1992; Valli & Price, 2000). Again, these matters are relevant to pre-service teacher education, the school/university relationship, the early career years and individual teachers. For example, studies of the role of schools in influencing teachers’ career longevity frequently refer to the importance of the learning culture of the school in which the teachers have their first teaching job and the need for a culture of collaboration amongst all teachers to improve schooling and develop professional commitment (Corrie, 2000; Flores, 2001; Weiss, 1999; Williams et al., 2001).

The extensive literature on the induction experiences of beginning teachers, including mentoring and support tends to be descriptive of the experiences or programmes and are aimed at making suggestions for improvement in this stage in teacher learning (for example, Atkinson, 1996; Carter & Francis, 2001; Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training, 2002; Gold, 1996; Grudnoff & Tuck, 2002; Jones, 2001; Kilbourn & Roberts, 1991; Murray, Mitchell & Dobbins, 1998; National Center for Research of Teacher Learning, 1995; Renwick, 2001; Schuck, 2003; Totterdell et al., 2001; Wang, 2001). Again, these provide a useful resource for debate amongst teacher educators, teachers and policymakers, and they indicate the kinds of discourses and professional commonsense that surround the teachers in this study as well as their colleagues and schools. However, my research aims to do more than simply describe such experiences.

This thesis takes an alternative approach to studying the professional knowledge of early career teachers by taking more explicit account of the particular social, cultural and political setting in which teachers find themselves in the early 21st century. Specifically, it analyses secondary teachers’ negotiation of a range of policies, beliefs and practices during a period of intense educational reform in New Zealand, and it explores how this contributes to the formation of their professional knowledge and identity. I now turn to an overview of the research on ‘diversity’ in teacher education.
as ‘diversity’ constitutes a major political agenda delivered through teacher education and in current government policy in New Zealand.

**Diversity, teacher education and beginning teachers**

Since the 1990s, there has been a growing body of teacher education literature that examines the preparation of teachers to work with ‘diversity’. ‘Diversity’ is usually used to refer to students from backgrounds culturally or linguistically different from dominant white, English speaking ones. This literature emerges from a number of sources, including social and political developments both outside and inside education. These include concerns by feminists and those fighting against racism in the 1980s and 1990s to ‘give voice’ to traditionally silent groups such as women and those from ethnic minorities (Luke & Gore, 1992). It generally questions the effectiveness of teacher preparation programmes in producing teachers who are willing or able to work with diverse students in ways that are culturally appropriate and educationally effective. In Chapter Four, I analyse in more detail the debates and rhetoric on social justice, equality, difference and diversity that contribute to my analysis and how the teachers in my study are negotiating these alongside their personal beliefs, policy imperatives and teaching practice. However, in this chapter I summarise the key issues and debates in the research on ‘teaching for diversity’ that relate to beginning teachers and the transfer of pre-service learning into the early years of teaching.

**Teaching in diverse communities**

There has been much debate about how best to address concerns regarding what Sleeter (2001) refers to as the ‘overwhelming presence of whiteness’ in teaching and teacher education (Sleeter, 2001; Valli & Price, 2000; Zeichner et al., 1996). Sleeter (2001; 2002), Gomez (1996) and Zeichner and Hoeft (1996) believe that preparing teachers for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms is vitally important in teacher education because most teacher education candidates in countries such as the USA, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand come from white, middle-class, privileged backgrounds. In the USA, they claim, teachers rarely have experiences or interactions with people from other ethnic backgrounds. They tend to arrive in teacher education programmes with strongly held beliefs and values based on their own experience of
success and schooling (Lortie, 1975; Trotman & Kerr, 2001; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996), and these are then translated into their own attitudes to teaching and classroom diversity.

Further, in North America, according to some critics, the majority of teachers appear to be insufficiently prepared, and even unwilling, to work with pupils other than middle-class, white children (Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell & Middleton, 1999; Gomez, 1996; Merryfield, 2000; Sleeter, 2002; Valli, 2000; Zeichner, 1996b; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). A variety of reasons are given for this, including: the lack of teachers of colour (Sleeter 2001), the lack of experience of white, middle-class teachers in inner urban schools or communities (which, in the USA, usually refers to immigrant, poor and African-American communities), and the lack of sufficient or effective preparation during pre-service teacher education, for working with diverse students.

These matters have also been raised in New Zealand, especially with regard to Māori and Pasifika pupils (Bishop, 2000; Fa'afoi & Fletcher, 2001). There has been a little research on what practices do and do not work for such students and in what ways teacher educators can contribute to change (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003; Ministry of Education, 1998; Te Puni Kōkiri, 2001). However, while gaps persist in this area of study, the work by Bishop et al. (2003) on professional development for teachers of Māori students and Sandretto et al.’s (2003) work on teacher educators for social justice are important exceptions. Recent work carried out with the assistance of Teaching and Learning Research Initiative grants also frequently focuses on school improvement and teacher professional development in order to improve learning outcomes for diverse student groups (for example, Conner, Greenwood & Buyers, 2004; Hill et al., 2006; McNaughton, 2004). This study also aims to contribute to analyses of teachers and teacher education knowledge and practices of working in socially and culturally ‘diverse’ classrooms.

There is limited research on the experiences of teachers in their early professional years who work in diverse communities. Where such research exists, it tends to be confined to single case studies. For example, Martinez (1994) and Birrell (1995) take a rare look at the way new teachers respond to cultural differences in their classrooms. Martinez explores the knowledge of one second-year teacher working in an Indigenous Australian community, linking the teacher’s experience and concerns
about the impact on him of deficit theorising from colleagues. Birrell (1995)
examined how one white American beginning teacher responded to black youths’
behaviour in school, and the ways in which the teacher viewed cultural identity,
without reference to the students’ different experience.

Both Birrell and Martinez raise concerns about the lack of preparation during pre-
service teacher education programmes for teachers to work in culturally diverse
schools. They also observe the impact that more senior colleagues have on new
teachers’ perceptions and the expectations they have for the academic achievement of
their students. These findings underline points raised earlier in relation to
‘professional socialisation’ and the ‘wash-out’ of pre-service teacher learning. They
also mirror arguments that more teachers from minority groups need to be recruited
into teaching and that teachers need to be better prepared for teaching in culturally
and linguistically diverse classrooms (Gomez, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter,
2001; 2002).

However, there are also more optimistic stories of teachers working in marginalised
communities. The importance of such studies is their illustration of the significance of
teachers’ understanding of the socio-cultural context in which their pupils and
communities find themselves. For example, McDonald’s (2005) found an in-depth
understanding of their pupils’ socio-cultural context to be an essential characteristic in
the expert teachers in a north Queensland Indigenous community. The pupils and their
families spoke about the special characteristic of these teachers ‘knowing’ them—that
is they understood their pupils and their social, economic, historical and cultural
circumstances, and taught accordingly. McAlpine and Crago’s (1995) research with a
first year primary teacher in a remote, Indigenous community in Canada is another
important example. In that research, the teacher engaged in conversations with the
researchers, and these conversations, the teacher’s willingness to change and her
strong belief in social justice, assisted the teacher to work out ways of implementing
her own socially just teaching values in her classroom. The teacher challenged her
own assumptions that she (the teacher) and the students shared a common cultural
experience. As a result of her self-challenging, this teacher moved on to develop more
culturally appropriate and effective ways of working.
Quartz (2003) similarly offers a powerful story of how an undergraduate programme, which aimed at developing students’ understanding of social issues in high poverty areas, was effective in improving the retention rate of teachers in Silicon Valley schools. The study showed that the programme also strengthened teachers’ ongoing commitment to enhancing students’ educational and social future. These examples (McAlpine & Crago, 1995; Quartz, 2003) suggest that it is possible in teacher education to prepare teachers who understand and act on their knowledge about pupils to achieve socially just education. What appears to be critical is working with teachers’ beliefs and values, so that they actively and willingly question their subject positions and their professional knowledge.

In New Zealand Bishop et al.’s (2003) project (funded by the Ministry of Education) identified both positive and negative possibilities for teacher education in regard to diversity education. That study involved teams of researchers/teachers, including new and experienced teachers, Māori and non-Māori teachers and men and women. It worked with interview narratives of Māori secondary students and their families, teachers and schools, to examine perceptions of what influences the pupils’ academic achievement. This research highlighted the inadequacy of ongoing systemic change alone for improving educational outcomes, as evident during the last century in New Zealand. It also showed that explanations for underachievement based on family/pupil background or attitude (what Bishop et al. call ‘deficit theorising’) have been at best well-intentioned but unhelpful and at worst destructive. However, findings from Bishop et al.’s study do suggest some encouraging changes—such as working collaboratively with teachers, encouraging them to deconstruct their own ‘deficit theories’, and change their focus to developing constructive relationships within their classrooms. These strategies have produced significant results in terms of student attendance, motivation and achievement.

The successes described in these studies (Bishop et al., 2003; McAlpine & Crago, 1995; McDonald, 2005; Quartz, 2003) suggest powerful examples of how new teachers might be prepared to resist unhelpful or deficit discourses that they may come up against in the early years of teaching, and to work towards achieving their own goals for teaching and learning. They illustrate emerging trends in the way teachers are talking about difference. However, the lack of studies on teachers’
practices when working with students who have different social and/or cultural origins from their own also highlights a need for further research about teachers’ negotiation of professional knowledge discourses, especially in relation to social justice, equality, difference and diversity. My research aims to build on existing work in this area with particular reference to contemporary policy developments, and to attend to moments of change. Responses to these moments are, as I have been arguing, expressed in particularly striking ways by new teachers who are encountering new experiences daily and needing to find their own (‘effective’) ways of working with diverse student groups. Studying early career teachers’ negotiation of change sheds a particularly clear light on how professional commonsense and practice is changing in relation to diversity and educational reform. Additionally, the location of this study in New Zealand, where the politics of ethnicity, race, identity and educational and social policy take a distinctive form, especially in relation to biculturalism, brings an important comparative perspective to contemporary discussions of diversity education and teachers’ professional knowledge. Chapter Four develops this line of discussion.

The research outlined so far represents influential fragments from a range of discourses that new teachers negotiate. Much of this research relates to pre-service teacher preparation. While this is not a direct focus of my study, the discourses and professional knowledge they offer—about being a teacher and about working with pupils from socially and culturally diverse backgrounds—form part of the discourse which new teachers negotiate as their professional knowledge forms. However, there are significant gaps in the literature that my research seeks to address, particularly about secondary teachers’ work immediately following graduation. In particular, there is very little research that brings together these issues with debates about social justice, equality, difference and diversity. As indicated in Chapter One, these concepts dominate official and informal discourses about education in New Zealand, and are therefore important to consider in relation to the professional knowledge of new teachers.

**Preparing teachers for diversity**

I now briefly review research literature on preparing teachers to work with socially and culturally diverse pupils, analysing what it can contribute to understanding the
types of discourses that new teachers encounter in teacher education and how this, in turn, contributes to professional knowledge and identity formation.

In addition to the accountability measures imposed upon schools in New Zealand to address equity imbalances, teacher education qualifications must also meet standards set by the New Zealand Teachers Council and other quality assurance bodies. These standards include attention to educational, social and ethnic diversity as well as the Tiriti o Waitangi (as discussed in Chapter One). Therefore, it is reasonable such matters would have been covered in some form in the teacher education programmes that the teachers in my study undertook. How these matters are actually taught, however, is left to individual teacher education institution. As virtually no research has been carried out in New Zealand on underlying philosophies in teacher education, the details of how these requirements are implemented are no in the public arena.

Research on teaching pupils from diverse backgrounds mostly concerns groups identified as being different from the dominant white, middle-class ‘norm’ or disadvantaged. It tends to be descriptive of interventions or about teacher thinking and professional knowledge with links to practice. Much of it presents small case studies of pre-service teacher education, although there are also a number of studies about practising teachers, including both new and experienced. Weiner (2001) reminds us, in her editorial for a journal issue dedicated to social inclusion, that engaging with the debates about social inclusion in teacher education and in-service teacher settings is important if teachers are to continue to address issues of equality. She acknowledges the changing pressures on teachers to respond to endless new policy initiatives and performance standards, but advocates looking at ways of working that are related to present-day visions. This present study contributes to a conversation about such possibilities.

There are well documented concerns about the dominance of white teachers in American schools, and the unwillingness of many of these teachers to work with pupils unlike themselves (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 2001; Valli, 2000; Zeichner, 1996b). The invisibility, within teacher education programmes, of teachers of colour is also, to some extent, an issue in New Zealand and is being addressed by education policy. For example, as explained in Chapter One, the recruitment of Māori and Pasifika teachers has been a focus of Government policy in New Zealand through
targeted teaching scholarships. Sleeter (2001), Valli (2000) and Ladson-Billings (2001) similarly argue for the active recruitment of non-white teachers in the USA to foster a broader range of cultural world-views. They also suggest a restructuring of teacher education curricula to deliberately prepare teachers for teaching in culturally, linguistically and socially diverse classrooms, and an approach to teacher education, which involves student teachers in critically reflective practice and critical analysis of socio-political issues in education. Such ideas are also the focus of many New Zealand teacher educators. However, Snook (2000) questions the commitment and ability of New Zealand educational policymakers and current teacher education curricula to address ethical and social issues in education within the current environment of accountability measures. He also challenges teacher educators to resist the erosion of contextual studies, particularly educational philosophy, educational history, educational sociology and comparative education, because of their importance for developing critically reflective and educated teachers. While my study does not seek to establish the extent to which these subjects have been eroded in teacher education, my analysis of the teacher interviews suggests the importance of engaging with such debates for (new) teachers in order to prepare them to address social equity.

As teacher education programmes are key sites for beginning teachers to gain insights into teaching in ‘diverse’ classrooms, I now turn to analyse the kinds of thinking and rhetoric that they would have encountered during their teacher preparation—from teacher educators, prominent New Zealand educational researchers and schools.

Alton-Lee’s (2003) review of evidence-based research, carried out for the New Zealand Ministry of Education, is a widely read document that pulls together research about teaching and learning related to what she calls ‘diverse students’. This synthesis of teaching characteristics needed to address education inequities has been influential in the development of the Ministry of Education’s definition of diversity:

Diversity is inherent in every group of students. Every student is an individual, bringing varied experiences and achievement from their previous learning and from their lives with their families, whānau, and communities. They differ by ethnicity, gender, language, cultural backgrounds, wider affiliations and heritages, and the resources available to their families. They may have particular special education needs or particular gifts (Ministry of Education, 2005a, p. 18).
Bishop et al. (2003) focus particularly on the experiences of Māori students. They have analysed the practices of teachers of Year 10 (14 year old) Māori pupils and the positive results of a professional development programme aimed at addressing their underachievement and developing culturally appropriate ways of working with Māori pupils. In more recent theoretical work, which Bishop co-authored with American researcher Shields and Palestinian researcher Mazawi, they explore what they refer to as ‘pathologizing practices’ (Shields, Bishop & Mazawi, 2005). They see these practices as arising from deficit theorising, which lays blame for pupils’ underachievement with the pupils and their families’ cultural or economic status. This is an illustration of the way some teachers work with categories of difference that position Māori as both different from and inferior to a dominant norm. Bishop et al. (2003) highlight the contradictions inherent in this way of thinking. On the one hand, such thinking reflects a need to treat the students the same as each other, thereby flattening out difference, or claiming that difference does not matter. On the other hand, this thinking can lead to teachers treating students differentially, based on presumed essential characteristics, and as a result lowering expectations of academic standards for Māori students (Bishop et al., 2003). Both views can be alienating for students, and implications of this kind of binary thinking are discussed in more depth in Chapter Four.

Bishop et al.’s (2003) challenge to teachers and schools to deconstruct their pedagogies and reconstruct ways of teaching that are productive and culturally responsive is supported by current programmes of professional development. A number of related projects have been introduced locally (for example, Te Kauhua) and nationally (for example, Te Mana Kōrero)\(^{21}\) that work with teachers to examine their practices and introduce changes into their classrooms. While these are aimed primarily at improving Māori academic achievement, there are potential benefits of these approaches for all students. Nevertheless, these programmes reflect what can be described as tensions between difference and sameness—that is, whether it is better to treat pupils the same or differentially based on ethnicity, gender or socio-economic status. Similar tensions were also evident in the narratives of the teachers in my study.

\(^{21}\) See Chapter One for an explanation of these projects.
There is an extensive literature for teacher educators on practices to improve the commitment and preparedness of teachers to work in ethnically and culturally diverse classrooms. In North America, Ladson Billings (2001) promotes a ‘culturally relevant pedagogy’ based on critical race theory. She draws on stories from a university teacher education programme to illustrate its potential for preparing teachers who are committed to improving student achievement in African-American communities. Similarly, Johnston and McLeod (2001) describe a model based on ‘disrupting hegemonic spaces’, which is used with student teachers at their New Zealand university to improve working relationships between Māori and Pākehā. This model proposes working with the overlapping spaces between colonial and Indigenous knowledges as well as recognising and valuing each for its own benefits. They promote understanding of and positive communication between Māori and Pākehā teachers and pupils. This is an example of a local solution (Cheyne, O’Brien & Belgrave, 2005; Thrupp & Tomlinson, 2005) in which relational, intersecting spaces—including colonising, supporting, disrupted and positional spaces—are explored. The aim of this approach is to open up communication and challenge student teachers to think and act outside the colonial space or away from disruption by hegemonic assimilative processes that see culture, language and knowledge as inferior.

Sleeter (2001; 2002) challenges much of the research that examines the effects of a variety of teacher education interventions designed to prepare teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse pupils. She argues that, although there is a large quantity of research on these issues, very little of it actually examines which strategies most effectively prepare strong teachers. She found the small-scale, short-term, in-house nature of the studies to provide inconclusive results. She advocates recruiting ‘a more diverse teaching force’, and employing more cross-cultural immersion experiences. Despite Sleeter’s observations of the limitations of small scale studies, close up analyses such as mine nevertheless provide a fruitful source of information about how teachers think and act in diverse settings, and contribute important knowledge about what is needed from teacher education, schools and policymakers to address equity in education.
In this section, I have been discussing some of the dominant themes in the relevant research literature, in part to situate my own research, but also in part to outline the discursive context in which discussions about teacher professional knowledge emerge. Debates about teacher preparation for cultural diversity are prominent in the field of teacher education and these debates, I am arguing, filter through into the understandings that new teachers are developing. Through their teacher education courses, their interactions with peers and more experienced teachers, their reading of policies and so forth, they imbibe certain understandings of what teaching for and within cultural diversity could mean for them. It is not a simple matter though of socialisation into particular views. Rather, I argue that the formation of professional identity and one’s own professional knowledge and commonsense is an ongoing process of negotiation across a range of discursive sites and that these are all part of the professional knowledge world that new teachers negotiate.

**New teachers’ negotiation of teacher education rhetoric**

Social justice and diversity are dominant themes in recent teacher education literature, providing fruitful insights into how teacher educators view their work in preparing new teachers to teach ‘diverse’ students, the kinds of ideologies offered in teacher education and students’ responses to these. Several studies examine what the authors describe as resistance by teachers and student teachers to recognise and/or respond to issues of social justice. Many of these studies examine the negative or deficit discourses of student teachers as well as the researchers’ responses to these discourses. Bondy and Roger-Martin (2003), for example, explore discourses of resistance displayed by primary student teachers to the Tiriti o Waitangi component of their pre-service teacher education programme. They found strongly felt opposition to ‘academic political correctness’ and preference for the assimilation of minority groups, without recognition of ways of knowing that differ from the dominant white Pākehā/European ones. Santoro and Allard (2003) and Carson and Johnston (2000) discuss the resistance of secondary student teachers to engaging with other than negative discourses about working with ethnic and socio-economically diverse pupils. Santoro and Allard raise questions about, and possible solutions for, how teacher educators might go about designing and delivering such courses and addressing this resistance. Carson and Johnston take these strategies further, claiming that part of the
problem for their research in Canada is the challenge to student teachers’ coherence of self in their university education—the biographical crisis faced by the student teachers’ in learning to teach, as described by Britzman (2003). They argue for Ellsworth’s (1997, cited in Carson & Johnston, 2000) ‘pedagogy of compassion’ and for teacher educators and student teachers to work together to critically examine their subjectivities—moving out of a cycle of blame and guilt and further suffering.

In my study, I have also attempted to avoid blaming teachers and students for their attitudes and beliefs. I do not see it as productive to judge their views within a negative/positive binary, and have taken an alternative approach to analysing them (see also Bishop et al., 2003; Carson & Johnston, 2000). I recognise professional knowledge as complex, contested and multi-faceted, seeing teachers as caught between a range of policies, ideas and practices that contribute to their own formation of professional knowledge and identity (Britzman, 2003; Stronach et al., 2002). Thus, what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ about their thinking and practices is not the main point. Rather it is how they negotiate these issues that is important for their meaning-making, self-making and professional practice. By better understanding this process, teacher educators, teachers and policymakers may find alternative ways of designing and delivering teacher education, professional development programmes and the school curriculum that takes account of the impact of these processes in providing socially just education.

A number of other researchers have also attempted to understand how teachers and teacher education students make sense of diversity in classrooms (Merton, 2003; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Schecter, 2002; Phelan & Luu, 2004; Povey, Stephenson & Radice, 2001). These researchers take a step back from describing ‘deficit’ thinking of teachers and examine the discourses behind or informing the thinking. Merton (2003, p. 4), for example, explores the experiences of teacher education students in relation to diversity, identifying the discourses that ‘describe cultural interactions and disjunctions’ in the narratives of these students. She examines the participants’ negotiation of these disjunctions and their stories of cultural diversity in education and teaching. She argues for teacher education courses on cultural diversity to explicitly address the concept and effects of ‘discourse’ and to provide tools for student teachers to critically understand the range of discourses about diversity.
Phelan and Luu (2004) identified four discourses expressed by secondary student teachers—the discourses of desire (why do you want to teach?), deficiency (they can’t!), denial (they are all the same to me!) and difficulty (there was a lot I learned). They argue that ‘the individual is always situated at the intersection of discourses and as such is defined by its very in-betweenness’ (p. 177). They see these discourses as mediating what can be said or must be silenced in teacher education and argue that this serves to reproduce the ‘white’ text in teacher education. Like Povey et al. (2001), they favour being direct with student teachers about any discomfort they may experience because they see this as being part of the process of understanding identity formation. This includes exploring ambivalent feelings and uncertain spaces. However, this is difficult work, even for those teacher educators seeking to engage student teachers in critical self-analysis, because the concepts and issues associated with race and racism can be abstract for white student teachers with mono-cultural experiences, and because it cannot be taken for granted that their personal and professional experiences will result in deeper understandings of difference.

**Teacher subjectivity and discourses of social justice**

In Chapter Five I analyse the interweaving of teachers’ views about teaching and social justice and the relationship of these to professional identity. I argue that teachers draw on multiple discourses and subject positions to construct professional identity. Pacini-Ketchabaw and Schecter (2002) argue that teachers’ subjectivities are constructed by their positioning within particular discourses but that they have choices—either to affirm or resist particular discourses. Pacini-Ketchabaw and Schecter, as do Britzman (2003) and Carson and Johnston (2000), see prior experience and exposure to the views of others as potentially influencing the choices teachers make. However, I do not see the choices new teachers make as being the result of isolated or discrete encounters. Rather, the choices arise from a complex layering of prior and present experiences and practices that contribute to a dynamic process of self-making or identity formation (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996; McLeod, 2003).

Additionally, I argue that it is necessary to analyse the ambivalences, contradictions and tensions inherent in the interacting discourses (Phelan & Luu, 2004; Povey et al., 2001). As Povey et al. (2001) point out, teachers who are motivated by equity principles are working in an environment in which they are negotiating contradictory
imperatives to both raise standards and reduce inequalities. In their study of secondary teachers engaged in professional development on inclusion, Povey et al. (2001) found a dominance of what they call a ‘liberal individualism’ discourse promoted by the standards agenda, rather than one of ‘equality’ or ‘justice’. They argue that there need to be changes to the agreed purpose of schooling, if changes to social inclusion practices are to be achieved. I develop a related argument in Chapter Six, with regard to the purposes ascribed to assessment and qualifications.

The studies discussed here give an indication of the range and types of issues and discourses that teacher educators engage in as they interact with students and teachers in courses about social justice, difference, equality and diversity. These form part of the complex of ideas that early career teachers encounter, along with those derived from current policy, cultural understandings and their own personal beliefs. I will now review the literature that is specific to professional knowledge, tracing common understandings of teacher professional knowledge and the understandings that I have adopted for this study. This discussion sets up my approach to analysing how teachers formulate professional knowledge (including professional identity) in the current environment of rapid social change and educational reform.

**Teacher professional knowledge**

Much has been written about teacher professional knowledge, and in this section I identify four main themes in the research literature. My grouping of approaches to teacher professional knowledge is similar to that developed by Rosiek and Atkinson (2005, p. 422) who argue that theorising about teacher professional knowledge needs to recognise the intersection of different traditions of research and sets of discourses—cultural, professional, personal, practical, political, technical … They too have identified models and examples of epistemological and ideological frameworks in the research on teaching and teacher knowledge. This provides a useful comparison with the themes I have identified.

Firstly, professional knowledge is often characterised as structured and as comprising a particular knowledge base. This is similar to what Rosiek and Atkinson (2005) refer to as the ‘scholarship of teaching’.
Secondly, professional knowledge is frequently discussed as part of a social, cultural or political context. This includes teacher reflection on practice and teacher socialisation. I view teacher reflection research as similar to Rosiek and Atkinson’s ‘critical-cultural’ tradition, and aimed at uncovering taken-for-granted cultural values of teachers and the importance of teachers understanding ideologies. I also include Rosiek and Atkinson’s category, ‘action research and teacher research’, in this grouping.

Thirdly, teacher knowledge is sometimes explained by and through teacher experience or conceptions. I include in this phenomenological/phenomenographical research and narrative research aimed at uncovering the personal aspects of teachers’ stories, and recognising the importance of social influences on teachers’ experiences (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005).

Finally, professional knowledge can be viewed as complex, multi-dimensional (or layered), evolving and unpredictable. Such understandings draw largely on poststructural theorising.

**Characterising and structuring teacher professional knowledge**

While theorising about teacher knowledge dates back many decades, in this chapter, I trace the writing of the past 30 or so years, with particular emphasis on more recent research.

Early discussions focussed on descriptions of teaching or learning to teach as a series of developmental stages and on what comprises or structures teacher knowledge. Fuller’s 1975 developmental model of teacher concerns (Conway & Clark, 2003; Kagan, 1992) and Berliner’s 1988 model of teacher development based on cognitive studies of expertise (Kagan, 1992) suggest that teachers develop knowledge progressively through a number of stages during the early years of teaching, sometimes developing to become ‘expert’ teachers. While still offering a structured and developmental view of teacher knowledge, Ammon and Hutcheson’s (Levin & Ammon, 1992) hierarchical model was concerned with teachers’ pedagogical conceptions, and it ranked teacher knowledge according to levels of understanding. All of these models describe teacher development through stages and have been used as a way of targeting teacher education to assist progression through specified stages.
While they acknowledge the importance of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, self-knowledge and biographical knowledge, such as beliefs about teaching and learning, nonetheless they are limited by assumptions that teachers progress from novice to expert in a linear fashion according to a relatively fixed structure.

Another feature of this work is seeing teacher knowledge as comprising categories of component parts. Since the latter part of the twentieth century debates have frequently centred on what knowledge, skills and dispositions make up the knowledge base of teachers, and, more recently, what this means for teacher educators (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Flores, 2001). Attempts to define this knowledge include a focus on technical aspects of teaching (subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and teacher characteristics) as well as on teachers themselves, and how they might make sense of this knowledge in action (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1995).

Shulman (1986) points out that from the late nineteenth century onwards, teachers’ subject knowledge has been considered the key to teaching. He argues that in the 1980s, however, there was a shift to focusing almost exclusively on developing teachers’ pedagogical knowledge because of the growing attention given to responding to the learner or the learner’s needs. Shulman questioned the utility of the divide between these approaches. His work has been influential in articulating the importance of not only teachers’ subject specific knowledge but also what he called their ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ and ‘curricular knowledge’. While there is still debate in teacher education about the relative merit of subject versus pedagogical knowledge, Shulman’s theory has had a widespread impact on what is offered in teacher education and teacher professional development programmes internationally. It offers a more inclusive understanding of teacher knowledge than either of the two models he challenges, and includes a variety of domains and categories. It also considers teachers’ intellectual biography and their professional context.

Understandings of teacher professional knowledge such as those of Shulman (1992), Fuller (Conway & Clark, 2003) or Berliner (Kagan, 1992) have been influential in the formation of policy internationally. This is particularly so in the creation of skill- or competency-based teaching standards (Scott & Freeman-Moir, 2000), which often include a range of aspects of professional knowledge (content, pedagogical and
Debates about structure and components have much to offer our understandings of teacher knowledge and teacher characteristics. However, such constructions are in danger of presenting teacher knowledge as a fixed, structured entity. The implication of this, therefore, is that new teachers can meet particular standards at particular stages in their careers, given the right input from ‘experts’. My research indicates that the formation of teachers’ professional knowledge is far more complex and uneven than is suggested by the application of linear and stage models of teacher learning.

Teacher professional knowledge as contextual and reflective

Recognition of the situated nature of teaching has also led to attempts to understand teachers’ knowledge as comprising more than a knowledge base (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005). Especially influential in teacher education has been the literature concerned with reflection and its relationship to action. This includes work such as Schön’s (1983) idea of understanding the relationship of teachers’ practical knowledge and their knowledge-in-action. This writing (including Brookfield, 1995; Schön, 1983; Zeichner, 1996c; Zeichner & Liston, 1996) was partly influenced by the work of the early 20th century educational philosopher, John Dewey and later by Carr and Kemmis’ (1986) work on critical educational inquiry. It is based on assumptions that teachers need to think critically about their practice. The meaning of the reflection and action relationship varies but it is generally viewed as being holistic rather than linear, and as involving intuition, emotion and passion (Greene, 1986 cited in Zeichner and Liston 1996). While this is sometimes seen as a somewhat idealised view of teaching, because of the day-to-day time constraints on teachers, ‘reflective practice’ has been developed and explored extensively as a way of challenging the positivist approaches to education and professional practice that dominated much of the 20th century (Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Reflective practice has been a dominant underpinning philosophy of much teacher education and teacher development over the last 20 years. It has much to offer teachers and teacher educators in terms of having them consciously think about what they are doing. However, the nature and practice of the reflection varies and therefore so too does the extent to which it impacts upon professional knowledge, curriculum design and delivery and social and cultural issues in education. Nevertheless,
Chapter Two: Review of literature

reflective practice is seen as a ‘norm’ in teacher education, and (student) teachers are expected to engage in it and take it seriously as a way of knowledge building. It has been a powerful discourse for the teachers in my study.

Despite its massive influence, a key criticism of reflective practice is that it does not guarantee change in education, because it may lead only to individual reflection rather than generating a collective or politically motivated response. Further, it has the potential to highlight deficiencies in teachers and to underplay the importance of complexity in teaching practice, as the focus of reflective practice tends to be on ‘problems with’ or ‘improvements to’ an individual’s teaching. Nonetheless, I also see reflective practice as offering possibilities for professionals to understand their own and others’ knowledge and practices, if it involves negotiation of multiple and complex educational discourses.

Other approaches to understanding teacher professional knowledge consider more directly the contextual aspects of teachers’ lives. By contextual I mean their work in particular social and cultural settings and in particular political climates. Research such as this focuses on teacher change over time or descriptions of the contexts of learning (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1995). By considering how teachers learn to teach, change or develop their beliefs or gain professional knowledge, this literature challenges constructions of learning to teach such as the developmental or structured models outlined earlier, which represent knowledge as universal and acquired through fixed processes. Additionally, it challenges images of teachers and learners as receivers of authoritative knowledge, as well as suggestions that the way teachers best develop professional knowledge is through practice or experience alone (Feiman-Nemser, 2001a). In other words it recognises teachers as having the potential to question or analyse the teaching/learning process, and their role in it.

Much research on beginning teachers focuses on problems related to classroom practice. Research concerned with the contextual nature of professional knowledge extends this focus by exploring teachers’ lives as part of an organisation, proposing that school culture or teacher biography are crucial factors in shaping the knowledge new teachers put into action.
The ‘wash out’ and ‘apprenticeship of observation’ scenarios discussed respectively by Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) and Lortie (1975) have also been developed in studies of new teachers socialisation. Such concepts have been used to explain the loss of theoretical knowledge gained during teacher preparation in favour of practical, survival strategies needed in school (Corrie, 2000; Flores, 2001; Williams et al., 2001). They are also drawn upon to encourage teacher education to prepare teachers who can resist the conservative or traditional thinking and practices promoted in schools and universities (Weiss, 1999; Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

Alternative explanations are offered by Loughran et al. (2001, p. 7), who suggest that ‘the difficulties of beginning to teach can create a situation whereby student-teachers’ ideals and hopes for teaching may be repressed … by the real world of school, rather than lost or washed out’. Levin (2001), Levin and Ammon (1992), Mulcahy (2005) and Rust (1999) also cite examples from their research that suggests there are other contextual factors, such as teacher biography, teacher experience, teacher personality, the philosophy and practices of teacher education programmes and so forth, that influence teachers’ conceptions and practices in the classroom and how they conceive knowledge and practice. I agree that the wash out and apprenticeship of observation analyses have limitations, given the complexity of the teaching process and argue that they offer only partial accounts of what is happening in the area of teacher learning and professional knowledge. Further, wash out and apprenticeship of observation explanations can become ways of describing teacher learning in deficit terms. Against single explanations or models of professional knowledge, my thesis analyses teacher knowledge in a particular contemporary setting and examines a range of knowledge sources that teachers draw on to formulate professional knowledge. This approach enables recognition of the complex, and multi-dimensional process of learning-to-teach.

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) similarly attempt to address this complexity. In their discussion of the nature of teacher professional knowledge, they suggest that not only is teacher socialisation a crucial consideration of teacher knowledge, but multiple interactions between teacher and school are also important. They see these interactions as being about both the influences on beginning teachers and the effects the teacher has on ‘the structures in which s/he is socialised’ (p 3). Sociological
considerations of teachers’ lives, such as this, have much to offer conceptualisations of teacher professional knowledge, because they take into account a range of contextual factors. In addition, work by Keltchermans and Ballet (2002) and others (Mulcahy, 2005; Phelan, 1997; Stanulis, Campbell & Hicks, 2002; White & Moss, 2003) also attempt to move away from constructions (including earlier sociological theorising) that place new teachers, in particular, as deficient and in need of ‘expert’ advice to adjust to the ‘real world of teaching’.

**Teacher conceptions and experience**

Over the last 15 years, there has been considerable research exploring teacher conceptions and beliefs about teaching and learning (Boulton-Lewis, Smith, McCrindle, Burnett & Campbell, 2001; Brownlee, 2000; John, 1996; Marton, Dall'Alba & Beaty, 1993; Patrick, 1998; Pratt, 1992). Initially this literature was influenced by phenomenological and phenomenographical theories (Marton, 1994; Marton & Säljö, 1976). Phenomenography aims to discover and describe the qualitatively different ways in which individuals understand or conceptualise a particular aspect of their world (in this case, teaching). It also endeavours to move beyond the individual’s understanding to provide a general map of the ways in which the phenomenon is understood. These studies attempt to increase understanding about teaching and learning from the point of view of the teachers. While they still used or developed models of hierarchies or developmental stages, they opened up a way to look at teachers’ professional world from their perspectives. This approach represents an early and important move away from statistical methods for measuring thinking. More recently, interest in understanding teacher thinking and experience can be seen in the emergence and growing popularity of narrative methodologies for researching professional knowledge, as promoted, for example, by Clandinin and Connelly (1994; 1995b).

Narrative research has been influential for a number of researchers in the field of professional knowledge. This approach is based on constructions of teacher professional knowledge as a landscape comprising:

…a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things. Because we see the professional knowledge landscape as composed of relationships among people, places, and things,
we see it as both an intellectual and a moral landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995b, p. 5).

There are numerous studies examining pre-service teachers perceptions and experiences of teacher education using narrative methods (for example, Clandinin & Connelly, 1995a; Craig, 1995; Loughran et al., 2001; Rust, 1999; Stanulis et al., 2002; Stroobants, 2005; Thomas, 1995) and several studies of newly graduated teachers’ perceptions of their teacher education and induction experiences (Doecke, Brown & Loughran, 2000; Goddard & Foster, 2001; Hebert & Worthy, 2001). Such analyses of teacher professional knowledge recognise the ‘situatedness’ or context of knowledge. In addition, the importance of the relationships teachers form is considered, as they make sense of their own practical, professional circumstances. By giving voice to the teachers, narrative approaches also have the potential to eschew constructions of the teachers as deficient. However, despite the usefulness of narrative approaches, and their influence on my study design, Clandinin and Connelly’s landscape metaphor has some limitations, largely due to its (usually) static nature which contrasts with understanding the organic nature of professional knowledge (Stronach et al., 2002).

Descriptions of teacher professional knowledge in terms of context, experience and teacher conceptions offer a deeper and richer understanding of teacher professional knowledge than those offered by typological, developmental models. However, it is important to ensure that attention to context and teacher narratives goes further than simply allowing us to settle comfortably in the knowledge that we are listening to ‘authentic’ teachers’ stories (Britzman, 2003; Convery, 1999). Gough (2005) usefully argues that we also need to consider the implications of poststructuralism and deconstruction for narrative inquiry. In researching teacher professional knowledge, this implies going beyond ‘feel good’ and ‘empowerment’ research to challenge or question what teachers’ ‘stories’, ‘narratives’ or ‘discourses’ can tell us about education, teaching, learning, learning-to-teach and the political, social and cultural implications of these practices.

**Professional knowledge and professional identity**

The approaches to analysing teacher professional knowledge described above all consider the work of teachers in respectful ways, and are concerned with the way professional and cultural discourses can distort teachers’ thinking and practice. Each
Chapter Two: Review of literature

differs in its explanation of which social discourses are sources of this distortion and each tends to critique earlier models (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005). However, like Rosiek and Atkinson (2005), I choose not to dismiss the earlier traditions, viewing all frameworks for studying teacher knowledge and work as constituting conflicting and contested discourses, which overlap and frame teacher learning. Thus, I seek an alternative approach to teacher knowledge research—one that ‘integrates its attention to … multiple facets of teaching experience’ (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2005, p. 8), and which acknowledges the instability of knowledge and professional and cultural discourses. I propose another direction for examining teacher professional knowledge, which draws on poststructural theories and principles. In the current climate of educational reform and public debate about the quality of teachers and teaching, there is a particularly urgent need to reconceptualise how teacher knowledge and professional expertise forms.

Much of the work discussed above tends to position teachers, in particular new teachers, as naïve bearers of professional knowledge and as empty vessels to be filled with the ‘expert’ knowledge of others. It is dominated by what I describe as ‘developmental discourses’—linear, developmental views of knowledge creation and subject formation, or descriptions of stories of teachers development in particular areas of professional knowledge, skills or disposition. As such, I see this as limiting understandings of the complexity of teacher professional knowledge.

Recent poststructural and feminist research offers alternative, more fruitful ways of conceptualising (beginning) teacher knowledge and work. Such approaches explicitly reject the view that the shaping of teacher professional knowledge and identity follow logical, prescribed patterns (Britzman, 2000; 2003; Davis & Sumara, 1999; Middleton, 1993; Middleton & May, 1997; 1999; Stronach et al., 2002). Rather, they conceptualise the formation of teacher knowledge and identities as complex, multiple and discursive. This is consonant with the analysis developed in this thesis of the formation of professional knowledge as a recursive process of negotiation of beliefs, rhetoric and policy. That is, professional knowledge is complexly formed in a back and forth way, with interaction between, across and within a wide range of discourses.

This view of professional knowledge as ever-evolving and unpredictable situates teachers as having to deal with competing discourses—their own and those of others
Chapter Two: Review of literature

(teachers, parents, students, teacher educators, the media, the authorities …)—interacting dialogically with the discourses that they ‘bump up against’ (Britzman, 2003). This is part of the process new teachers engage in—dealing with ‘contradictory realities … conflicts and crises that structure the work and narratives of learning to teach’ (Britzman, 2003, p. 11). Therefore, this thesis analyses the ‘dis-order’ of how teachers negotiate competing discourses of professional knowledge.

My discussion of this process draws on several sets of analyses, which I will now elaborate as a way of building up a picture of how I have attempted to explore how the teachers in this study make sense of the professional knowledge discourses they encounter.

Davis and Sumara (1999) challenge simplistic conceptions of teaching and learning to teach, likening simple conceptions (and also complicated conceptions) to the image of machines (simple or complicated) that can be pulled apart into components to be understood. They claim that it is not possible to do this with learning to teach because its complexity cannot be reduced to component parts. They emphasise the relationships that bind the complexity, and the ‘whole’.

The negotiation of professional knowledge, as with professional knowledge itself, is also multi-faceted. As Davis and Sumara (1999) suggest, the contributing elements are ‘intricately, ecologically and complexly related’, and there is ‘no direct causal, linear, fixable relationship among the various components …’ (p. 242). Davis and Sumara view teaching and learning to teach as a web of relationships, experiences, outside influences and unknown factors. However the metaphor of the web has its limitations because webs can be structured and symmetrical. In their professional environment teachers necessarily face dilemmas, and they constantly shape and reshape their views (and those around them) of knowledge and practice, and views of themselves as professionals, teachers, members of the communities in which they are located. The process of professional identity formation is therefore more usefully examined drawing upon the metaphor of a palimpsest or ‘magic writing-pad’, which conveys the image of a complex layering of old and new subjectivities, which are overwritten but continue to interact with each other (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996). In Chapter Five, I adapt this metaphor to analyse the identity formation of teachers in my
Britzman (2000; 2003) also views learning to teach as complex, emphasising the interaction of multiple discourses. She develops a compelling discussion of what it means to learn to teach and what it means to be a researcher (in her case, an ethnographer) studying what it means to learn to teach. She proposes that teaching is a ‘dialogic discourse [that] can take into account the discursive practices and their social relationships that realise pedagogy and the lived experiences of teachers’ (2003, p. 25). Further, she suggests that teacher education should recognise ‘that multiple realities, voices, and discourses conjoin and clash in the process of coming to know’ (2003, p. 49). Britzman, too, sees knowledge as being differently constructed by each teacher and mediated by a range of discourses, often, in teacher education, by dominant traditional ideologies. While her study concerns student teachers, I will extend her work by adapting some of her ideas in relation to beginning teachers in my study. For example, while Britzman disrupts understandings of ‘student teacher’ and ‘learning-to-teach’, I trouble the concept of ‘teacher’ by exploring the professional knowledge (including identity) formation of early career teachers. We both take an approach to our research that is consistent with poststructural and feminist interpretations of professional knowledge and professional identity—that is, the notion that the ‘teacher’ is not a unitary construct that is definable or real, but a discursive one.

A key insight of poststructural accounts of teacher learning is the importance of the relationship between professional knowledge and professional identity. In poststructuralist terms, subjectivity is shaped discursively and is not a unitary entity but embodies multiple and even contradictory subject positions (Britzman, 2003; McLeod, 2003). For example, new teachers are constructed variously as professionals with expertise, as neophytes, as learners, as teachers and so forth.

In an important analysis of the concept of professional identity, Stronach et al. (2002) deconstruct the notion of ‘the professional’ nurse and teacher, revisiting the data from two previous studies. They eschew the notion of a unitary professional arguing that the self-presentation of the teachers and nurses in their studies demonstrated how their identities were ‘fragmented’: ‘So ‘a professional’ is plural and ‘the professional’
Chapter Two: Review of literature

(\textit{The Nurse, The Teacher}) is a false singularity’ (p. 117). They develop a reading of the professional self as ‘caught between … an ‘economy of performance’ (manifestations broadly of the audit culture) and various ‘ecologies of practice’ (professional dispositions and commitments individually and collectively engendered)’ (p. 109). The idea of teachers engaging in an economy of performance came about as they found in their study that teachers frequently appealed to a range of accountability standards related to pupils’ levels of achievement, public comparison of pupils and schools and various performance measures. In New Zealand this is also evident, as I will show in later chapters, as teachers refer to curriculum achievement objectives, national certificate achievement standards, teacher performance indicators, national educational guidelines and so forth.

Ecologies of practice are explained by Stronach et al. (2002) as appeals by teachers to various types of experience and beliefs—including commonsense philosophies and practices, for example, to do with ‘student-centred learning’ and ‘good practice’. In my study, teachers also appealed to ecologies of practice such as beliefs about fairness and teaching style. They called on a range of personal and professional experiences, including their own, their colleagues and the school’s.

A key point of Stronach et al. (2002) that I draw on in this thesis is the idea that teachers are constantly looking for and finding ways to address the contradictions and dilemmas set up by the juxtaposition of an economy of performance and ecologies of practice. The value of this argument for me is the way the two imperatives come together as part of the process of becoming a professional in the present educational environment, and the way this presents as fragmented identities. What is interesting is not simply to define or identify these, but to examine the ‘discursive dynamics between these different sorts of pressure’ (Stronach et al., 2002, p. 125).

Chapter One discussed the impact of an audit culture in New Zealand education and its juxtaposition with a dominant goal of equity, creating a juggling act for teachers. Stronach et al. (2002) describe such tensions as creating a series of contradictions (ambivalences) and dilemmas that professionals attempt to address and redress. Stronach et al.’s analysis provides a valuable framework for the present study, particularly the concepts of ‘economies of performance’ and ‘ecologies of practice’. Although I understand Stronach et al.’s focus to be on the contradictions and
dilemmas that teachers negotiate between these two, I also see the teachers in my study attempting to address the contradictions and dilemmas between different ecologies of practice. That is, their own competing ecologies (biographical and academic), and those of their colleagues, the students, the whānau (family and friends) and so forth.

A further strength of the conceptualisation presented by Stronach et al. (2002, pp. 110-112) is its emphasis on moving away from reductionist or resolvable analyses of professional identity. For example, they critique analyses that are ‘emblematic’. That is, the professional is constructed, for example, as a hero or heroine—who gives him or herself to the ‘cause’—or a victim, with decreased control over his or her destiny and increasingly the implementer of policy. They also critique analyses that set up the professional in a polarity—such as the traditional versus the progressive, or the practical and the technical. They also reject views of professionals in terms of different types of knowledge, stages of development and typologies of roles (or styles of working). They further critique what they refer to as ‘narratives of professional redemption’—whereby the ‘authentic’ teacher’s ‘voice’ emerges from the wilderness. Finally Stronach et al. challenge definitions of ‘the professional’ and professionalism that are expressed in universalising terms—for example, teacher competencies including those set by policymakers. In rejecting such ‘methodological reduction, rhetorical inflation and universalising excesses regarding the definition, project and typologizing of the ‘professional’", Stronach et al. (2002, p. 112) instead ‘attempt to complicate the notion of professionalism’ (p. 113). It is this type of analysis of professional knowledge that I use in this study.

In summary, the discussion of teacher professional knowledge developed in this thesis draws on poststructural and feminist accounts of professional knowledge and identity. Teachers (new and experienced) negotiate professional knowledge discourses and construct their own understandings and subjectivities discursively. Their negotiation of the professional knowledge world engages them in making meaning from and of competing discourses and forming their identity (including their expressions of becoming and being a teacher).
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined key areas in the research literature that relate to the focus of this thesis. I have identified a number of gaps in studies of and approaches to new teacher professional knowledge in the current era, and I have signalled the contribution my study will make to the field.

Prominent themes across the literature about new teacher professional knowledge include much description and analysis of the kinds of knowledge encountered in teacher preparation and how this transfers into the early career of teaching, the structure or path of professional knowledge growth, how student teachers and new teachers experience and manage working in diverse socio-cultural contexts and, more recently, new teachers’ professional identity.

Studies of the professional knowledge of new teachers tend to be dominated by research on pre-service primary teachers. The existing research on secondary beginning teachers is also predominantly related to experiences in pre-service teacher education. Because of the particular emphasis in New Zealand education on equity imperatives, and the centrality of this in new teachers’ professional lives, this review has considered work on equity and diversity in teacher education and in relation to beginning teachers. Prominent themes in this literature include concerns about the lack of teachers of colour in schools, the reported inadequacy of the preparation of teachers to work with culturally, socially and linguistically diverse pupils, and analyses of student teacher and early career teacher attitudes and approaches to teaching in culturally diverse settings. Much of this work tends to position teachers as inadequate or ignorant. There is a limited range of research that challenges such deficit constructions of teacher professional knowledge. There is also a need for empirically and nationally situated studies of the interrelationship between professional knowledge and identity formation.

This study of new secondary teacher professional knowledge moves beyond descriptive, development/stages analyses to take account of the unpredictability and ‘dis-order’ of teacher learning, recognising the formation of teacher knowledge as discursive and contingent, and taking place in particular settings and times with
particular people. It also recognises the inclusion of identity formation in the shaping of professional knowledge and the fragmented nature of identity.

In the following chapter, I discuss the approach taken in carrying out this research, including its theoretical underpinnings, the chosen methodology and the research design.
Chapter Three: Methodology and research design

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss in more depth the ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations guiding the study. Later in the chapter I will take up these considerations in relation to the design of this study. I begin this chapter with a brief definition of qualitative research—the broad paradigm in which narrative inquiry is situated. This is followed by a synthesis of the theoretical perspectives informing this research, a detailed discussion of narrative inquiry and my approach—interviewing, ‘reading the data’, ‘writing as inquiry’. The final part of the chapter is a description of the research procedure.

Qualitative research, the broad tradition in which the study is located, developed out of the disciplines of anthropology and sociology and has come into more common use in educational research since the 1960s. Denzin and Lincoln (2005), in the introductory chapter of their edited book, The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, provide a generic definition that I use as a starting point:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p.3).

While there are clearly different perspectives on what constitutes qualitative research this definition is inclusive of a wide range possibilities, and allows for a variety of methods to be employed in the pursuit of an investigation (Bell, 1999; Burns & Walker, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; McGee, 1997; Reinharz, 1992).

The methodological approach selected works with interview narratives from new teachers as a way of gaining insights into how they negotiate dominant discourses in the current changing educational environment. The teachers were interviewed in small groups about their experience and understandings of current professional issues such as the implementation of the national curriculum, the new senior secondary school
qualification and ‘diversity’ in the classroom. They also discussed biographical and professional influences on their thinking and beliefs, their ongoing professional development and their future plans. A ‘conversational interview’ style was adopted that encouraged the teacher participants to interact with each other, to respond to and debate each others’ reflections, rather than respond in a ‘question-answer’ format in which the interviewer’s questions can dominate the structure of the interaction.

Guided by methods drawn from narrative inquiry, I examined the narratives generated in these interviews in relation to educational policy, professional rhetoric and practice discourses. As a form of qualitative research, I regarded my role, as researcher, as integral to the construction of meaning about these narratives. I developed an approach to analysing the interviews that foregrounded the evolving and reflective process of interpretation and the practice of ‘writing as inquiry’ (Richardson and St Pierre 2005; Gough 2004).

The aim of my data analysis was to explore the beliefs and philosophies of teachers in relation to other discourses that they encounter in negotiating the professional knowledge world (Britzman, 2003; Davis & Sumara, 1999; Stronach et al., 2002). My analytical role has been to read the teachers’ narratives in relation to policy, their own understandings and beliefs, and those of others. I have done this by continually writing and reflecting on what I read and hear in the interviews. In particular, I have explored prominent and recurring themes expressed in teachers’ interpretations of social justice, accountability and policy reform.

As noted in Chapter One, this study is informed by key poststructural principles. While the term ‘postmodern’ is frequently used interchangeably with ‘poststructural’, in general, I use ‘postmodern’ to refer to a moment in time, an historical period, with its associated mistrust of singular ‘truths’ and linearity (Cheek & Gough, 2005; Lather, 2003; MacLure, 2003). I use the term ‘poststructural’ to refer to the analytical theory used within the context of the postmodern. Poststructural or postmodern research is concerned with questioning metanarratives—going beyond modernist desires to find and define ‘the real’—without producing alternative metanarratives (Cheek & Gough, 2005). Such approaches challenge, disrupt or question aspects of ‘reality’ that are engrained or assumed in our ways of thinking, and in much social science research are concerned with analysing discourses and discursive practices.
Chapter Three: Methodology and research design

(Davies & Gannon, 2005). The questioning of a singular ‘reality’, and understandings of ‘reality’ as partial, multi-faceted and contested have been important influences on my conceptualisations of knowledge and identity, and the development of the methodology used in this research.

There has been an extensive feminist engagement with poststructural theory (Burns & Walker, 2005; Griffiths, 1995; Lather, 1991; Reinharz, 1992), and several aspects of this engagement have also influenced how I have approached this study. I do not extensively develop a feminist analysis as I am not foregrounding gender relationships or issues (Burns & Walker, 2005). However, I have been influenced by the feminist emphasis on the centrality of ‘voice’ and the prominence given to personal experience and identity (Davies & Gannon, 2005). This influence is evident in my focus on teachers’ subjectivity and professional identity and the significance accorded to personal narratives. Debates within feminist theory concerning social justice and difference have also been influential, but they are not directly relevant to this methodological discussion, and are discussed in Chapter Four.

The concept of ‘discourse’ is integral to poststructural theories and my use of the term requires explanation. MacLure (2003) and Bacchi (2005) discuss two broad traditions in discourse theory—poststructural and linguistic. While the linguistic tradition is concerned with language and the use of language, poststructural understandings of discourse involve more than this. It encompasses, for example, practices for producing meaning, forming subjectivities and relationships within a particular context (MacLure, 2003). Bacchi refers to the focus on language patterns as ‘discourse analysis’ and the political theoretical focus (like MacLure’s poststructural tradition of discourse) as ‘analysis of discourse’. This latter tradition focuses on understanding ways in which issues are given particular meaning within a specific setting. This is similar to the approach taken in this thesis which attempts to understand how early career teachers make meaning out of competing discourses of professional knowledge in contemporary New Zealand. My aim is to understand broader socio-cultural conceptualisations—what Gee (1999, p. 26) refers to as ‘Discourse with a capital ‘D’’. However, at times, I also focus on individual teachers’ negotiation of persuasive and conflicting ‘discursive structures/meanings’ (Bacchi, 2005, p. 1) which is more akin to MacLure’s ‘linguistic tradition’—or to what Gee
refers to as ‘discourse with a little ‘d’’. This is useful because it maps out when and what these are—that is, discourse, Discourse and narrative.

Thus, I examine how discourses operate at a social, cultural, institutional level; the teachers’ understandings of the ways ‘Discourses’ in policy, education and political rhetoric operate; the relationships of these to their own biographies and professional practices; and the subject positions of the teachers, as expressed in the narratives, in relation to professional knowledge and educational reform.

Narrative inquiry is the underpinning methodology of this study and I now turn to consider terminology, common usage, origins, theoretical interpretations, in particular poststructuralist influences, and limitations of narrative inquiry.

**Narrative inquiry**

Clandinin and Connelly (1994), in a discussion on personal experience methods, provide an explanation of ‘narrative’ as meaning both the phenomenon and the method—‘narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study’ (p. 416). To distinguish between the two, they sometimes refer to the phenomenon as ‘story’ and to the inquiry as ‘narrative’. Taylor (2001) and Middleton and May’s (1997) ‘life-history method’, used in their research on teacher union activists’ contribution to gender equity and teachers’ lives respectively, is similar to Clandinin and Connelly’s ‘narrative inquiry’ (or ‘inquiry into narrative’). Middleton and May use the term ‘biographical narratives’ to describe the stories they collected from the teachers they interviewed.

Conle (2003) cites Genette’s (1980) concept of ‘narrative engagement’ as having three different lenses or ‘facets’. These are: ‘narrative’—Conle uses ‘narrative statement’ (the oral or written discourse used to tell the story, the one that is available for analysis); ‘story’ (the events that are the subject of the narrative statement—without regard for context of the telling); and ‘narrating’ (the act of telling, including the context, audience, etc). In this thesis, I use the terms ‘narrative inquiry’ or ‘narrative research’ to describe the inquiry and ‘story’ or ‘narrative’ to describe the teachers’ experience as it is told to me. I see myself engaging with the teachers’ ‘narrative statements’ as narrated in the group interviews, and as reading the ‘discourses’ that underlie what they are saying, in relation to discourses in education,
Chapter Three: Methodology and research design

the teachers’ biographies and the educational literature. So my use and understanding of discourse here is intended to give a sense that the narratives are more than the stories told—rather, they also represent layers of both biographical and social meaning.

Narrative methods of inquiry have become increasingly popular in educational research in general, and are particularly popular in relation to researching teachers. There have been significant studies of how teachers develop their professional knowledge over time (Clandinin, 1998; McGee, 2001; Middleton, 1996; Middleton & May, 1997) as well as how they understand the political, social, cultural and historical issues of education (Bishop, 2000; Gough, 2005; Middleton & May, 1999; Taylor, 2001). Narrative methods are also used as a way of engaging participants in critical reflection leading to professional growth (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995b; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; O’Brien & Schillaci, 2002). As one overarching goal of my research is to understand social, political and cultural dimensions of teaching through the eyes of new teachers, this method suits my purposes. At the same time, I have been influenced by poststructural understandings of narrative inquiry that do more than merely represent the participants’ stories and ‘voice’. That is, I want to go beyond simply looking at the narrators to consider the narratives themselves and the interacting discourses (or ‘texts’) that are represented by the narratives (Britzman, 2003; Gough, 2004; McLeod, 2000; McLeod & Yates, 2003). It should be noted that, while my approach is influenced by aspects of a life-history approach in that I focus on the relationship between biography and wider social contexts and experiences, I do not employ a life-history method as such.

It is necessary to look beyond the teachers’ stories (their lives and voices) to the meaning within and between the stories (a semiotic interpretation) and to how they position themselves within and between these stories (a political interpretation) (Green, 1994). This latter concern is consistent with a poststructural agenda that deconstructs meanings and assumptions, rejects universality and examines tensions and dilemmas created by these relationships. The analyses in Chapters Four and Five include both a semiotic and political interpretation of teachers’ professional knowledge and identity formation.
As such, my thinking and writing about the texts is my interpretation or narrative of the narratives collected (or produced)—‘an interpretation of an interpretation, a construction of a construction, a narrative about narratives, a “metacommentary”’ (Jameson 1981, cited in Doecke et al., 2000, p. 347).

The growing popularity of narrative approaches signals interest in conversing with and listening to not only high profile but also ‘ordinary’ teachers about their practices and their insights into student learning, schools, professional understanding, and political and social issues (Thomas, 1995). By including the narratives of new teachers, I intend to contribute to this conversation. Thomas (1995), in discussing the revival of storytelling from ancient times (p. 3) and its reconstruction in narrative research methods, points to narrative method’s strength in affirming the one unifying aspect of the various qualitative research approaches—the actors’/agents’ right the speak for themselves: the advent of teacher as subject not object’ (p.4).

**Interpretations and adaptations of narrative inquiry**

I will now explore some of the different ways in which narrative inquiry has been interpreted and adapted, and identify how I have applied these adaptations in my study. Narrative inquiry is typically viewed as offering a way of understanding experience and learning from experience through the exploration of that experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). It involves the story, the narrator and the audience (Witherell & Noddings, 1991), and has dimensions of time, place and personal/social context (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000) or, in other words, provides a tapestry of time (Middleton & May, 1999), place, character and advice on what we do with our lives (Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Middleton and May (1997) also define their life-history method as being a way of studying the development of people (in their case teachers) over time and in particular places. One of the aims of their study was to view the narratives of the teachers in their study alongside those of policymakers, sociologists and historians as a way of providing insights into policies and practices of the time (Middleton & May, 1999, p. 90). This is similar to my desire to examine current educational policies and rhetoric of equity and educational reform, through reading the narratives of the teachers in my study.
The telling of biographical stories appears to be linked with the individual construction of knowledge or meaning making, which, O’Brien and Schillaci (2002) argue, is an inevitable part of life in the postmodern world. By telling and retelling these rich stories, and by discovering and producing meaning from the stories, Clandinin and Connelly (1994) argue that it is possible to develop deeper understanding about educational issues, about teaching and teacher knowledge, and about students and student knowledge. It can also contribute, they argue, to the development of educational theory, and potentially engage the researcher, participants and educational community in professional and personal growth.

Personal history is widely recognised to be of key importance in shaping teachers’ actions and behaviour (O’Brien & Schillaci, 2002). Therefore by engaging in autobiographical accounts, teachers and researchers can use past and present experiences, not only to make sense of the complexities of teaching, but also to examine teaching practices and develop ideas (Doecke et al., 2000; O’Brien & Schillaci, 2002). In Britzman’s (2003, pp. 69-70) study of learning to teach, she explains how biographical history is one of the multiple discourses that the student teachers ‘bump up against’. She talks about the four chronologies in becoming a teacher: experience as a student in the classroom (prior educational biography); experiences as a university and teacher education student; student teaching (the teacher’s world, department politics, constructing relationships with teachers, managers and students); newly arrived teacher (mediating the influence of school system, students, teacher union, community, public policy, professional organisations, cumulative experience of their classroom lives). Although the biographies of the teachers are not the direct focus of my study, they are part of the negotiation or shaping of professional knowledge and identity. The teachers’ biographies (or chronologies) are complexly intertwined with the competing discourses being negotiated. In exploring the juxtaposition of multiple discourses in the narrative statements of the teachers, aspects of their biographies emerge at times and are considered along with how they reconcile these in relation to other professional discourses with which they interact.

According to O’Brien and Schillaci (2002), teachers need to develop self awareness because of the powerful position they are in to influence learners. Engaging in critical
reflection through examination of their personal histories and the reconstruction of their knowledge, beliefs and assumptions, can lead to the development of this awareness and to professional growth (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Convery, 1999; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Employing narrative methods can be an effective way to do this, through the articulation of stories, which enable people to make sense of their lives and create connections that enhance learning (O’Brien & Schillaci, 2002; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). It can also enhance knowledge of educational issues (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Convery, 1999; Green, 1994) and deepen understanding and respect for others as well as expand teachers’ sense of responsibility as professionals (Witherell & Noddings, 1991) and develop their professional knowledge.

Despite the many strengths of narrative approaches, there are certain problems associated with providing opportunities for the teachers to ‘develop’ or ‘grow’ professionally, most notably the potentially paternalistic nature of this desire, which positions teachers as in need of improvement, rescue or empowerment. While it is possible that my research could have had such effects, it has not been my intention to either demean the work of these teachers or to patronisingly show them the path to professional improvement. Rather, my aim has been to gain understanding about teachers’ negotiation of the professional knowledge worlds in which they live and work, as a way of increasing knowledge about teachers’ professional work and identity formation—particularly in New Zealand in the early part of the 21st century, in the context of neo-liberal educational reforms. At the same time, my ‘compassionate researcher self-identity’ hopes that by participating in this study, the teachers have, on the way, also benefited personally and/or professionally. This may or may not have happened and I am realistic about the limits and effects of my power in this regard.

Poststructuralist critics such as Gough (2005) and Convery (1999) have noted further limitations to narrative enquiry. Gough, for example, critiques Connelly and Clandinin’s lack of acknowledgement of the implications of poststructuralism and deconstruction for narrative research, suggesting that it is necessary to situate narratives in political, social and historical contexts. He also advocates moving beyond seeing discourse as taking the form of a story (as is conceptualised in
‘narrative theorising’), to taking a poststructuralist view of discourse as taking the form of a text that conveys different levels of discursive meaning. Gough (citing Stoicheff 1991) refers here to the notion that the world is as text and our interpretation of the world is a function of our reading of texts. This is consistent with my approach, in which I attempt to go beyond simply representing teachers’ stories and voices to examining the ‘text’ or discourses embedded in the narratives.

I now explore methodological issues related to my use of interviewing as the key strategy for recording the teachers’ narratives. I will then discuss my approach to interpreting the narratives—reading them as texts and writing as inquiry.

**Interviewing and other field texts**

For this inquiry, my choice of method for gathering teacher narratives was group interviews. Throughout the process I also recorded my own narrative and responses to the interviews in a research journal, *Endnote* records and in a handwritten notebook. These reflective and interpretive notes were both epistemological and methodological—that is, about both the concepts being explored and matters related to the research design and procedures (Johnson, 2001).

Kvale (1996, p 3-5) identifies two contrasting metaphors for the interviewer—the ‘miner’ metaphor and the ‘traveller’ metaphor. The miner excavates for facts and nuggets of data, while the traveller is on a journey of meaning making. The former is conceptualised as one who seeks quantifiable, objective facts; the latter as one who explores ideas, through conversation, seeking to find out what is there—sometimes in relation to specific topics. The interviewer describes qualitatively what is heard and seen and reconstructs this as stories, through her/his own words.

This latter metaphor has some consonance with the underlying principles of narrative inquiry and with the specific approach to interviewing deployed in this study. Kvale associates the metaphorical interviewer as traveller with ‘a postmodern constructive understanding’, in which the interview is a conversation aimed at leading the researcher to new understandings about other people’s experiences. This conversational type of interview, was inspired by the phenomenological philosophy which is based on a descriptive study of consciousness (Kvale, 1996, p. 29), the purpose of which is ‘to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects’
own perspectives’ (p. 27). Reinharz (1992, p. 18), similarly suggests that this type of interview ‘explores people’s views of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory’. Freebody (2003) describes this as a way of exploring accounts by which interviewees construe the significance and nature of educational practices.

However, I also agree with McLeod’s (2000, 2003) poststructural caution that interviews are unlikely to reveal a transparent or self-evident ‘reality’ or provide complete insight into the interviewees’ subjectivities. Her discussion about the use of interviewing as a strategy in narrative research draws on a longitudinal study, begun in 1993 with Lyn Yates, of young people’s identity formation through secondary school. McLeod (2000) reflects on how she and Yates attempted to structure the interviews to generate insight into the young people’s subjectivities. Yet, as she argues, identity is never simply and fully revealed during interviews. This is consistent with poststructural understandings that the research process cannot provide a clear window into the inner life of an individual (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21), and Freebody’s (2003, p. 132) caution that not even open-ended interviews are ‘transparent window into people’s stable, self-contained knowledge or beliefs about a topic.’

McLeod also comments on the role of research interviews in providing readers with a glimpse of the lived experience of the interviewee at a particular time. Having gathered stories from interviewees, researchers need to do more than present the raw data. They are also involved in producing meaning from the texts, interpreting them from different perspectives and locating them within current social, cultural and political context (McLeod, 2000). A similar orientation is evident in my intention to go beyond simply presenting the stories of the teachers and to interpret their narrative statements in relation to the research literature, policy dictates and guidelines, and educational and social debates.

Although the most common strategy used in narrative research is the use of interviews (for example, Middleton & May, 1997; Taylor, 2001), I was particularly interested in using group interviews as a way of having teachers engage in conversation. This allowed the potential for collaboration in the construction of meaning, and opportunities to engage in conversation. As Patti Lather (1991) points out, ‘group interviews provide tremendous potential for deeper probing and reciprocally
educative encounter’ (p. 77). Doecke, Brown and Loughran (2000) in discussing the use of group interviews in their study of beginning teachers, stress the power of the interactions between the people present in the interview—the teachers and researcher—in jointly producing meaning, through the sharing of their experience. This was the main reason I chose to use groups in my study. Additionally, group interviews, compared to on-to-one interviews, have the potential to minimise some of the power relations between researcher and researched. Power relations persist across all fieldwork encounters, but in group interviews, the inclusion of others in the conversation can, perhaps, work to defuse their effects.

I chose group interviews as the main source of field texts because I see them as a potentially effective, collaborative way of engaging the teachers in interactive thinking and conversations about their own thoughts, and as a way of questioning assumptions, and of encouraging joint meaning making about experiences and the educational issues facing them. In reality, while this appeared to happen to some extent for some of the teachers, the number of interviews and the variation in the grouping between years limited this potential. Furthermore, as acknowledged above, there are limits to what researchers can do if they alone make decisions about what processes or subject matter are discussed, without involving the research participants, even if some freedom is offered within the framework. As this was my doctoral study, I chose to have control over the research focus and process, rather than work collaboratively with the research participants. Further, the work pressure on the teachers would have made greater commitments of time difficult for them. At the same time, I attempted to make the focus and process as accessible and useful as possible for the teachers, based on my professional knowledge of teachers’ work contexts.

There are yet further practical limitations with the use of interviews—whether with individuals or groups. What is said by the participants does not necessarily reflect what they do in practice (Sleeter, 2002), and not everything is necessarily revealed in a public forum such as a group interview. Observations of the teachers in the classroom can be an effective way to counter this concern, although the researcher’s reading of even this is partial. However, for ethical reasons (such as the reduced ability to protect the identity of the teachers, and the problem of gaining access to
schools and permission to observe the teachers’ pupils) and practical reasons (the teachers were already being heavily assessed in their early years of teaching through observations by senior colleagues) this was not possible in my study. Furthermore, my interest was in exploring the teachers’ negotiation of the range of competing professional knowledge discourses, from their perspective, and their identity formation, rather than examining their actual classroom practice. Therefore, my focus has been on meaning-making and self-making rather than actual practice.

Data analysis: Reading data as text/writing as inquiry

I have reconceptualised my approach to ‘data analysis’ as ‘reading’ the teachers’ narratives as ‘text’ (Britzman, 2000; Gough, 2004; Lather, 1991; McLeod, 2003). I have therefore chosen to use a strategy described as ‘writing (as) educational inquiry’ (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005) rather than grounded theory, which was my original plan. While research analysis generally involves reading and writing, what I am trying to convey is the recursive way in which I used writing to develop my analysis, as I interacted with many ‘texts’.

The approach I had first planned to use to analyse the narratives generated from the interviews was a constructivist, grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2000). This approach attempts to address criticisms of Glaser and Strauss’ 1967 version of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) as being objectivist (and therefore limited by desires for unitary truths), by taking into account poststructural concerns with recognising the interaction of the researcher’s interpretation with the research texts—such as the narratives of the teachers in my study. I also intended to use the software package, NUD*IST, to assist with sorting and organising the data into themes and categories, as it is designed to work with grounded theory. However, once I had started this process, I found that even the reconceptualised version of grounded theory (and the use of NUD*IST) was too rigid and structuring of the data for the kinds of discourses I was finding in the teachers’ narrative statements. While the grounded theory approach has many advantages, the categorical approach to data was unsuitable for expressing the complexity of the relationships between aspects of the teachers’ stories. A partial explanation for this is the tendency of grounded theory to read the similarities and not the differences in the text (Stronach et al., 2002). Furthermore, I sought a process which could read across narratives that express multiple, uncertain,
conflicted and complex interactions with the diverse discourses constituting professional knowledge.

This presented me with a methodological challenge—how do I best approach my questions about teachers’ negotiation of professional knowledge and identity formation from a perspective that does not privilege order and structure? Typically poststructural perspectives do not privilege order and structure.

‘Making a mess with method’

John Law (2003) discusses a similar dilemma that he and Vicky Singleton faced as they struggled to make order out of data they collected to ‘trace’ the paths of alcoholic liver disease patients’ use of social and health services. He tells of their eventual recognition that they were trying to define a reality that was not tidy or regular, and that reality itself can be ‘mess’. He points out that: ‘Realities can be made independent, prior, definite and singular, but that is because they are being made that way. It could be otherwise.’ (p 8). Instead of describing this ‘mess’ as incoherent, his preference is to ‘allow the non-coherences to make themselves manifest. Or rather, it is to start to think about ways in which we might go about this’ (p 11). While this is still problematic, because to attempt to express anything in writing requires some kind of structure, the idea of allowing for ‘mess’ is consonant with my conceptualisation of professional knowledge and identity as unstable and potentially contradictory (as discussed in Chapter Two).

My conceptualisation of professional knowledge as both orderly and dis-orderly, and professional identity as both constant and changing, in conjunction with my understanding of research ‘data’ as text (Britzman, 2000; Gough, 2004; Lather, 1991; McLeod, 2003) led me to analyse the text through a process of writing—that is, ‘writing (as) educational inquiry’ (Gough, 2004; Richardson & St Pierre, 2005).

In many cases, writing and analysis occurred together. I am not suggesting that data analysis and writing are separate, but in foregrounding the act of writing as a form of inquiry, I want to emphasise the ongoing, cumulative manner in which my analysis developed. This happened not only as an interrogation of teacher narratives, but also as part of an interaction with many texts during that time—including my own reflections, research literature, policies, discussions with colleagues … as well as
reflections on the teacher narratives. An emphasis on writing as a form of inquiry is intended to underline this intersecting and dynamic interpretation. At the same time, when analysing the interviews, close attention was paid to what was and was not said, what was or was not emphasised, recurrent themes, tensions and dilemmas, the emotion behind what was said, points of contestation and so on. As such, although I did not code the data, what I chose to analyse was not entirely random. It was built up partly from themes that arose in the interviews—either through my questions or because the teachers chose to use a particular example.

My own constructions and positionings are always present in the interpretation, and multiple readings are possible of the field texts. Further, I chose to privilege not only the idea of complex layers of meaning in the teachers’ narratives, but also particular layers, such as the relationships of these to the reform environment of education in New Zealand in the early 21st century. Although I avoided focusing on the individuals, their biographies and subjectivities are present because these are intricately entwined with their representations and experience.

My approach to interpreting the data, then, has been multi-faceted. In the process of reading, writing, talking and listening to the range of interacting discourses—that is, experimenting with writing about the teachers’ responses and linking the findings back to the original research concerns, aspects of a number of approaches are present in the analysis.

**Reading data as text**

Britzman, in her study of student teachers’ learning to teach, likens her task as a poststructural ethnographer, to reading a novel—reading the narratives rather than the narrators, or reading their stories as texts (and introducing the associated concept of teaching as a text). She describes this process as reading the different discourses within and between the stories—the contradictions (competing regimes of truth), dramas of misunderstandings, deceit and conflicting desires. She moves away from telling the stories of the student teachers’ perceptions of their experience in favour of telling how they construct their stories and what discourses run through them—the conflicting, contradictory, competing discourses—their own and those that they call upon.
McLeod and Yates (2003), Gough (2005) and Lather (1991; 2003) also write about the different ways they have or could have read the research texts (or data) in their work and about the role of the researchers’ life experiences and identities in mediating the methodological choices made and the interpretation of the texts. Lather, for example, explores four different ways that she could have read the responses in her research about students’ resistance to a liberatory curriculum in an introductory woman’s studies course. She describes these as tales—a realist tale, a critical tale, a deconstructivist tale, and a reflexive tale’ (1991, p. 128) and demonstrates how even these four approaches resist a singular definition when a deconstructivist approach to methodology is used. For example, her realist tale is reflexive, infused with ‘the ambivalence and open-endedness characteristics of non-dominating, non-coercive knowledges which are located, partial, embodied’ (pp. 134-5). With her critical tale, she provides two readings—one using hegemony theory and one drawing from deconstruction. She shows, through these very different approaches, how our readings of a text are grounded in our own constructions of knowledge, and why she sees it as being important to take a self-reflexive, politicised view of our research (and teaching).

Gough (2004), like Lather (1991), explores the different possibilities of how to approach writing in research, via analogies to crime fiction writing and SF (science fiction, science fantasy or speculative fiction). He argues that detectives/modernist researchers aim at uncovering ‘the truth’ and are concerned with epistemological (what?) type questions, while SF/postmodernist researchers are concerned with ontological questions (What is? What if? How?). Like others influenced by poststructuralism, he moves away from seeking a unitary truth, and is more interested in allowing for new possibilities and multiple meanings to emerge.

A poststructuralist interpretation, then, recognises and makes explicit the researcher’s partiality and the contextuality of the reading. It asks questions of (or reads) texts in order to seek possible meanings of the narrations, rather than the ‘what’ of the narrators’ stories, and explicates the situatedness of these discourses. It also highlights the fragility of ‘truth’ and the need to be transparent about other possible and different interpretations.
In summary, the analysis developed in this thesis examines the narratives rather than the narrators and reads their stories as texts. The intention is to gain insight into the process of learning to teach for these new teachers, and to illuminate their interactions with the recent educational climate of reform in New Zealand and internationally.

**Writing as a method of inquiry**

Through a recursive process of writing ... reading ... talking ... writing, I have been self-consciously employing ‘writing as a method of inquiry’ (Gough, 2004; Richardson, 2001; Richardson & St Pierre, 2005) since the beginning of the research process. This analytical process is well suited to my inquiry both epistemologically and methodologically, as it recognises the complexity and discursive nature of professional knowledge and resonates with Law’s (2003) argument for ‘making a mess with method’.

Richardson (2001, p. 34) sees the process of writing as a way of finding out about yourself and the world—‘a method of inquiry’. St Pierre (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 970) describes it as being both ‘a method of data collection ... and ... a method of data analysis ...’. She uses ‘writing as a method of data analysis by using writing to think’, referring to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980/1987) rhizomatic work in that connections across ideas and themes were made as she wrote. Inspired by the ideas of Giles Deleuze and Laurel Richardson, St Pierre describes her work as ‘nomadic inquiry’:

... a great part of that inquiry is accomplished in the writing because, for me, writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery (p. 967).

This is similar to Noel Gough’s (2004) example of his writing about four texts related to Ursula Le Guin’s novel, *The Telling*. He claims that he began with:

... no coherent focus or plan (and certainly not with any underlying structure in mind that resembled the orderly tree-like connections and articulations that characterise conventional Western ways of organising knowledge). Rather, a number of initially separate threads of meaning—requests, reflections, recollections and ruminations—coincided, coalesced, and eventually began to take shape as an object of inquiry (p. 158).
These representations of writing as inquiry capture, in part, how I have attempted to construct my analyses, using writing, not simply as a means for representation and repetition (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005), but as a process of discovery and meaning-making. This process of both interpreting and analysing presents a challenge because it does not involve following structured, systematic paths where data fits neatly into predetermined categories. However, it allows for unexpected changes in direction when moving recursively between various discourses.

In this study, writing has taken the form of: journal entries and notes in Endnote files—both descriptive and analytical—on readings about educational theory, methodological issues, beginning teacher research, socio-cultural issues and educational policy, responses to the readings and conversations, dilemmas and epiphanies as they relate to these; writing bits of thesis chapters—both methodological and thematic; emails between supervisors, fellow research students, colleagues and friends; and notes written after long conversations about the research or after listening to presentations about other research.

As with the process of learning to teach and negotiating the professional knowledge world, writing as inquiry can be messy, recursive, uncertain … yet I have found it to be a valuable strategy, one that enables meaning-making from the multiple discourses encountered during the research process.

**Research procedure**

The remainder of this chapter details the specifics of the research design, including the recruitment and selection process, the participants, the production of field texts and research texts, ethical protocols and procedures used to manage tensions arising during the research.

**Participants: access, selection, recruitment**

For this study, I interviewed, over a period of two years, nine recent graduates of New Zealand secondary teacher education programmes. Some of the teachers had been students in a teacher education programme in which I had taught and some I had not met previously. I approached teachers in their first year of teaching, who were working in schools in the region where I live and work. This region was chosen
because the schools where the teachers were working cover a wide spectrum of New Zealand society (in terms of their social-economic and ethnic make up), as well as for practical reasons of proximity.

I frequently remained in contact with graduates from the programme I managed, and I decided to approach a number of them in their first year of teaching in the early 2000s. These teachers were approached with a formal letter from me (see Appendix A), inviting them to participate in the research. The snowball method described by Middleton and May (1997) and Taylor (2001) was also used to attract further participants as I did not expect all of the teachers I first approached to be available for the research. This was done by providing those initially invited with additional copies of the plain language statement, to be distributed to other first year teachers. Letters were also sent to school principals asking them to pass the invitation on to their first year teachers.

My aim was to attract about 15 teachers, allowing a reasonable leeway if there were fewer teachers willing or able to participate. My justification for this number is based on my reading of similar studies and commentary on interviewing for studies concerned with a similar depth of understanding. Middleton and May (1997) interviewed 150 teachers from several generations, fairly intensely over two years, in order to explore their experiences and perspectives of education over the course of their lifetime (p. 11). They explain that this is a larger sample than has been used in most life-history research, which has usually relied on in-depth case studies of 12-30 people (for example, Clandinin & Connelly, 1995b; Taylor, 2001; Weiler & Middleton, 1999).

Kvale (1996) suggests that researchers should interview ‘as many … as necessary to find out what you need to know’ (p. 101) and that this number of participants will depend on the study’s purpose. Too small a number, he says, will mean ‘it is not possible to make statistical generalisations or to test hypotheses of differences among groups.’ (p. 102). If the number is too large, then it will not be possible to make an in-depth interpretation of the interview. He gives a number of examples as suggestions for the appropriate choice of sample size: one person (for a case study about the experience of one person); three girls and three boys (to test hypotheses about their comparative attitudes); 15 ± 10 people (for studies exploring and describing attitudes
in detail) and, he suggests continuing interviewing more people until further interviews yield little new knowledge; 1000 people if the goal is to predict the outcome of a national election. He discusses arguments for and against the generalisability of interview studies, and argues that the approach taken depends on the purpose of the research. As my qualitative study is intended to elicit teachers’ narratives, I was interested in analysing close up how meanings are made by the teachers and how professional knowledge discourses are negotiated, a moderate number of participants is justified.

Rather than adopt a broad sweep survey to see how a range of teachers negotiate professional knowledge and educational reform, the use of a relatively small sample was deliberate. The aim was to examine closely and deeply, rather than broadly, the intersection between biographical and professional processes. As with case study research (Stake, 1995), the illumination of issues through close up analysis, could generate other issues that could then be taken up in other studies. It thus opens up ways of exploring professional knowledge formation in other settings.

A total of 12 teachers agreed to participate and returned signed consent forms. However, two of these withdrew before the research began—one because she gave birth during the week of the first interviews and the other because she felt unable to give the time during the holidays, due to over-commitment and exhaustion. Therefore, I began the research with ten teachers participating. One of these withdrew in the second year of the study, because she was no longer in a teaching position. Approximately half of the teachers were known to me, through my professional work as a teacher educator and the others were graduates of other teacher education programmes around the country and I did not know them until the research began.

Table 1, below, provides some detail about the nine participants who remained in the study, and their schools. Two of the teachers were at the same school.

Andy, in his late thirties taught for just over a year in a fairly large suburban school in a high socio-economic area with mainly Pākehā pupils, but with a significant number of Māori and immigrant pupils. He moved to another school in his second year—again mainly Pākehā but with a significant Māori population. Andy teaches sciences
and mathematics. Prior to teaching he had a professional and management career in a large organisation.

Aroha is a young Māori woman who works in a largely Pākehā school, teaching in the social sciences. While she is one of only three Māori teachers at the school, she is comfortable at the school and supported as a new teacher. The school has a group of teachers who are committed to serving the needs of its small Māori population. It has developed strong links with local iwi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Estimated age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Description of school.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>Late 30s</td>
<td>Pākehā</td>
<td>Year one: Suburban school in a high socio-economic area with mainly Pākehā students and small but significant Māori and immigrant populations. Year two: Suburban school in a mid-high socio-economic area with mainly Pākehā students and a small but significant Māori population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aroha</td>
<td>Late 20s</td>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>Suburban school in a high socio-economic area with mainly Pākehā students and a small but significant Māori population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>Mid 40s</td>
<td>Pākehā</td>
<td>Suburban school in a high socio-economic area with mainly Pākehā students and a small but significant Māori population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>Early 40s</td>
<td>Pākehā</td>
<td>Suburban school in a low socio-economic area with a significant Māori population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jude</td>
<td>Mid 20s</td>
<td>Pākehā</td>
<td>Suburban school in a high socio-economic area with mainly Pākehā students and a small but significant Māori population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Mid 20s</td>
<td>Pākehā</td>
<td>Suburban school in a low socio-economic area with a multicultural population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Mid 30s</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>City school drawing on high socio-economic areas with mainly Pākehā students and a significant immigrant and international student population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>Early 30s</td>
<td>Pākehā</td>
<td>Suburban school in a low socio-economic area with a high Pasifika/Māori population.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Summary of participants and their schools

Christine also works in a large suburban school as a mathematics teacher. The school is in a relatively high socio-economic area with mainly Pākehā students, although there is a significant local Māori population. Christine has come into teaching after working as an industry trainer. Until she began teaching, she also spent much of her spare time as a community volunteer.

Iris returned to study after a long career in administration and teaches mainly humanities in a suburban school in a low socio-economic area. The school has a significant Māori population and a small but significant Pasifika population. The school has recently undergone a major restructure and is committed to providing the staff with the skills and knowledge to enable them to work effectively with its diverse student population.

Jude is a young Pākehā woman who teaches in the humanities area, including contributing to the school’s strong performing arts programme. This large school is located in a suburban area with a significant Māori population but is mainly middle-class Pākehā.

Paul, a young Pākehā humanities teacher, works in a suburban school in a low socio-economic area with significant Pākehā, Māori and Pasifika populations. The school is committed to providing its student with a range of options, and excels in sports and performing arts.

Robert, in his thirties, was raised and educated in Asia before immigrating to New Zealand where he completed a business related and teaching qualification. He teaches in both business and humanities, in a large, urban school with a high population of well-off Pākehā and Asian students. The school also has small but significant Māori and Pasifika population. It is focused on achieving excellent academic, sporting and cultural results.
Teresa worked in marketing and design before coming into teaching. During this study, she taught in a suburban multicultural school in a low socio-economic area, with mainly Pasifika and Māori students. She teaches in the technology and design field and is also involved in the sporting life of the school.

Tim has come into teaching from a previous career and teaches a range of science and technology subjects in a small, suburban, Catholic school. The school population draws on both high and low socio-economic areas and has significant numbers of Pasifika and immigrant/refugee students.

**Ethical issues**

A key to managing research in a practical and ethical way is to be constantly aware of potential risks, including protection of participants’ identity, cultural sensitivity and respect, the potential power conflict between researcher and researched, the potential to coerce and the potential for causing psychological or emotional distress.

In conducting any research in an ethical manner, it is important to be constantly aware of any potential, even if unintentional, harmful or disrespectful effects that the research could have upon participants. This requires being open and honest with participants and in all reporting of the research; and being sensitive to and respectful of individuals, groups, and organisations throughout the process of the research. To do this, I attempted to ensure that participants were fully informed about the research and the nature of their involvement, that they participated willingly and without coercion and were protected from harm (including harm from having their identity revealed), and that they went away from the research experience having gained some benefit from it.

The plain language statement, in the form of a letter (see Appendix A) provided details about the research, its purpose, rationale, design and about what was required of participants and the potential benefits to them if they chose to participate. An explanation was also provided about how confidentiality and anonymity would be managed and how I planned to protect their identity. Before proceeding with the
research, I obtained signed consent from participants stating their understanding of these details, including their right to withdraw at any time (see Appendix B). 22

In this study, a number of particular ethical issues arose, one of which was how to protect the identities of the teachers given the small population of newly graduated secondary school teachers in the region of the study (and, for that matter, within the small New Zealand population). This created a dilemma common to qualitative research particularly because of the importance in this research for the reader to gain a sense of the teachers’ professional context and elements of their biography that impact on their professional lives. Thus, while every effort has been made to protect the identities of the teachers, it has been necessary to provide background information about the teachers’, their schools, their teaching subject areas and their lives to ensure the quality of the close analysis of the narratives. Nevertheless some facts have been omitted or modified where they would reveal exactly who the teacher is. For example, in some instances the exact subject, ethnic profile, school profile, teacher education institution and life history of a teacher could indicate only one possible person. There are a number of teachers, principals and teacher educators who would be able to establish who this person is from what they know of me. It should be noted that the letter sent to participants alerted them to this risk (see Appendix A).

Further ethical issues for this study were how to manage my previous relationship as lecturer of some of the participants with my research relationship and the recruitment process, and how to manage my relationship with participants from very different social, cultural, educational and global experiences from mine. This is particularly relevant in New Zealand when Pākehā researchers work with Māori.

Because New Zealand is founded on a treaty between the Indigenous people and the Government, there has been significant writing about the question of who has the right to carry out research on/for/about whom, with regard for research that includes Māori participation and issues (Bishop & Glynn, 1992; Smith, 1999; 2005; Te

22 These procedures are consistent with the AARE and NZARE guidelines (both of which were necessary for this study) for ethical considerations in educational research, including protection of the participants’ identities, my commitment not to coerce, to gain informed consent and to respect the teachers involved.
Awekōtuku & Manatu Māori, 1991). This raises profound political and ethical issues for Pākehā researchers, such as myself, whose research may involve Māori participants or consideration of education for Māori pupils. For example, many argue that it is no longer acceptable for non-Māori to carry out research ‘on’ Māori about issues concerning Māori, unless they have been invited. A central concern here is about the voyeuristic possibilities and the opportunity for the imposition of culturally biased assumptions distorting the realities of those being ‘researched’—representing another form of colonisation. Furthermore, a good many Māori researchers are focused on carrying out research on their own terms, in ethical ways using kaupapa Māori\textsuperscript{23} theories or other approaches that are immersed in tino rangatiratanga.\textsuperscript{24} Discussions amongst Māori theorists about kaupapa Māori research methodology tend to centre around critical and post-colonial concerns, and are about Māori carrying out research, within a specific historical, political and social context, that analyses existing power structures and social inequalities for Māori (Smith, 1999). Kaupapa Māori theory is seen as an anti-positivist critique of power and inequality, and involves resistance and emancipation for Māori.

However, this thinking does not necessarily exclude a questioning (and in fact, I would argue it demands it) by Pākehā educational researchers and teachers’, such as myself, of our roles as Tiriti o Waitangi partners in challenging our own and others’ assumptions and actions regarding Māori education. Hence, for this study, I am committed to exploring cultural and social issues in Māori education from my perspective and those of the participating teachers as part of my examination of social, political and cultural issues in education.

One of the tensions and dilemmas I faced was how to fairly and ethically represent the narratives, tensions and dilemmas of Māori participants, as they negotiated essentialising and naïve and potentially racist discourses of colleagues. There is considerable awareness in New Zealand about researching in culturally diverse settings, in particular the practices of Pākehā carrying out research, which involves Māori, or non-Pasifika carrying out research involving Pasifika peoples. This was an

\textsuperscript{23} Kaupapa Māori research means Māori-centred research (Smith, 1999, p. 125).

\textsuperscript{24} Tino rangatiratanga means sovereignty and refers to the right of Māori determine their own destinies (Smith, 1999, pp. 109 and 173).
issue for me in this research and I was careful not to coerce participants to speak about experiences or views that were particular to their ethnic experience. Nevertheless, because of my interest in their perspectives and experiences and how they construct these, I was careful to allow opportunities for them to speak. In the second round of interviews, this was particularly fruitful (see Chapter Five for particular discussions).

Another ethical dilemma in this research was the participation of graduates from the teaching diploma course I managed. I was mindful of trying not to coerce their participation, communicating with them by formal letter with a clear requirement for the teachers to ‘opt in’ rather than ‘opt out’. Further, by the time this research was carried out, I had no official or informal role in their education or certification, so by not participating there was no risk to their professional progression or credential.

**Interviewing the teachers**

In order to gain insights into my research question, the main field texts were produced through what I call ‘conversational’ interviews (Freebody, 2003; Hollway & Jefferson, 2002; Kvale, 1996; Reinharz, 1992). As a way of documenting the interview process, I will now detail how these interviews were conducted and the way discussion topics were generated. My intention was to place these teachers into groups of five, and interview them once in the middle of their first year of teaching and again in the middle of their second year. However, due to the availability of the teachers in the school holidays, I formed three groups in the first year—one of two teachers, and two of four. In the second year, again because of availability, the groups had to be reformed. This was done with the agreement of each teacher. Two groups were formed—one of three teachers and one of four. The other two teachers were interviewed individually. This was unavoidable because one was not available in the holidays and the other had moved to a new region and I was able to visit him in his new town when I visited the area for another purpose.

The teachers were invited to participate in group interviews (rather than individual ones) because of my conviction that much learning can take place when teachers engage in conversations (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Wideen et al., 1998), and that this process can enhance professional growth (Doecke et al., 2000; Lather, 1991).
Through this process, the teachers involved became part of the retelling and reliving process, by listening to each others’ stories and sharing in the making of meaning. The individual interviews were a little different, but because of the conversational way in which the interviews were conducted, there was significant dialogue between the teachers and myself, allowing for a certain amount of joint meaning making. These conversations were suitable settings for the teachers to explore a range of topics related to the multiple discourses associated with their professional lives and, in themselves, allowed for further interactions between these discourses.

The interviews were held in a comfortable room, at my place of work (apart from the out-of-town interview which took place at the teacher’s workplace). This was a relatively neutral place and a familiar community and educational setting for all the participants. Refreshments were provided as a way of assisting in the development of a congenial atmosphere amongst the participants and having them interact informally and get to know each other a little. Also, the interviews were between two and four hours long and it allowed for sustenance and a break from talking and listening.

During the first interviews the participants were asked to talk freely around a number of themes related to the research question. Guiding themes were used to start each conversation, as listed below. The teachers were given a copy of the interview themes and questions in advance to enable them to reflect on what they might say prior to the interview (see Appendices C and D). The purpose of this was to promote richness in their narratives (Fontana & Frey, 2005) and to ensure that they were fully informed about what would be expected of them during the interviews. However, while the themes were designed to cover topics that were relevant or of interest to the teachers, they were also broad enough to provide freedom for the teachers as to what they would discuss.

The interviews were scheduled halfway through the year to allow time for the teachers to have begun to settle into their new profession, while being not too far into the year that they had forgotten their experiences and influences as they set out on their new careers.

Themes #1 - #3 were covered during the first set of interviews and Themes #4 - #6 were covered in the second set, a year later.
Theme #1 explored professional and political issues of concern for the teachers—related to curriculum, the national educational guidelines, assessment, and diversity. Theme #2 explored the teachers’ teaching philosophy, their own educational experiences, and the influences on their philosophy and professional knowledge. Theme #3 was about where the teachers saw themselves headed in terms of ongoing professional development and future teaching.

The second interviews began with an informal progress report from each teacher about any changes and about how their careers were progressing. Discussion then moved on to Theme #4, which revisited issues of concern to the teachers in their second year, and provided an opportunity for the teachers to update their perceptions of their teaching one year on. Theme #5 looked at current influences on their professional knowledge and practice, and Theme #6 updated their vision of where they saw themselves going in terms of ongoing professional development and future teaching. During these second interviews, I was a little more directive, than in the first interviews—partly because in the first year, the interviews had been a lot longer than predicted and I was aware of the time pressure on the teachers, and partly because I wanted to focus the teachers discussions more on the themes of the interviews. Again, the dilemmas this created will be discussed in more depth later.

The themes for the interviews were used as a guide to the conversations, and in all sessions, additional, related questions were added so that teachers could clarify or expand on their thinking. While the themes were not directly focused on the ‘competing discourses of professional knowledge’ that is the basis of this inquiry, they were intentionally aimed at allowing the talk/thinking to take its course with the teachers own ‘concerns’. This is in contrast to an alternative approach that uses directive or controlling tight interview schedule. Also, because of my ‘writing as inquiry’ approach (developed throughout the research process), my own clarity about how to ‘read’ the research texts formed and reformed during and after the interview process (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005)—‘writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a … method of discovery’ (St Pierre, 2005, p. 967).

During the interviews, each teacher was invited to speak to each theme or sub-theme, although in reality the interview was always conversational and interactive between those present—the participants and myself as researcher (Oakley, 1981). While, in
some groups there were teachers who were familiar with each other (having attended the same teacher education programme), other groups were less familiar. However, participants were encouraged to ask each other questions and enter into discussion about the points raised, and they were willing to do this. They also showed considerable respect for each others’ views, even when these differed from their own, and they listened carefully to others. This interaction enabled shared interpretation and production of narratives, and joint meaning making, finding new ways of understanding and seeing the issues or educational rhetoric under discussion (Convery, 1999; Doecke et al., 2000), as well as room for differing views.

During the interview process, my role was as a participant, facilitator and interviewer. However, while I contributed to the discussion, I was careful to maintain, as much as possible, a listening role (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

As I have noted previously, the teachers’ participation in the research was intended to provide an opportunity for them to explore current policies, ideas and practices in education. The third and sixth themes also aimed to allow for the teachers to identify their intentions for further professional development over the following years. This exploration of professional development opened up the conversations to some ‘what if?’ and ‘wish list’ talk, which may have been productive for the teachers. It also provided further data for me to ponder the teachers’ thinking concerning what was valuable or important for the negotiation of professional knowledge.

By interviewing the teachers in the first and second year of their careers, the intention was to gain insights into the differences and similarities of their concerns at these two stages—thereby providing some sense of the negotiation of the professional knowledge world over time, and during a formative period. It was also intended to shed light on what schools, teacher educators and teachers might consider in planning professional development for beginning teachers. However, this short time span provided only limited insights into changes between the two years of the research. Nevertheless, the two sets of interviews provide ample data to allow analysis of the teachers’ constructions of professional knowledge at this particular point of time in their careers. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed for analysis.
The opportunity to continue following these teachers beyond this study was not possible due to the time constraints of doctoral study, but would have been preferable, especially as most of the teachers would have become fully registered (and therefore not under particular scrutiny by senior teachers) at the end of their second year of teaching. This change in status might have given them greater freedom to speak and act within the teaching discourses they preferred rather than conform to those they see as necessary to ‘pass’ from provisionally registered teacher to fully registered teacher. A key finding, as discussed in Chapters Four and Five, was the delicate balance the teachers trod between speaking as fully included professionals and being careful not to jeopardise their chances of becoming technically registered, by speaking out of line and risking negative assessments of their teaching. Their awareness of this dilemma was not always spoken but it was evident in other ways—such as the expressed reluctance of some to question or assert themselves in their schools.

**Questions of validity**

Guba and Lincoln (2005) point out that there is considerable debate about what represents quality of interpretation in qualitative research. There is, however, a growing consensus that the stories that emerge from research are dependent on the standpoint of the researcher, as are the questions asked and the methodological approach taken. Given the widespread view that in qualitative research no method is neutral, I would argue that objectivity is never possible, even in examining the research procedure (Johnson, 2001). Thus the criteria for evaluating research are relative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln, and Merriam (2001), argue that in poststructural and feminist research, such as mine, reflexivity and multi-voiced text replaces objectivist criteria considered important in positivist and post-positivist paradigms (including internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity). Merriam suggests that each inquirer should search for and defend the criteria best suited to their work, and she suggests apparency, verisimilitude and transferability as possible criteria (p. 200). Nevertheless, she argues for the need to continue to defend internal validity, reliability, external reliability and ethics in research because such questions continue to be asked of researchers. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 24) similarly argue that ‘[t]erms such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity,
reliability and objectivity’. Richardson and St Pierre (2005, p. 963), in their discussion of validity, deconstruct the concept of ‘triangulation’ as using a range of methods for ‘validating’ findings. They prefer the concept of ‘crystallizing’ because the image is not a ‘rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object’ but one that ‘combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach’. This image better suggests poststructural understandings of knowledge and research and the kind of approach I have taken in this study.

However, I suggest that criteria for evaluating qualitative research should not be finite and fixed, but open-ended and articulated as partial, and that the lists of criteria represent the particular standpoints or biographies of the researcher. Given discussions of knowledge and the research process as socially determined and contestable, I do not see it as possible to use an absolute and fixed list of criteria to judge validity in my study. As part of the ongoing examination of the research process, such criteria need to be open to being challenged, changed and modified during the inquiry (Johnson, 2001; Smith & Hodkinson, 2005). Therefore, in attempting to maintain integrity, ethics and ‘rigour’ in this research, my social, political and cultural standpoint, and my relationships and interactions as researcher, with the participating teachers, the literature, the research texts, and discussions with other academics are articulated at several points throughout the thesis. These articulations or ‘criteria’ are tied up with both practical concerns, (such as questions about the selection of participants, and the relationship between the question, theoretical assumptions, and methodological choices) and ethical and methodological concerns (such as questions about whether the chosen methodology can achieve the intended goals, whether views of all participants are fairly represented).

I do not see it as possible in this research to be an objective observer and interpreter, who gathers, analyses and presents data as a single truth in order to establish generalisable theory from the research. Rather, I am a participant in the research, and someone whose own interactions with the teachers’ stories, those in the literature, discourses and professional debates are evident in educational settings.

In summary, qualitative research can produce tensions for the researcher, but these need not always be seen as negative or unproductive. As I have signalled, a number of
ethical and methodological dilemmas persisted throughout the study, and in some respects working through these proved productive for generating analysis. These key methodological dilemmas are threaded through the analysis in the following substantive chapters and can be summarised as follows.

There were tensions created by my being a researcher of ‘Other’ and the power relationships (both past and present) with the participating teachers—both those previously known to me and those with whom I was newly acquainted. Further, it is impossible to gain a clear insight into the inner thoughts of the individuals interviewed because of the situatedness of the narratives told and the interpretations of those narratives through lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity (Britzman, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; McLeod, 2000). I also faced the dilemma of wanting to reciprocate by offering the participating teachers an opportunity to engage in professional growth, and the desire to avoid assuming that this will happen in research set up and created by me, based on my understandings and assumptions (Ellsworth, 1992; Lather, 1991). Another dilemma was created by focusing the research on my choices and my interests, while trying to create a space for the teachers to talk about matters of concern to them. Finally, there were inevitably tensions created by my choice to privilege complexity, layering and multiple readings of the teachers narratives and the relationship of these to social, political and cultural issues in New Zealand education in the 21st century—and the difficulty of this approach to allow for clarity.

The aim of this chapter was to present the methodological underpinnings of my study. In the following three chapters I present my analysis and discussion of the teachers’ narratives, developing three main types of analysis.

Vignettes are drawn from the teachers’ narratives—including aspects of their life history, the stated influences on their thinking and practice, their experiences and representations of these. I use these vignettes to explore ways in which the teachers address professional, social, cultural and political issues in education—for example, equity discourses in educational policy and policy reform imperatives—and my evolving analysis of these.
Another type of analysis is the use of critical readings or deconstructions of the teacher narratives, and examinations of these in relation to a range of discourses, including the rhetoric of equity or the accountability environment in education. This type of critical reading is also developed in relation to examining the process of becoming a teacher. At times, the same excerpt has been used more than once. This is deliberate and illustrates how multiple layers of meaning can be interpreted within a single excerpt, and that analysis can accentuate different dimensions for different purposes. That is, the excerpts are examined in different ways to highlight different themes or aspects of teachers’ knowledge or identity formation.

Finally, I employ policy analysis to examine the current wave of education reform, as well as a case study of a particular reform to assessment. I consider the process of teachers’ professional knowledge formation in the context of those reforms.
Chapter Four: New teachers negotiating discourses of social justice, equality and difference

Introduction

Many factors contribute to new teachers’ professional knowledge. These include knowledge gained in formal settings, the accumulation of personal experiences, informal discussions with colleagues and pupils, wider political debates and policies related to education and social issues. In this chapter, I turn to consider the circulation of ideas concerning equality and difference that contribute—directly and indirectly—to the views held by teachers in this study and the formation of their professional knowledge. A key argument of this thesis is that, given the current direction of social and educational policy in New Zealand, it is urgent that we understand how dilemmas created by differing understandings of equality and fairness are negotiated by teachers.

The teachers’ narratives include frequent reference—sometimes implicit, others explicit—to ideas associated with equity and social justice in their teaching and schools. As they articulated their teaching philosophy and aims, their conversations called on a range of understandings associated with these concepts. The teachers’ narratives also indicated that they were grappling with policies and standards associated with an accountability culture that is increasingly directed towards achieving ‘equity standards’.

Concepts of social justice and equality have been a major focus of political philosophy and ideas, and continue to be addressed in social and educational policy. Debates about these concepts are relevant to this study because they form part of the discursive and political context that shapes educational thinking. Such ideas have also played an important part in New Zealand’s social and political history, as well as in the educational policies that emerge from this context. In this chapter, I examine teachers’ negotiation of these concepts and related discourses in their professional practice.

The chapter is divided into three sections:

- *A critical analysis of selected and influential debates about social justice, equality and difference*. This analyses macro cultural discourses that teachers in this study
encounter and explores some of the contemporary discourses that attempt to explain the relationships between justice, sameness, equality and difference.

- **Educational ‘myths’ of equality in New Zealand.** This section links these discourses with educational policy and historical ideologies in the New Zealand context.

- **Negotiating discourses of social justice, equality and difference.** This examines the teachers’ narratives to illustrate how what might be regarded as typically divergent political and conceptual debates concerning social justice and neo-liberal audit cultures are negotiated by new and practising teachers.

The first two sections of this chapter thus aim to illustrate the juxtaposition of equity policies, contemporary debates about social justice, equality and difference, and the accountability standards that dominate much of teachers’ work. This provides a context for the final section, which analyses teachers’ reflections on their practice and how they juggle the multiple and dominant discourses embedded in the policies and ideas they encounter in their professional lives. As such, this final section is a close-up analysis of teachers meaning-making of important macro-level issues in education.

**A critical analysis of selected and influential debates about social justice, equality and difference**

Debates about the meanings and effects of social justice have been central to much contemporary political, social and feminist theory, particularly over the last two to three decades. These have included theoretical and political discussions about the relationships between the terms ‘difference’, ‘sameness’, ‘equality’ and ‘inequality’, alongside critiques of traditional or modernist approaches to meaning, identity and difference (Weedon 1999). My aim in this section is to give an overview of recent select key debates about these matters. I argue that such debates and understandings infuse the professional discourses that teachers negotiate in their daily lives, and thus contribute to the formation of teachers’ professional knowledge. For new teachers, including those in my study, this shaping of knowledge occurs in particularly intense ways as they make sense of the many ideas and issues they encounter early in their careers.
I begin by tracing some influential understandings of social justice and equality, drawing particularly, but not exclusively from feminist debates. While it is not possible in this thesis to consider the full range of potentially relevant philosophical debates, I address central elements of these debates as a way of locating teachers’ understandings in the wider socio-cultural and political context in which educational ideas form and circulate. This is not intended to be an in-depth analysis of historical or philosophical shifts in meaning but is offered as a review aimed at examining the present political landscape and the use of these terms in policy, in political and feminist theory and in educational professional practice.

**Equality of opportunity, equality of outcomes and equity**

Taking the position that these ideas are not fixed or stable, my discussion firstly explores readings and constructions of ‘equality’ and the associated concepts of inequality, difference and sameness. A number of writers have mapped changing understandings and (re)conceptualisations of social justice and education, and the relationships between the two (Bacchi, 1996; Beeby, 1986; Blackmore & McLeod, 2001; Burbules, 1997; McInerney, 2004; Renwick, 1986; Scott, 1994; Weedon, 1999; Yates, 1998).

A central focus of many discussions about ‘equality’ and ‘equity’ is whether equality means the same treatment or if it allows for differential treatment in order to compensate for pre-existing inequalities. This is a persistent dilemma for educational policy and professional discussions, and one of the key dilemmas that teachers (and many other social practitioners) grapple with. That is, how is equality related to sameness—is it a matter of treating everyone the same and according the same rights? How is difference understood—as exclusion, deficit or as ‘Othering’? And, are there alternative ways of considering and working with these concepts?

The rhetoric of ‘equality of opportunity’ and policies based on this, such as the deliberate intervention of bussing black students in the USA to traditionally white schools and vice versa, acknowledges that some groups of people are disadvantaged
by their economic, social or ethnic circumstances. However, because of power, economic and cultural relationships, policies and practices based on this idea are often inadequate for reducing inequality for groups and individuals who have few resources to start with (Cheyne et al., 2005; Renwick, 1986; Yates, 1998). In the case of students in the USA, the continuing contrasts between predominantly black urban and white suburban schools, suggests that in practice integration does not necessarily result in changes to inequalities (Balkin, 2001). In contrast, arguments that focus on ‘equal outcomes’, such as equal employment opportunities and affirmative action policies, are based on the premise that differential treatment, rather than the same treatment, is necessary to address prior and current inequalities (Aristotle, 350 B.C. (trans W.D Ross 1925); Beeby, 1986; Gewirtz, 2003; Scott, 1994). This latter approach is usually referred to as ‘equity’, rather than ‘equality’ (Gewirtz, 2003) and this is how the term (equity) is used in this chapter. (Interestingly, Aristotle proposed a similar concept in his writing on ‘justice’ as equity, arguing that treating people equally (or the same) can be unfair if they are unequal in the first place (Aristotle, 350 B.C. (trans W.D Ross 1925)).

Nevertheless, an underlying assumption of policies based on both equality and equity is that it is preferable for all groups and individuals to assimilate into the dominant culture of educational institutions and society. This, in turn, is underpinned by a belief that such entities are culturally and structurally neutral, representing the ‘norm’ (Blackmore & McLeod, 2001). I argue, however, that it is precisely conceptions of the ‘norm’ which are problematic, as they do not necessarily reflect the values, experiences and beliefs of everyone. Recent feminist and poststructural debates about identity also question the existence of, for example, one type of ‘woman’ or shared characteristics for all members of one ethnic group (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Gilbert, 2005; Scott, 1992; Yates, 1998) and that ‘categories’ of identity are socially and culturally shaped (Scott, 1992; Weedon, 1999). Burbules (1997) similarly argues, for example, that invoking categories such as race raises questions such as: what constitutes a racial category? How do you define a race? Who belongs to what

25 The bussing policy came about from a view that racial integration would address educational inequalities (prior to this in the USA racially segregated schools were seen as part of a ‘different but equal’ view). This followed a ruling in the Brown versus Board of Education cases of 1954-55 (Balkin, 2001)
groups? And how do nationality, gender, ethnicity, and so forth articulate with race? Such categories of difference are therefore not self-evident and clear-cut but instead are culturally contingent and blurred.

Scott argues that there is no single ‘identity’ of ‘woman’, ‘black’ and so on, and that we need to examine the ways subjectivities are produced, the ways in which race and ethnicity intersect with gender, and the ways politics organises and interprets experience (1992, p. 31). In educational and social policy, one influential response to such analyses of identity is the development of policies and practices that attempt to be inclusive of difference and diversity (Burbules, 1997; Weedon, 1999).

**Difference and equality**

Definitions of equality and equity, and debates about the ability of policies based on such understandings to be inclusive of differences, are well ingrained in educational and social discourses.

To take a contemporary example, in the lead up to the 2005 New Zealand general election, the two major political parties’ tax policies illustrated some of the uses and effects of categories of difference in presenting arguments for equality. The conservative National Party proposed across the board tax reductions for all workers, while the Labour Party proposed tax relief for workers on low and middle income and with children, as well as other targeted financial relief. The National Party saw social justice as a matter of treating all workers the same while Labour saw it as treating them differently, depending on their need (as perceived by the Government). Both these approaches are promoted as representing equality, but the understandings of ‘equality’ differ.

Policies that are based on a philosophy of equality of opportunity, such as the National Party’s tax policy, assume that everyone should receive the same benefits, whatever their economic, social or cultural circumstances. This policy proposes equal provision for everyone (regardless of family commitments) within the same income brackets (similar to that offered in the 2006 Australian budget) by providing, arguably, unneeded increased income for the well-off, as well as some relief for middle and low income earners. Thus it is unequal on the basis of outcome or need
and is therefore, in my view, an example of an unfair approach to addressing social inequities.

In contrast, policies and practices based on a philosophy of equal outcomes, such as those that have dominated New Zealand educational and social policy since the late 1980s, are intended to address inequities. Such policies argue for differentiation of resources largely on the basis of categories of difference such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, race and ability. The Labour Party’s targeted tax policy, introduced in 2006 which offers much needed relief for ‘middle and low-income’ New Zealand families (as well as interest-free repayments of student loans), is an example of this. However, those considered as not being ‘in need’—workers without children and high-income earners—receive no reduction in tax. The aim of such a policy is to address imbalances in equity on the basis of need. Unfortunately, the policy also excludes other groups in need—in particular, those on unemployment or sickness benefits, illustrating a point made by Scott (1994) that policies based on differential treatment, can invoke dissent because they have the potential to produce inclusions and exclusions. The central challenge here is how to address inequities in society and continue to be fair to others, and how to make decisions about the basis for the formulation of policies aimed at producing equitable outcomes.

A further problem in promoting equality by differentiating need on the basis of categories of difference is the risk of the categories being constructed as essential and fixed. Viewing categories as immutable has the potential to set up groups or individuals as victims inherently in need of special help (thus positioning them as ‘Other’). Weedon (1999) points out that such constructions have the potential to position some ‘differences’ as inferior. Burbules (1997, p. 101) also argues that categorical identifications embedded in social policies tend to become static and reified (p. 101), and that because particular categories are regarded as important, they become more significant than others. Thus there appears to be a hierarchy of differences, with some categories of difference elevated above others (for example, gender above race) (Young, 1990).

Additionally, thinking of difference in terms of sameness (that is, thinking of people within particular categories as having the same characteristics, needs and experience) obscures the differences within categories (Burbules, 1997; Scott, 1994) and suggests
that differences are deviations from a norm. An alternative way of viewing difference is to start with ‘difference as a general condition’ (Burbules, 1997, p. 102). This argument is elaborated in the next section.

I have presented here examples of problems that can arise if equality is placed in opposition to difference or if equality is viewed as ‘sameness’. In her exploration of the relationships between equality and difference, Scott (1994) critiques debates, including those by some feminists, which do this. Tracing the historical contexts and meanings of the terms since the 1960s, she argues that a false binary arises when calls for equality appeal for differences to be ignored. She further argues that calls for differences to be considered appeal for a focus on needs, interests and characteristics to be recognised, and that this creates a dilemma. On the one hand, ignoring difference can produce a ‘faulty neutrality’, where everyone is treated the same (despite inequalities in status, power and resources), leading to inequities being perpetuated. On the other, focusing on difference can highlight the ‘deviance’ or ‘deficit’ of the particular differences (Scott, 1994, pp. 288-289).

Both these understandings—ignoring and focusing on difference—highlight the risk of ‘Othering’ individuals and groups not belonging to the dominant groups. Scott (1994) calls for new ways of thinking about difference and equality that reject this simple and misleading opposition. She calls for further explorations of how the dichotomous pairing works—unmasking the power relationships constructed by posing equality as the antithesis to difference—and/or a refusal of the resulting dichotomous construction of political choices (p. 293). She rejects views of equality as ‘sameness’ (such as ‘equality of opportunity’), and sees difference as disrupting fixed binaries. Thus, she argues that equality is the antithesis to inequality, while difference is the antithesis to sameness. This understanding enables us to see how equality and difference can coexist, without falling into the trap of understanding equality as sameness or difference as inequality.

The teachers in this study may not have engaged directly with the philosophical or feminist debates presented here about difference, sameness and equality. Nevertheless, such ideas have been extremely influential in public debate and policy, and can be seen as infiltrating indirectly, the professional contexts and knowledge of teachers. As I show below, the teachers’ narratives revealed struggles with their own
and other beliefs about these ideas. Later in the chapter, I examine how such struggles contributed to the formation of professional knowledge.

**Systems of thinking about difference**

Following Scott (1994), Bacchi (1996; 1999) and Burbules (1997), I argue that educational discussions about equality and social justice require new ways of thinking about difference. This is needed, in order to better address policy and practice dilemmas (Bacchi, 1999) and is based on a belief that education is a conversation about difference (Burbules 1997). This view challenges political and philosophical theories that rest solely on differences between people, based on definable categories such as socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation. This kind of thinking is what Bacchi (1996) refers to as ‘category politics’. Alternative systems of thinking about difference are required and there is a need to step back and examine, not what categories mean, but the relationships involved, the multiple ways that difference can be deployed, and how we use our understandings of categories for political means (Bacchi, 1996, 1999; Burbules, 1997).

I further argue that categories of difference shape and construct identity and experience—that is, they actually shape what they seek to describe (Bacchi, 1999; Blackmore & McLeod, 2001; Burbules, 1997). This creates a dilemma for policy of how to address social, economic, cultural differences without ‘Othering’ via categorisation. The concern here is that differences might be presented in policy in ways that position some categories as inferior (Bacchi, 1999; Scott, 1994; Weedon, 1999), that is, that understandings of difference based on categories risk characterising non-dominant groups or individuals as being different from or inferior to a dominant norm (Burbules, 1997). This kind of thinking risks the creation of inclusions and exclusions because it depends on distinguishing differences from or between categories. An alternative to this is to view equality as requiring recognition, respect and inclusion of differences (Burbules, 1997; Scott, 1994).

In outlining the different uses of ‘difference’, Burbules seeks to avoid, firstly, categorising individuals and groups according to different characteristics and, secondly, lines of argument that use categorical systems for viewing difference. He describes such systems of thinking as ‘difference as diversity’. In this he includes
difference as: ‘variety’—that is, referring to different kinds within a particular category (such as different national identities); ‘difference in degree’—or different points on a continuum of quality (such as skin colour or intelligence in the ‘IQ’ sense); ‘variation’—a different combination of and emphasis on certain elements (such as different states of disability); ‘different versions or interpretations’—of the same key elements (such as might happen with enactments of sexual identity); or ‘analogy’—that is, as relative to some comparable or parallel standard.

Like Bacchi (1999), Burbules (1997) considers the political implications of such understandings and uses of difference, and what he sees as the resulting politics of liberal tolerance, categorical welfare policies, and weak forms of multiculturalism. He views such policies and strategies as promoting arguments for ‘sameness’, which actually function to ignore differences and inequalities within categories, and risk continued unequal outcomes for some individuals and groups. Burbules (1997, p. 106) sees the five ways of thinking about difference described above as providing an incomplete explanation of difference, because they refer to the difference between or from external points of comparison and contrast, rather than as ‘elements of enacted, lived identity’. He argues that, while they have ‘some usefulness in helping us understand a range of ways in which people make differentiations within a discourse of diversity’, they are limiting. Therefore, he proposes three more productive ways of thinking, which he refers to as ‘relational systems of thinking about difference’. These provide fruitful alternatives for understanding the ways some new teachers talk about their negotiation of educational and discourses associated with equity.

Burbules calls the first of his three relational ways of thinking about difference ‘difference beyond’. This includes difference within a particular category or framework as well as challenges to that framework. He explains this understanding as being what we might experience with differences beyond our experience or comprehension, such as an encounter with an ‘Other’. His next way of thinking about difference—‘difference within’—suggests and accepts that categories are never entirely stable and ‘provides latitude for understanding how difference is enacted; how people express differences, play with them, transgress them, cross borders between them’ (p. 107). Finally, ‘difference against’ may be created when groups
actively try to differentiate themselves from a norm. This view directly challenges or critiques assumptions of a dominant discourse or set of experiences.

‘Difference against’ can be viewed as a form of political identity and as a challenge to existing relations of power and inequality. In New Zealand the concept of ‘tino rangatiratanga’ (Māori self-determination and authority of their own affairs) can be viewed in this way. This concept is a guiding principle of the Tiriti o Waitangi and is commonly enacted in modern times as an underpinning philosophy for Māori organisations as well as through policy (Cheyne et al., 2005). It provides an alternative framework for Māori to question the normalising effects of categorical politics on them as Indigenous people.

Burbules (1996) and Bacchi’s (1996; 1999) relational ways of thinking about difference assume difference to be the antithesis to sameness (similar to Scott 1994) and also propose that ‘difference’ is an inherent feature of individual and collective identities. These arguments challenge liberal versions of pluralism that emphasise tolerance and understanding across diverse views of difference that are portrayed as stable and defined, and, rather, view difference and debate or contradictory viewpoints as integral to relationships. These relational approaches to exploring difference and sameness also offer directions for political and social change not only through critiquing existing rhetoric in social policy but also by providing an alternative conceptual and political language.

Policy measures to address social and economic inequalities, which are based on categories of difference (such as New Zealand’s education policies), have the benefit of raising awareness of inequalities for particular groups of people. Yet, decisions about who is unequal, whether differential treatment is fair and if so, who or which groups should receive it, generate profound ethical challenges for policymakers, governments and teachers. Teachers’ recognition of actual or potential inequalities raises questions for them about what constitutes fairness, about what is regarded as fair or just in relation to schooling, and who decides. Such issues arise daily in their professional practice—both in the classroom and within teachers’ professional communities.
Chapter Four: Social justice, equality and difference

**Justice and difference**

Definitions of justice, as with the other key concepts discussed here, are socially and culturally constituted (Lucas, 2003; McInerney, 2004). However, there have been many attempts to establish universal principles and definitions, from Aristotle (350 B.C. (trans W.D Ross 1925)) to Rawls (McInerney, 2004). Claims for justice are frequently based on socio-economic arguments and the distribution of resources, goods and services, such as Rawls’ (1973) ‘justice as fairness’. Rawls (1973) points out that while the key role of justice concerns distribution of goods, services and rights, justice cannot be assessed by its distributive role alone and that we must take account of wider connections to social and economic circumstances and political systems. Nevertheless, his theory is largely concerned with the distributive dimension of social justice.

More contemporary and feminist debates, however, view justice as being multi-faceted and plural (Fraser, 2005; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Young, 1990). Justice is understood as not only about the politics of redistribution but also about the politics of recognition. Two key protagonists in these debates are Nancy Fraser (2005) and Iris Marion Young (1990). They argue that a socio-economic understanding of justice is based on the principles of fair distribution of resources and, on its own, ignores crucial dimensions of justice, such as recognition of differences.

Fraser (2005) argues that there are typically two types of arguments used about justice—those based on socio-economic redistribution (concerned with economic equality) and those based on legal or cultural claims (concerned with recognition of difference). Fraser argues that both these dimensions—distributive and recognitional—need to be considered when attempting to address inequalities. She thus challenges understandings of justice that relate only to distributive equality. More recently, she has revised her earlier model of justice to include a third dimension, which she calls ‘political’ or ‘representational’ justice.

Young (1990) takes a different stance, arguing that theories of justice such as Rawls’, have the tendency to universalise experience and that they are too abstract to be useful. Instead, she argues that rather than ‘focusing on distribution, a conception of justice should begin with the concepts of domination and oppression (p. 3)’. She does
not reject distribution as a concern of justice, but confines it to material goods such as things, money or natural resources. She argues that social justice is also shaped by matters to do with power, identity, status, cultural hierarchies and with a concern to prevent exploitation and marginalisation of powerless people. Young presents a framework, which she calls ‘an enabling conception of justice (p. 39)’. She proposes a set of criteria by which social justice can be conceived, referring to these as the ‘five faces of oppression’: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. This, she argues, recognises differences between the types of injustices experienced by different groups, without devaluing the groups or ranking the oppressions. It provides a plural explication of the concept of oppression by recognising that difference is multiple, cross-cutting, fluid and shifting (p. 48). Thus, she argues that particular differences need to be promoted to address injustices.

Gewirtz’ (1998) explanation of justice builds on the work of Young (1990) and on Fraser’s earlier work (1997, cited in Gewirtz 1998). She too argues that understandings of justice need to include more than the distributive dimension. She views both ‘equality of opportunity’ and ‘equality of outcomes’ as based on ‘distributive justice’ (or socio-economic justice). She describes equality of opportunity as a ‘weak’ liberal version of social justice, which requires certain conditions to be met in order to be effective, such as equal formal rights, equality of access or equality of participation. An example of this would be that all pupils have access to attend their local school (this is a right of all children in New Zealand). Equality of outcomes is described as a more radical and ‘strong’ liberal view and relies on direct intervention. Examples of this would be the differential treatment evident in some recent New Zealand social policies, aimed at preventing disadvantage and achieving equal rates of educational success, health and welfare. Gewirtz, drawing on Lynch (1995), argues that these conceptualisations of equality are, however, limited because they do not confront hierarchies of power, wealth and privilege.

Gewirtz (1998) identifies three dimensions of ‘equity’ (which she indicates is a term she uses interchangeably with ‘justice’). These are ‘distributive justice’, cultural justice’ and ‘associational justice’. These are similar to Fraser’s (2005) ‘economic justice’, ‘recognition justice’ and ‘the political’. Distributive or economic justice
refers to principles for distributing goods to society and includes what Fraser refers to as the absence of exploitation, economic marginalisation or deprivation. However, according to Gewirtz, this dimension can also include distribution of cultural or social resources (or cultural and social capital) (Gewirtz, 2003). Cultural or recognitionist justice refers to a recognition of and respect for cultural and identity differences (Gewirtz, 2003). Fraser (2005) sees this as the absence of cultural domination, non-recognition or invisibility, and disrespect.

Fraser’s (2005) third dimension of justice—the political—concerns the ‘stage on which struggles over which distribution and recognition are played out’. Similarly, Gewirtz’ associational justice underpins economic and cultural justice and is described as the absence of ‘patterns of association amongst individuals and amongst groups which prevent some people from participating fully in decisions which affect the conditions within which they live and act’ (Power & Gewirtz, 2001, p. 41). Gewirtz emphasises this dimension as being relational—about understanding the ‘cultural rules’—political, social, economic practices and procedures.

These accounts of justice, equality and difference offer useful lines of analysis for examining how teachers address and respond to calls for equity and fairness in their daily professional lives. Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) challenge those who critique policy ‘from above’ without considering how teachers can address practical difficulties in implementing socially just practices. My study aims to contribute to this conversation by documenting and analysing new teachers’ negotiation of ideas and debates about educational and social justice, diversity and associated policies in New Zealand.

Relational constructions of difference and equality are particularly important for my analysis because they challenge unitary, stable conceptualisations and better enable a recognition of difference as inherent in equality. However, categorical and distributive constructions remain relevant to the study because of its focus on the ways in which teachers construct and negotiate all understandings of difference and equality, including those more explicitly connected to socio-economic and material inequality. Further, such understandings remain influential, especially in educational policy and political debates, as illustrated in the example of two differing tax policies described earlier in this chapter.
I will now give a brief overview of the educational ‘myths’ and narratives that have guided educational policy in New Zealand.

**Educational ‘myths’ of equality in New Zealand**

This section examines the changing historical engagement with ideas about justice, equality and difference in New Zealand educational and social policy, particularly over the last 15 years of educational reform. The purpose of this discussion is to provide some historical context for the current climate in which the teachers in my study work, and some of the heritage of the ideas they address as they attempt to enact educational policy that is framed in the language of diversity and equality.

**‘Survival of the fittest’ versus ‘equality of opportunity’**

In New Zealand, prevailing ideologies in educational policy since the 1870s, can be mapped alongside major international shifts in social policy and in relation to discourses of social justice, equality and diversity in education. The first New Zealand Education Act of 1877 reflected the laissez-faire philosophy of the time (Lee & Lee, 1999). Education mirrored the existing social system (Cheyne et al., 2005) by providing differentiated education to students in schools based on class, race and gender. The elite were prepared for university while those students whose vocation was seen as being in the trades or labouring were discouraged from attending secondary school (the school leaving age was 13 but was gradually raised to 16 over the next 100 years) (Lee & Lee, 1999). Thus, on the whole, lower class children and Māori were prepared for domestic service (girls) and manual labour (boys). Renwick and Beeby refer to this time as being founded on an educational ‘myth’ (philosophy) of the ‘survival of the fittest’ (Beeby, 1986; Renwick, 1986).26

After the economic depression in the 1920s and 1930s, the first Labour Government carried through on its 1935 election promise to respond to inequalities and poverty, by introducing the Social Security Act of 1938. This led to a welfare state with the declared aim of ‘equality of opportunity’, evident in the provision of free or

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26 Beeby (1986, p. xv) uses the term ‘educational myth’ as he explains: ‘Each generation creates, or simply assumes, its own educational myths and its own unattainable but approachable goals, with at least the appearance of permanence, on which to build its plans for education.’
subsidised education, health, housing and financial security.\footnote{See my earlier discussion in Chapter One, of Beeby/Fraser’s 1939 statement of educational intent.} In a recent speech to educational leaders (Maharey, 2006), the current Minister of Education, Steve Maharey claimed that the Beeby/Fraser vision is still representative of New Zealand’s educational tradition, with its emphasis on every child receiving a free education by right so that they may reach their full potential. The policies of the 1930s were a reaction to the inequalities generated by the ‘survival of the fittest’ philosophy, which actively produced unequal opportunities for students, depending on their race, class or gender. The survival of the fittest ideology, however, still persists to some extent today and remains ingrained in educational thinking, particularly through the revival of such ideas in the current neo-liberal economic environment. Nevertheless (as will be discussed later) alternative constructions of equality compete, and it has been severely weakened by subsequent ‘myths’ (Beeby, 1986).

In the years following the Second World War, New Zealand was relatively prosperous, enabling further development of its welfare state. Large areas of quality state housing were built during the 1950s and 1960s, and health, education and basic foods were heavily subsidised; a ‘family benefit’ was available for the mother of each child up to the age of 18 years, while they were financially dependent, and welfare payments were available for unemployment and sickness (Duncan & Worrall, 2000).

In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, growing political action from new social movements was commonplace in New Zealand, as it was internationally. These political actions were inspired by, for example, the feminist and civil rights movements, anti-war protests (in reaction to US President McCarthy’s draconian policies), opposition to the Korean War, and USA, Australia and New Zealand’s involvement with the war in Vietnam). Political action\footnote{Details of this information can be found at New Zealand History Online, at <www.nzhistory.net.nz> (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, n. d.).} also included New Zealand involvement in the anti-apartheid movement including widespread boycotting of South African products and unprecedented civil disobedience and police violence during protests against the tour in 1981 by the South African Springbok rugby team. There has also been ongoing environmental action by both New Zealand citizens and politicians including protests against French nuclear testing in the Pacific and the refusal of successive governments...
to accept nuclear ships in New Zealand coastal waters. Political action has also
included movements aimed at bringing about individual freedom and freedom for
oppressed groups, such as anti-racist groups, actions to reclaim Māori owned land
under the Tiriti o Waitangi, actions leading to reform to the human rights legislation
that reduced discrimination against homosexuals and lesbians, and ‘reclaim the night’,
anti-rape protests.

In New Zealand, there was a strong focus on gender equality in the 1970s and 1980s,
and also on justice for Māori under the Tiriti o Waitangi (especially from the mid
1970s). Tiriti o Waitangi issues have dominated since then, although equality for
other categories of difference has also continued to be sought in education, health
and/or social policy (particularly on the basis of ethnicity—especially Pasifika—
gender and ability) (Cheyne et al., 2005).

During the 1980s and 1990s, especially, constructions of equality based on categories
of difference were influential in raising awareness and bringing about policy and
funding changes in New Zealand education—for girls, for Māori, for students from
lower socio-economic groups, and for special needs students. This way of thinking
still holds for much educational policy in the early 21st century. For example, the
National Administration Guidelines 29 outlined in the Education Act 1989 specifically
identify the needs of these groups (Māori and Pasifika students were added in the
revised 1999 Guidelines), although pressure from right wing political parties has led
to a weakening of many affirmative action policies.

Since the 1970s, there has been increasing recognition that access to education and
social justice is still lacking for some groups and individuals. Similarly, a strong
ideology of ‘equality of opportunity’ continues to assume that everyone needs to
respond to the dominant cultural values of our institutions. In the late 1970s and early
1980s, essentialising and assimilationist assumptions of equality constructed around
categories of difference were also challenged in New Zealand. For example, criticism
and anger came from groups such as Māori, and lesbian feminists, who called for an
acknowledgement of heterogeneity within categories. Anti-racist groups—both Māori

29 A more detailed discussion of this can be found in the Chapter One.
and non-Māori—began working through Tiriti o Waitangi injustices, and there were a number of high profile, often bitterly fought, land protests, including prolonged occupation of disputed land.  

This action and the Royal Commission on Social Policy (1988) led to, amongst other things, the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal, to address past wrongs under the Tiriti o Waitangi (including land and sea ownership, language preservation, educational and health equity, access and ownership of fisheries and broadcasting …). Another major outcome of the RCSP was the inclusion, in all social policy and subsequent legislation, of objectives related to the Tiriti o Waitangi and equity (as defined on the basis of categories of difference). However, Cheyne et al. (2005) point out that since the 1999 Labour-Alliance Government came to power, these policies have broadened to include Pasifika and some low-income people, thereby diminishing their specific attention to Tiriti o Waitangi issues.

As yet, there is little articulation in policy of the possibility of difference within these categories, despite clear messages, especially from some groups of Māori, about the need for such conceptualisations (Cheyne et al., 2005). A further problem has been identified with the essentialising nature of policies based on categories of difference. This is illustrated in recent debates on educational policy in New Zealand that provides differential treatment for some groups of students considered to be disadvantaged. Some critics have argued that differential treatment amounts to special treatment and that this ends up disadvantaging the so-called ‘neglected’ group—the one that does not receive the ‘special’ treatment. Such arguments have been particularly common in relation to gender equity, with renewed arguments against differential treatment for girls and claims that boys are now failing (Education Review Office, 1999). Instead of differential treatment for some groups, many now argue equality means everyone should be treated the same. Such arguments have influenced

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30 This included the 1975 Māori ‘Land March’ to Parliament, beginning in the far north of the country, and the reoccupation of disputed Māori land at Bastion Point on prime real estate in Auckland. There have been similar occupations in more recent years, for example, in Wanganui City and Urewera National Park.

31 The RCSP highlighted social injustices and recommended changes to New Zealand social policy that took account of the Tiriti o Waitangi and inequalities affecting a variety of groups, particularly Māori.

32 While the achievement of many girls has improved in most areas, boys achievement has not changed (Rutledge, 2000).
changes in many policies, for example, the removal of Māori and Pasifika teaching scholarships by the Labour Government in response to the conservative opposition, National Party, whose members call for equality not to be race-based; controversial changes enacted by the Labour Government in 2004 which removed Māori customary rights to land in favour of Crown ownership of the foreshore and seabed; and, more recently, the draft revised National Curriculum, that had most references to the Tiriti o Waitangi removed.\(^3^3\)

As documented above, there are well-established critiques of categorical representations of difference. Nevertheless, the influence of categorical thinking persists in initiatives and policies and it has been fundamental to much thinking about social justice, equality and difference for several decades in New Zealand. Therefore, it is not surprising that the teachers in my study were clearly grappling with associated dilemmas and contradictions as part of their negotiation of professional knowledge, educational reform and learning to teach.

**Equity, marketisation and accountability—conflicting discourses?**

The former education secretary, Clarence Beeby (1986), has characterised New Zealand’s education system in the 1980s as dominated by an ‘educational myth’ of equality of results, and as a response to what he saw as the failures of the ‘equality of opportunity’ ideology that he was influential in bringing into educational policy in 1939.

The move away from rhetoric about ‘equality of opportunity’ and towards ‘equality of results’ or, in today’s language, ‘outcomes’, is similar to what Blackmore and McLeod (2001) characterise as the rise of the ‘language of equity’. Constructions of equality have changed to include recognition by some educationalists and social commentators that the provision of different resources is necessary to provide socially just outcomes to students who began with unequal access and family resources.

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\(^{33}\) However, at the same time this curriculum attempts to recognize New Zealand’s diverse student population, encouraging teachers to address the implications of this in their teaching. It should also be noted that submissions on this draft have led to Tiriti o Waitangi commitments being included in the final version of this curriculum statement.
The orientation to achieving equitable outcomes, alongside global shifts in economic ideology saw attempts by successive New Zealand governments of the 1980s and 1990s to move away from the welfare state, subsidies and centralised control of administration (including education). The resulting marketised system emphasises individual choice and responsibility for education. The educational policy reforms that followed from this major economic ideological change in New Zealand constructed education as a commodity to be traded, alongside others, in the marketplace (Clark, 2005).

As well as the ‘market’ ideology, these educational reforms were driven by an ‘equity’ ideology, which led to differential social policies based on categories of difference. This co-incidence of policy orientations created tensions between two potentially conflicting ideologies. Thrupp and Tomlinson (2005) identify similar conflicts with regard to the British New Labour government’s social justice policy ‘which has become policy to alleviate growing divisions and inequalities which the market policies embraced by the government have sustained’ (p. 551). However, the difference between New Zealand and the United Kingdom is that while both countries follow neo-liberal economic paths, New Zealand also maintained its socially liberal policies, through the clear articulation in social policy of an equity agenda (Thrupp & Tomlinson, 2005). So, while policies aimed at addressing social and economic inequities have been developed, the market policies themselves have contributed to producing or increasing these inequities (Gordon, 1994; Pierce & Gordon, 2005).

In relation to the educational reforms in New Zealand, Thrupp (2005) views education, on the one hand, as a commodity promoted by liberal individualism, emphasising accountability to and controls by central government, but with responsibility devolved to educational institutions. On the other hand, it aims to promote equitable outcomes, with educators and policymakers taking on the responsibility to promote a productive society where all citizens are successful and contributing. This suggests an apparent opposition of educational aims for New Zealand—one constructs education as being for the private good (and therefore a matter of choice and personal responsibility) and the other promotes education for the public good (where educational outcomes are for the benefit of society and therefore
the responsibility of all). This indicates a major tension at a macro or public policy level, and one that is played out in schools on a daily basis.

This tension between discourses of equity and an accountability and audit culture are characteristic, I argue, of the global educational environment since the late twentieth century (Codd & Sullivan, 2005). While much has been written about the rise and global circulation of neo-liberal policies, we know very little about how teachers work through these tensions in their practice.

From this brief overview, we can see several key tensions that teachers in New Zealand encounter. Following Stronach et al. (2002), I have argued that teachers are involved in a negotiation of policy, ideologies and practice, and that professional knowledge and identity is formed, in an ongoing way in this dynamic process. Because the New Zealand educational environment is dominated by the apparently irreconcilable ideologies of a market economy and equity policies, the focus of this thesis is on how teachers juggle the contradictions and dilemmas created by this juxtaposition, alongside their beliefs and philosophy and those of their colleagues, pupils and the wider community. Further, this negotiation of policies, ideologies and practice involves not only competing discourses between them but also within them. This is more a negotiation of interweaving discourses, rather than binary oppositions.

**Negotiating discourses of social justice, equality and difference**

Having analysed the dominant policy imperatives and related debates about equity that frame teachers’ lives in New Zealand, I now examine the layers of understanding expressed by the teachers in this study as they juggle the imperatives embedded in what Stronach et al. (2002) call an economy of performance and ecologies of practice. I analyse the interviews in relation to what they suggest about how teachers negotiate discourses of social justice, equality, difference and diversity. My overall aim in this analysis is to better understand how new teachers formulate professional knowledge. Of interest here is how teachers construct their thinking about the key concepts outlined so far in this chapter—how they talk about differences and sameness; how they interact with and make sense of educational policies and debates involving categories of difference and ideologies of equality (of opportunity and of outcomes); how they interpret current dominant rhetoric in New Zealand educational and social
policy, including the use of the term ‘diversity’ and the juxtaposition of ‘equity’ discourses alongside ‘accountability’ measures. My analysis draws out some of the tensions and dilemmas that arose for teachers as they grapple with competing meanings of equality and difference, and multiple educational agendas. Thus I go beyond critiquing the rhetoric and policies to consider how they play out in practice (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002).

This section is structured around a number of key themes, and each subsection integrates analysis and vignettes from the interviews—sometimes of discussions within a group about a particular issue, policy, ideology or practical concern; sometimes of a group or individual expression of a dilemma or contradiction or ambivalence in their professional lives.

A dilemma I faced in this research was encouraging the teachers to talk about their work with their pupils without falling into discussion of categories of difference that ‘Othered’ those who were not members of dominant groups. This was in spite of my articulation, at the start of the interviews, that I was interested in their representations of their work with students from the full range of social, cultural, ethnic … backgrounds. Their responses included a mix of discourses arising, in part, from their personal experiences and beliefs. They also expressed views and interpretations on policy dictates about teaching diverse student populations and Tiriti o Waitangi commitments and what they learnt about these matters during their teacher education programmes. The commonsense cultural myths generated by their interactions with colleagues and schools, and the attitudes of students and parents also contributed to what they had to say about social justice in education. In other words, these teachers were bumping up against multiple discourses (Britzman, 2003).

In a way the interview discussions of these ‘contradictory regimes of reality’ (Britzman, 2003) are perhaps not surprising, as the teachers have recently been immersed in teacher preparation that examined and, in some cases, questioned education’s role in responding to difference in the classroom and in schools. All teacher education programmes in New Zealand cover, to a greater or lesser extent, socio-cultural issues in education, including education about the implications of the Tiriti o Waitangi for teachers and schools, and education for Māori, Pasifika and students from ‘socially disadvantaged’, minority or marginalised groups (Kane,
2005). While recent market reforms in education have eroded the time spent teaching ethical and social issues in some teacher education programmes (Jesson, 2000; Snook, 2000), there is an obligation (coupled with a strong commitment in some programmes) to meet standards for teacher education that include preparing teachers for working with students from these groups as well as for those with certain cultural capital (fitting the dominant white, middle-class norm). Furthermore, over 96% of pupils in New Zealand attend state-funded schools (www.minedu.govt.nz) and these schools have linguistically, ethnically and socially mixed populations—to a much greater extent than, for example, the United Kingdom where there is a wider social and ethnic division between types of schools (Thrupp 2005).

The interviews offer fruitful data related to three themes emerging from the teachers’ negotiation of equity policies in practice: 1) an overriding ethos of fairness; 2) their understandings and ambivalences in addressing policies that are largely based on categorical understandings of difference; and 3) some ways of reframing understandings of difference that could lead us forward in our thinking.

An ethos of fairness

A strong theme from the interviews is what I have termed an ‘ethos of fairness’, which I view as an expression of justice. At times, the teachers gave direct responses about their work with students in academic, social or culturally diverse classrooms and about what societal issues they thought impacted on their teaching. They also indicated, indirectly, how they view the relationship of teaching philosophy and practice to poverty, ethnicity, gender and other categories of difference. Their responses—both direct and indirect—were pragmatic, typically couched in terms of their teaching, rather than explicitly about the politics of culture, ethnicity, poverty, equality, difference, racism, sexism or social justice. Common direct responses were about issues such as the use of cell phones, drugs, suicide, pregnancy, teenage sex and relationships. However, from another angle, the teachers’ discussions about teaching

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34 Teacher education programmes are also subject to accountability measures (as discussed in Chapter One) – from the New Zealand Teachers Council, academic quality organizations and the Tertiary Education Commission. They are required to cover the Tiriti o Waitangi and educational standards (NAGs), and to ensure that graduates meet the various teaching standards of the Education Review Office, teachers’ contractual professional standards and NZTC.
and learning represent narratives that are constantly infused with discourses of social justice, equality, difference and diversity. So, while they did not often use the conventional language of political analysis, their ways of talking about their work with students were frequently based on beliefs and a commitment to acting fairly—by which I understand them to mean justice.

The teachers drew on many interpretations of justice, equality, difference and diversity to express their ethos of fairness. One explanation for this is their experience (in most instances) of growing up with the pervasive values of justice, which, while contested, infuse New Zealand’s social history. Further, perhaps people who go into teaching are likely to be receptive to them because of teaching’s association with social change—‘making a difference’—and giving pupils a chance. These are also likely to have been expressed in teacher education and they are clearly articulated in educational policies. Further, all of these teachers worked in schools with linguistically and ethnically diverse students, and most of these schools include significant numbers of pupils from socially disadvantaged homes.

The following example illustrates how Paul, a young humanities teacher, who works in a low socio-economic area with a significant Māori and Pasifika population, drew on several understandings of justice, and the need for teachers to adjust their teaching to individual pupils to provide the opportunity of equitable outcomes:

_A lot of the students at [my school] we know aren’t necessarily moving on to tertiary education, so we’ve got quite a strong framework there with like Transition and gateway project, which is about getting students out into various different sort of work groups and apprenticeships ... we’re trying to aim for what’s best for them (Paul, Interview Two)._}

One interpretation of this could be that Paul does not see a need to broaden his pupils’ aspirations, and that the school’s responsibility is to prepare them for life opportunities, even if limited by social circumstances. While it is possible that there is an element of this belief, there are also other layers of meaning in this extract, which

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35 I suggest that this is, in part, because of a strong ethic of equality amongst New Zealand’s early European settlers. It is also because of shifting articulations of national identity in New Zealand from a colonial outpost with strong economic and social ties to the UK, Australia and USA to a country with distinctive foreign policies—such as its anti-nuclear stance and its non-combatant role in the 1990 Gulf War and current War in Iraq. As discussed above, this ethos is also reflected in much of New Zealand’s social policy.
suggest the dilemmas and contradictions that teachers face in practice. Paul understands education as being a right for every pupil—everyone has the right to receive and have access to an education, as has been an educational aspiration in New Zealand since 1939 (Beeby 1986). He also appeared to have a philosophy that students should have the chance to exit from school with a future that is rewarding for them. So, as he sees it, schools need to provide opportunities that lead to employment or qualifications in a range of careers. This extract suggests that he believes his school is being just and fair by offering these alternatives. In a way, this reflects both a philosophy of equality of opportunity (Beeby 1986) and, at the same time, equity and justice, as described by Gewirtz (2003). Another teacher, Robert, who works in a high socio-economic, city school, with a significant immigrant population, readily draws on the language of diversity: ‘Yeah, the teacher can do something to cater for the diverse needs’ (Robert, Interview One). The use of this kind of language is not surprising, given New Zealand’s history and the current emphasis in the New Zealand curriculum and in many teacher education programmes on ‘teaching for diversity’.

Some of the teachers’ language also suggests that they are consciously trying to include all their pupils in learning in their classrooms. Iris and Tim, both in their forties, work in low to mid socio-economic, multicultural suburban schools:

_We are working on new ways of trying to get kids involved with the learning ... it’s essential that we take on the new ways of teaching ... you get them on board ... manoeuvring (Iris, Interview Two)._  

_I believe that I, the teacher, am the facilitator of their learning, so what I’m trying to provide is the rich environment (Tim, Interview Two)._  

While policies and standards are not directly mentioned in these quotes, the language of both teacher education rhetoric and Ministry of Education standards and strategic documents is, again, evident, reflecting their awareness in practice of the equity agenda and associated accountability standards. As well as being a response to these policy discourses, there is also sense of justice in how they choose to teach. These teachers focus on what they (and their schools) can do to engage the pupils—to give them a fair chance of academic success—‘getting them on board’.

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36 The use of the term ‘multicultural school’ in this thesis refers to a school with a student population that is culturally diverse. It does not necessarily imply a particular philosophy of the school.
Paul, Iris and Tim all work in schools with significant numbers of pupils from traditionally marginalised groups in the community, many of whom have lives and backgrounds vastly different from their own. However, they see themselves as being responsive to the pupils they are teaching. There is a recognition of reciprocity in the teacher-learner relationship, which is also illustrated in the following examples from Paul and Andy, in his late thirties, who works in a suburban, high socio-economic school with a significant immigrant population:

*Just trying to make sure that you’re aware of how they’re doing, you know ... just making sure that they know they can actually ask you ... I try and show a willingness to learn from them as well—from their different backgrounds and maybe show a little bit of mine as well—just give and take, sort of thing with culture (Paul, Interview One).*

*... you got to give the students freedom, power, a sense of belonging ... (Andy, Interview One).*

Comments such as these suggest a respect for and recognition of difference, and also a desire for the inclusion of difference (Burbules, 1997; Scott, 1994). The teachers portray a sense that they assume that their role as teachers is to accept the differences within their classrooms (and the differences between the students’ and their own origins). Because of this, they reported adjusting their practices for individuals and groups within the classroom. Aroha, in her late twenties, works in a suburban, high socio-economic school. Nevertheless, she attempts to address difference within her classroom:

*And you will do anything that’ll help him ... I also find that you’ve got to cater for the – high learners (Aroha, Interview One).*

Teresa, who is in her early thirties and works in a suburban, multicultural school with low literacy levels, also acknowledged the importance of being available for the pupils if they need extra tuition:

*I mean if there’s kids in class that just can’t read, or just don’t get it ... they can come back after school and do it, then I’m there for them, because I do want them all to achieve (Teresa, Interview One).*

Tim (Interview One) believes that teachers need to take into account the ‘*multi-level, multi-curricular stuff*. These extracts reflect an acceptance of and respect for difference, and their planning for this in their teaching. This attempt at ‘inclusion of
difference’ suggests that the teachers work collaboratively (with colleagues and/or pupils) and use whatever resources are available to be responsive to their students.37

My version, coming straight out of [teachers] college is to co-construct knowledge or make knowledge with them (Tim, Interview One).

I make sure [that I choose resources] … with our things on. It had the heroine with a Māori girl on the cover. Just little things you can do to make it accessible (Iris, Interview One).

Like we’ve just done a unit on Māori myths and storytelling (Jude, Interview One).

This could also be understood as being a discourse of ‘diversity as curriculum’ — the understanding and use of students’ lives and community resources (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Schecter, 2002). Here we can see how the teachers’ personal beliefs are underpinned by a commitment to or belief in fairness. Jude, a young Pākehā woman, demonstrates her commitment to including Māori language and world views in her teaching:

I speak fluent Māori, and so I bring that into my classroom because I don’t teach it but I think it’s important to have it in my classroom (Jude, Interview One).

Andy referred to the common practice within New Zealand secondary schools of providing Māori and Pasifika cultural activities. Both he and Tim suggested that a commitment to diverse cultural knowledge requires going beyond more superficial activities:

I owe it to Pacific Island to try and get the learning and language and cultural surroundings for them … I think there’s disparity that’s occurring in NZ between the PC tokenism and the integrated multicultural, bicultural, bilingual (Tim, Interview One).

I was really disappointed. Yeah, … the school has kapa haka38 and polyfests39 and all that – they’re good, but it’s really fallen on one or three

37 However, for most of these teachers, the opportunity to work closely with parents, whānau and other community resource people does not arise and it is not common practice in New Zealand secondary schools to develop such relationships. This is a divergence from Pacini-Ketchabaw and Schechter’s understanding.

38 Kapa haka refers to Māori cultural performance—dance and action songs.
teachers to do all of that and there’s always like the school will play lip service to it because they have to show they doing something in that respect (Andy, Interview One).

Several of the teachers see their own responsibility as teachers to do justice to all groups through their teaching, and the extracts above illustrate their valuing of difference within their classrooms and schools and catering for differing needs. The ethos of fairness captures a number of the debates about justice, equality, difference and diversity discussed earlier. It is also supported by accountability standards linked to the educational equity policies. It appears from the teachers’ statements that their allegiance is not simply to one or other of these debates. Iris and Tim, for example, refer to multiculturalism, which could suggest a homogenising of all cultures, but Tim particularly expressed his commitment to catering for difference (both Māori and Pasifika) in order to achieve a positive learning experience for his students. So, rather than drawing on one set of debates or beliefs, the teachers shift their thinking and reported actions between philosophies of equality of opportunity, equity/justice, sameness, inclusion of difference, and so on (Beeby, 1986; Burbules, 1997; Gewirtz, 2003; Scott, 1994).

These examples from the teachers’ narratives suggest something of the complexity of beliefs and systems of thinking about equity and justice that teachers negotiate in practice in the context of educational policies and standards, informed by New Zealand’s particular context. They draw on multiple, contested debates and rhetoric—from their own biographies, teacher education, a social and political history infused with justice debates, and shifting educational policies (Britzman, 2003). For instance, in an extract above, Tim referred to his views coming straight out of teacher education. Aroha referred to the knowledge she draws on with her dual heritage:

*Me being Māori has helped a lot [with my teaching about New Zealand], in terms of giving a Māori view, but because my grandfather is English, so I’m still maintaining the European view as well (Aroha, Interview One).*

39 Andy is referring here to the annual Polynesian cultural festival and competition for secondary school students.
Iris, when asked what influenced her teaching, also drew on her biography, referring to her parenting experience and her desire to provide a different kind of learning experience from that experienced by her daughter:

> *Her secondary school just totally – something went wrong and she just spent her time at school just avoiding it (Iris, Interview One).*

While few of the teachers made direct reference to culture, ethnicity, poverty, as abstract political concepts, they did, consciously consider how to address these differences in their professional practice.

> *This kid in my class … needs to be on an alternative learning programme, cos he is not writing, taking it in … (Aroha, Interview One).*

> *All my classes, my kids know that it’s a safe environment – that they’re not allowed to put each other down or themselves down or the subject down and there’s one young man in particular, in my year 11 class, who comes from a shocking background (Christine, Interview One).*

> *I’ve got [only] one out of 150 students who are Māori – literally. But yes I am doing work for them (Jude, Interview One).*

> *I owe it to Pacific Island to try and get the learning and language and cultural surroundings for them (Tim, Interview One).*

Similarly, they rarely referred to specific named policies or to associated accountability standards, but the language of New Zealand educational equity policies (in the National Administrative Guidelines and the curriculum documents, for example) is present in the teachers’ narratives—for example, they used phrases like ‘catering for students’ needs’, ‘high expectations’, ‘improving educational outcomes’, and ‘paying lip-service to the Tiriti o Waitangi’. Thus, the extracts discussed here also illustrate how ideologies (personal beliefs, teacher education rhetoric and systems of thinking) operate alongside policy imperatives of equity and professional practices (Stronach et al., 2002). For example, when I asked the teachers about what they and the schools do to address the National Administration Guidelines about equity for Māori and Pasifika students, they often referred to school practices aimed at addressing equity policies:
[My college], for example, has just had a classroom that’s been turned into a marae.\textsuperscript{40} We’ve just started houses. Family members are kept in the same house (Paul, Interview Two).

In terms of culturally, [my college] has a high European rate. There are only about 170 Māori students there, and three Samoan students. And they recognise the fact that our Māori students aren’t achieving, and so they’re trying to put in a system where there’s that support there (Aroha, Interview Two).

We have low literacy levels … so we are working on new ways of trying to get kids involved with the learning and … which is [the Building Blocks professional development programme]. So we’re at a school where … it’s stronger than encouraged … it’s essential that we take on the new ways of teaching and create trios and cooperative learning … you have to do it (Iris, Interview Two).

I teach in a predominantly, ah, middle-class … upper middle-class, white school, but I teach whānau teaching. Now you’re in a whānau based school … where they want to have a white, middle-class thing, whereas whānau teaching works really, really well (Christine and Tim, Interview Two).

This complex juxtaposition of the triumvirate of policies, ideologies and practices also shows the impact of context and situatedness in the shaping and making of teacher professional knowledge (Stronach et al., 2002). The importance of fairness (or justice) for New Zealand pupils is both an aim and a value in the professional discourses of teachers and in educational policy in New Zealand. Further, it is a requirement of teachers and schools that they meet a range of accountability standards related to equitable outcomes. In this respect, teachers are enacting policy rhetoric as well as enacting their own valued desire to achieve justice.

In the following section, I analyse in more detail some of the tensions that the teachers in my study faced in their day-to-day work. I examine the kinds of responses to policy and practice dilemmas that I saw emerging from the interviews, and which were linked to the strong ethos of fairness in the teachers’ narratives.

\textsuperscript{40} He is referring to a dedicated building for Māori cultural activities and learning.
**Categories of difference**

The overarching ethos of fairness in the teachers’ philosophies of teaching, in part, reflects the strong justice and equity agenda in New Zealand social policy and thought. This history may also explain why the teachers appeared to feel little need to question educational policy. Perhaps it was because, as new teachers, they have much to negotiate as they formulate professional knowledge; perhaps also, they are largely comfortable with the aims of educational policies (and their underlying ideologies) that promote inclusive curricula and aspirations for equitable outcomes. However, at the same time, as illustrated in the previous section, there was evidence in the interviews of some of the dilemmas that teachers face when implementing educational policy in practice. In doing this, they engaged with a variety of understandings of ‘diversity’ and ‘justice’.

As discussed above, New Zealand educational policy is infused with the language of equity and diversity. That is, equity is frequently understood in terms of ‘meeting the needs’ of particular groups of pupil—targeting students by categories of ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender or ability.\(^{41}\) I argue that there are defensible reasons for having such policies when aiming to address social and economic inequalities. Nevertheless, alternative ways of thinking about difference, such as those advanced by Burbules (1996) and Young (1990), are useful for understanding teachers’ interactions with discourses of social justice and difference. While the teachers do not necessarily engage with the concepts as developed theoretically by Burbules (1996), Young (1990), Gewirtz (1998; 2003) and others, they do engage with related ideas.

Some of the teachers in this study appeared to view the policy focus on diversity as unproblematic, or the use of categories as something to avoid discussing or responding to. Others were at times less sure about how they and schools might

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\(^{41}\) The most recent draft curriculum in New Zealand (July 2006), while still expressing the need for teachers and pupils to be aware of and respect both our bicultural heritage and multicultural society (p. 9), also acknowledges the importance of understanding and expressing ‘self’ in relation to others. There is less reference to the needs of particular groups of students than in the previous version. This is more akin to contemporary understandings of justice (such as Gewirtz ‘relational’ justice or Fraser’s ‘associational’ justice …) that focus on interconnections as well as categories. However, the National Administrative Guidelines for schools continue to identify several categories of difference as a particular focus for teachers, schools and policymakers, and teachers continue to be appraised against these standards.
achieve just outcomes for students, based on these policies, accountability measures and ideologies. Either way, this illustrates the dilemmas and contradictions faced by teachers caught in the policy, ideology and practice nexus.

I will now analyse how these teachers negotiated this nexus. This extends the previous discussion of teachers’ negotiation of equity beliefs and practices to analyse how the teachers’ narratives illustrate their negotiation of competing discourses (Britzman, 2003) and address dilemmas and contradictions of an economy of performance and ecologies of practice (Stronach et al., 2002). Examples discussed here include teachers’ naming of categories in order to explain their teaching and their evasion or ambivalence about using categorical terms and questioning of their effects.

**Naming categories**

Despite the reluctance or ambivalence of the teachers about identifying categories of difference such as gender, socio-economic status and ethnicity, several referred to such characteristics in an attempt to analyse the social impact of these on their teaching and student learning:

*I’ve noticed the difference between the girls and the boys (Teresa, Interview One).*

*It might also be the teaching techniques that are being utilised are not ones that Pacific Island or Māori or lots of kids, Pākehā included … (Tim, Interview One).*

*Our problem is not so much the kids, it’s the parents … there’s evidently a shortage of cannabis, and so P was the alternative that they were using so of course it causes major problems at home. So we get the effect, not necessarily from the kids, but because the home life of the kids becomes very unstable (Iris, Interview Two).*

*Every student has a history … many of them don’t come to school with breakfast (Andy, Interview One).*

Bishop et al. (2003) and Shields et al. (2005) suggest that one interpretation of such comments is that it reflects a culture of blaming the students and home. On the surface, this could explain the teacher’s comments here. However, Hattie (2002) also points out that the students’ home life makes up about 70% of the differential for student achievement and that, at school, teachers have the greatest impact on student
achievement. Deeper analysis of the interviews suggests that the teachers are conscious of the influence of home life and other factors, such as school, on their pupils, and that they are not unsympathetic towards this. This is evident in the comments made about the sorts of things that they can contribute to the pupils’ academic lives.

There are teachers that tend not to want to address external things—ignore the fact that a student’s parents getting divorced and so they’re not at home and they’re between homes night by night at the moment, and they won’t have their gear … I think that’s one part of the philosophy that I don’t share in (Jude, Interview Two).

Several teachers referred to the pupils’ backgrounds generally, or to the perceived inadequacy of their parents, their poverty, their ethnicity or their language skills in relation to their school performance.

I’ve found their background very much impacts on how they are (Andy, Interview One).

That’s what some of their background is … drunken, alcoholic father … disciplinarian mother (Christine, Interview Two).

[Socio-economic] decile level and the poverty … two thirds of them, Pacific Islanders, have got very low reading/writing and that … translates into very poor marks (Tim, Interview Two).

On their own, these comments might suggest the teachers see little hope for the pupils and that they subscribe to a ‘culture of blame’. However, the same teachers also expressed their commitment to helping their pupils’ achieve success:

It’s really important to have high expectations of them too. And for them to know that you’ve got high expectations of them … I want them to believe in themselves. If they don’t see that I believe that they can do better, they’re never going to (Christine, Interview One).

… create empowered learners and put the basics all the way through … enable them to pass … And it’s treating kids as you’d want to be treated, as I want to be treated—with respect and dignity (Tim, Interview One).

So my job is to try and keep them, as you pointed out, enthused enough, excited enough to try to keep working towards at least passing some of their NCEA (Tim, Interview Two).
This suggests that their reference to pupils according to social categories was an attempt to describe aspects of their professional work that they must be aware of, and as part of how they respond to their pupils’ learning and lives; it is, from their perspective, an attempt to have a more ‘sympathetic’ understanding of the pupils’ family contexts.

Andy also showed how he sees himself as potentially making a difference despite the economic or cultural backgrounds of his pupils. He is interested in understanding what he can about power and freedom, and ‘good practice’, for example, for his work with the Māori pupils in his class: ‘I keep on seeing William Glasser coming through—power, freedom’ (Andy, Interview Two). Although Andy is slightly uncertain about the forthrightness of some of the Māori pupils, who ‘know their rights [and] can be quite confrontational’ (Interview Two), he recognises, as a contributing factor, such things as the different learning contexts that some of his students might have come from in their bilingual intermediate school (Years 7-8, age 11-12). Thus he considers his own role alongside the pupils’ home lives, culture, schooling, gender and so on.

Andy’s reflections on cultural diversity appear to be an attempt to articulate his understanding of difference, and to be culturally sensitive (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Schecter, 2002). At the same time, though, he implies that sometimes it might be necessary to assimilate or control pupils to bring them into line with the dominant culture:

*There’s a bilingual [Māori] class across at the intermediate and some of the students that have come through … can be quite confrontational in class, because of possibly the way they’ve been taught over there. Maybe it’s more of a more inclusive learning, where they maybe feel they’re more equal with the teachers than they get here, and that has been difficult, on occasions, to deal with, because a lot of the other students are not like that, and they don’t like that type of inclusion (Andy, Interview Two).*

He also expresses concern about blaming teachers for the problems that pupils bring from home:

*I’m sick and tired of teachers getting it in the neck because home life problems are causing students to be the way they are. Schools have less teeth than they could have to sort out issues (Andy, Interview Two).*
Thus, he embodies the type of dilemma new teachers face as they bring their personal values and teaching desires into an environment where differing understandings of equality and power exist, and where particular forms of justice are demanded—in this instance, his desire to allow pupils freedom and power, while on the other hand needing to bring disruptive behaviour into line.

I would argue that these extracts show that Andy is genuinely trying to make sense of equity discourses from his own constructions and common educational myths, alongside his teacher education learning and his recent reading about equity, power and diversity in education. We can see here how he is attempting to address dilemmas created by the juxtaposition of an economy of performance and ecologies of practice (Stronach et al., 2002). That is, he is making sense of the competing demands of policy and accountability standards with his own beliefs, educational discourses (such as William Glasser) the school, pupils and teacher education:

*There’s so many other things the education department [Ministry of Education] wants the schools to do (Andy, Interview One).*

*I try and do it differently, but I’m constrained by what they expect you to teach across the curriculum and the tools that they have available … there’s no real teeth to deal with disruptive students (Andy, Interview Two).*

*I’m almost thinking that the kids’ learning is almost independent of the teacher, in fact (Andy, Interview One).*

*Having done a little bit of research last year, when we were doing the training, on William Glasser and his methods on freedom, power – you got to give the students freedom, power, a sense of belonging and that type of thing, to have a successful classroom … The trouble is it doesn’t always fit in with the management style expected at school and I have found myself in a little bit of trouble for pushing the boundaries a little. (Andy, Interview One).*

*I want to do teaching to make a difference (Andy Interview Two).*

These extracts suggest that Andy draws on a number of systems of thinking about student learning and achievement, including the effect of home and school, power and freedom, and assimilation and control. They illustrate how teacher professional knowledge cannot be defined precisely as one set of fixed ideas, that teachers do not subscribe to one understanding and do not simply implement policies or strategies in a
systematic, unproblematic way, despite the accountability requirements to do so (Britzman, 2003; Stronach et al., 2002).

A number of the teachers, for example, Tim, Andy and Jude, also demonstrate their concern for the broader responsibilities of the school, and indicate their understanding of social justice and equity as more than token inclusion of policies and cultural practices:

I do see poly club in terms of multicultural, I see pōwhiri [Māori cultural welcome, that is.] where the kids are pulled out for welcomes, but I see no endorsement ... empowerment, recognition, working with Māori in any way shape or form as a separate group or as tangata whenua [Indigenous people of this land] or as hapū [sub-tribes] or iwi [tribes] ... I don’t see the Treaty of Waitangi anywhere (Tim, Interview One).

I don’t see a lot of accommodation of different cultures in the teaching ... the school will play lip service to [the Tiriti o Waitangi] because they have to show they are doing something in that respect ... (Andy, Interview One).

In general, I don’t know that the school is embracing [equity practices]. Like saying, “well what are we doing about that?” Even the kapa haka is an example, put over the other side of the school for an hour a week, and that’s sort of it (Jude, Interview One).

All these teachers work in mid to high socio-economic areas. Jude and Andy’s schools have much higher Pākehā populations and recognition of cultural diversity is viewed by them as important but inadequately dealt with by the school. Tim’s school has a significant Pasifika population as well as many other cultures, but he believes the school could do more with its acknowledgement of difference.

These extracts suggest that the teachers view simply having policies and accountability measures in place about Tiriti o Waitangi commitments and education for Māori as inadequate and that a deeper engagement with issues that impact on learning for Māori is needed to make a difference. There appears to be an assumed understanding by the teachers that schools and teachers have a responsibility to make sure their teaching takes ‘difference’ into account—and that policies only work in practice if the practitioners accept them and commit to implementing them. This is another instance of the overarching ethos of fairness, and view that inclusion is assumed to be part of their role as a teacher. While it is possible to see in some of the
teachers’ narratives an element of ‘blaming’, naming the differences in their pupils could also be viewed as part of the analysis of the lives of their pupils, in order to understand them. Working out how to ‘name’, characterise, and understand pupils’ backgrounds is an important part of teacher professional knowledge formation and of their making sense of the relationships between teaching, learning and social justice.

The teachers consider what is happening in practice in their schools, the actions and attitudes of colleagues and senior management, their learning in teacher preparation and the policies with which they are familiar. As suggested by Britzman (2003), they appear to be trying to integrate these with their own prior and evolving understandings, and conflicting constructions of equality—on the one hand, treating everyone the same and, on the other hand, treating people differentially based on differences. At the same time, they are consciously trying to reconcile these with educational policies and accountability measures (both government and school)—related to the Tiriti o Waitangi, education for Māori and multicultural education—and various philosophies and practices observed in their professional practice—Stronach et al.’s (2002) economy of performance and ecologies of practice. This illustrates the juggling of the three domains of policy, ideology and practice discussed earlier.

However, it is not necessarily the case that these were always in opposition. Teachers were both shaping their professional knowledge and being shaped by the surrounding discourses, as they negotiated a place as teachers within their schools and the education environment.

**Ambivalence about naming categories**

Several teachers also discussed social justice and difference in ways that indicated their ambivalence to categorical policies. At times this came across as an avoidance of naming categories that essentialise their pupils and an emphasis on providing for all individual pupils. At times, also, the construction of categories of difference is troublesome for the teachers because of the potential to exclude individuals or groups of students and because of deficit interpretations of categorical policies.

Paul, who works in a school with a high Pasifika population, appears to hold to an ethic of difference being inherent in his role as a teacher, in that he accepts difference in his classroom:
I try and show a willingness to learn … their different backgrounds … But, I mean, my lessons could probably use a fair bit of work to make them more diverse. It’s something I have to work on.

He has a matter-of-fact approach to this and sees part of his role as being to adjust his teaching to suit the students:

I guess one of your roles is trying to get the students to achieve or work to the best of their ability … if that’s the way that’s best for the student, then that’s the way that’s best to go … Just trying to help them get the most that they can out of their life. So whether that means that they leave school at the age of 16 and do an apprenticeship or whether they move on to university and, and I don’t know, get a masters or whatever or a doctorate – which ever one of those is right for them, that’s where we’re trying to help them get to (Paul, Interview Two).

He aims to prepare his students for their chosen career or study pathway, as it fits with their ability and interests—what Pacini-Ketchabaw and Schecter (2002) refer to as socialising the students into the mainstream. Similarly, Paul’s talk about difference frequently turns to pragmatic matters, such as the presence of a marae at the school and provision of a range of extra-curricular opportunities for students. Because he does not name the differences, he is unable to and/or choses not to analyse the extent to which this (or any other initiative or policy) addresses social justice.

Paul, however, sees his role as being sensitive to the needs of his students, and expresses this through comments about the academic differences between his students more than about socio-economic, ethnic or gender differences. His awareness and sensitivity to difference enables him to reject actions that treat pupils as the same and allow for his knowledge of differences to be supported by his pedagogy—this is a form of ‘intercultural sensitivity’ (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Schecter, 2002). It is also consistent with educational policies that call for ‘meeting the needs of students’ based on difference, as set out in the Statement of Intent (Ministry of Education, 2006), the Schooling Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2005a) and the National Administrative Guidelines (www.minedu.govt.nz).

Paul’s responses, above, to my questions about how he and his school recognises or values cultural, academic and social diversity appeared to me to indicate a desire to avoid labelling pupils, perhaps so that he does not position the pupils as, for example, ‘poor’, ‘Māori’, ‘female’ … and therefore as ‘Other’ or inferior. It is hard to be sure if
this is his reason. However, on one occasion when I asked the question specifically he mentioned the school marae then moved quickly on to non-category specific topics of catering for needs on the basis of extra-curricular activities. Also, when he explains what the school does to address diversity, I prompted him twice to talk about his own views, but garnered no response.

Paul’s evasion of the use of categorical terms of difference is unlikely to be explained by a lack of concern about social differences—as shown earlier, he frequently talks about doing what is best for individual students. Nevertheless, teachers need to understand the principles behind categorical funding policies because they are embedded in New Zealand educational policy, and schools’ and teachers’ effectiveness is measured against accountability standards of equity. An alternative to such policies would be to remove special funding for specific groups of pupils, a proposition that has been promoted by conservative elements, including the right wing political opposition party. The teachers in this study did not discuss this in the interviews. However, there is a pulling back by Government of such funding. Such changes, and the language used in policy, including that in the new draft national curriculum, are important considerations for teachers, because of the danger they present for continuing (or exacerbating) social inequities, rather than reducing them. One reason for this is that such policies are based on the faulty assumption that treating everyone the same results in equal results (Scott, 1994). This suggests that a deeper understanding of the philosophical debates about difference and equality, equity policy and associated accountability standards could help teachers to negotiate this politically charged arena. Further, it is important that teachers understand and are confident in justifying the basis for educational policies and funding. Thus, this suggests two important considerations for teacher educators and professional developers. Teachers need to be prepared to deconstruct the language of social justice, equality and difference. They also need to understand, in depth, the consequences of equity policies and accountability measures, teacher beliefs and values, and teacher actions.

**Questioning the effects of categorical policies and practices**

Another way in which the teachers responded to the use of categories of difference was by questioning school and teaching practices on the basis of the nebulous concept
of ‘political correctness’. In the period since this study was conducted, the leader of
the conservative opposition National Party in New Zealand (whose views of ‘equality
as sameness’ are cited early in the chapter) created a portfolio for a shadow minister
for ‘the elimination of political correctness’. This concept is frequently used in New
Zealand when discussing differential treatment on the basis of ethnicity, culture,
gender and so forth. Middleton (2005), Santoro and Allard (2003) and Seidl and
Friend (2002) also discuss student teachers’ use of the term to suggest sensitivity to
difference or special consideration for some people based on their essential
characteristics. For some of the student teachers in these studies, the concern is their
feeling of doing wrong by not agreeing with policies, practices or ideologies that
distinguish between people based on race, gender, economic status, and so on. The
arguments used against differentiating policies are that they are unfair to those not
included, they lead to separatism and they exclude other groups (often meaning their
own white, middle-class and/or male groupings). This dilemma was also evident for
some of the teachers in my study.

Teresa, for example, who worked in a school with a large number of Pasifika and
Māori students, reacted with uncertainty to a range of discourses about difference, and
articulated her rejection of what she called ‘political correctness’ because she saw it
as being unfair to students, including those targeted by ‘PC’ policies. However, her
reasons for this appear to be about fairness or inclusion (rather than sameness). She
provided a compelling example of exclusions that arose in her school as a result of
categorical policies and her view of their failure to achieve their stated aim of
improving academic outcomes for the targeted pupils (or, for that matter, other
marginalised pupils in her school).

\[\textit{We’ve got a group of boys that are Māori, that do nothing in class, that are}
\textit{constantly being rewarded. Like they’re allowed to go off to this competition and}
\textit{that competition and recently we had a martial artist that came ... and ran}
\textit{workshops ... and the Māori boys were the only ones in the school that were}
\textit{allowed to participate and they do nothing in class, and resentment is starting ...
from the teachers and the students ... but to me it’s got nothing to do with their}
\textit{education, ... they’re having more time away from class than they do in class. It’s}
\textit{not improving their educational outcomes. And it’s actually not improving others’}
\textit{, because while they’re}\\

\footnote{This portfolio has since been disestablished, after a leadership change.}
resentful and all the rest of it, they’re not focusing on what they should be doing (Teresa, Interview Two).

Teresa is referring here to the school’s use of specific funding for Māori students or a policy of targeting Māori students for special treatment. The way the school managed this situation created concern for Teresa as it challenged her sense of fairness and inclusion. She also saw what she called special treatment as being patronising and targeted funding as being ineffective in this instance. The differential policies appear to be unfair to other marginalised groups of pupils in the school, while at the same time having little effect in achieving the aim of improving educational outcomes for Māori. The example here illustrates how teachers can be in the position of negotiating political and ethical dilemmas, as part of their daily professional practice.

Another example of Teresa’s uncertainty about categorising pupils arose when I asked the teachers in her interview group about their work with diverse students. Rather than refer to the more obvious (to me) ethnic diversity at her school, she said, ‘For the first time, I’ve noticed the difference between the girls and the boys (Teresa, Interview One)’. This was followed by an assertion that her students are ‘bright’ and ‘awesome’ but that their educational experiences have been limited. When asked to explain more the characteristics of her pupils as a way of providing background to these assertions and the kind of work she was doing with them, Teresa said:

You mean like low decile – that type of thing? They’re ... very casual; they’re very honest and open ... I find them; they’re very ... I don’t know ... practical, musical, great sense of humour (Teresa, Interview Two).

She needed further prompting to specify their ethnicity:

It’s low decile, Pacific Island, Māori kids (Teresa, Interview Two).

While Teresa avoided using categories of difference and disagreed with what she saw as an ineffective, unfair policy and the school’s implementation of it in practice, she appeared, at some level, to see the need to understand and respond to individual pupils, and to ensure fairness. This is another example of the sort of meaning-making and contradictions teachers face as they are caught between policies, accountability standards and funding based on categories of difference and equity ideologies and what they do in practice. How Teresa negotiates her understanding of this policy/practice dilemma illustrates both Stronach et al.’s (2002) concept of teachers
negotiating an economy of performance and ecologies of practice (as explained in Chapter Two), and the way in which teacher professional knowledge forms discursively as teachers interact with a range of discourses (Britzman, 2003). These dilemmas are perhaps magnified for new teachers because they are confronted, in the classroom, with the impact of social inequalities played out in the education system and, often for the first time, find themselves in the position of having to address these alongside their own ethos of fairness and inclusion, and their school’s particular interpretations of educational policy.

Many schools and teachers as illustrated in this thesis, are aware of the need and/or requirements for equitable policies and the reasons for them, and are trying to achieve these aims. Indeed, most of the teachers in this study viewed their schools as having effective or, at least, well-intentioned policies and procedures in place. One interpretation of this is that everything is okay (and fair). However, as perceived by others in this study, and as shown elsewhere (for example, Bishop et al., 2003; Shields et al., 2005), schools and teachers could do more, as could government and teacher preparation (Britzman, 2003; Gewirtz, 1998; Lucas, 2003; Thrupp & Tomlinson, 2005; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). In the following section I examine examples from the interviews that suggest some ways forward in how we might think about and act upon difference. I discuss ways in which our understandings of difference and categories might address policy dilemmas so that they are viewed as opportunities for change and justice, rather than as impediments to fairness.

**Reframing difference**

Another way for teachers to respond to the potentially dangerous effects of categorical definitions of difference is by reframing the characteristics of their pupils. Teresa and Iris, for example, portrayed their pupils as special, just as ‘bright’ as any other and with much to offer. While they did not negatively categorise their pupils, they work in schools with high numbers of pupils from Māori or Pasifika families, and students living in predominantly lower socio-economic suburbs. Teresa, who expressed concern that some of her colleagues were not fully committed to preparing their pupils sufficiently, reported that she actively encouraged her pupils to do their best. When pushed in the interviews to reflect on her pupils’ ‘differences’, she described ‘their best’ is as good as any pupil from the dominant culture:
I think the kids are neat, out there. And I think they’re bright and I think they want to learn ... (Teresa, Interview One).

This contrasts with what she described in the attitudes of some of her colleagues, ‘Excellence has not been expected’ and illustrates the strength of her personal philosophy of fairness. As discussed above, Teresa rejects what she sees as ‘PC’ differential policies at her school, because she sees them, in practice, as being unfair to other pupils, as illustrated in the previous discussion. Her challenge of PC policies and criticism of her colleagues’ unwillingness to confront issues of social justice in their classrooms are both based on her ethos of fairness. While her challenge to political correctness could be viewed as resistance to an equity agenda, taken together with her challenging of teachers with low expectations, a deeper understanding of difference is evident. In a way she is taking seriously the expectation that teachers are accountable. She assumes difference to be part of the educational environment—for example, she commented, ‘I’ve never really noticed the difference’ (Interview One)—and challenged those who lower their expectations of pupils, based on preconceived ideas about their pupils. For example, Teresa commented that some of her colleagues do not expect excellence from their pupils and do not support their learning because they do not see them as capable.

Teresa could have followed her colleagues example and taken a deficit view of her pupils—she too expressed her frustration at their apparent lack of motivation. However, she does not let the pupils’ cultural and educational backgrounds or her knowledge that they cannot always read well influence her belief that these students are ‘bright’ and ‘want to learn’. She explained their apparent lack of motivation and educational success as a lack of self-belief rather than as lack of intelligence or ability or willingness or desire to achieve. She claimed to see through destructive, self-deprecating behaviours to their positive qualities and to their potential as young people. She views their knowledge and understanding differently and in ways that allow her to work with them in positive and productive ways. Teresa regards her pupils as having the same potential and desires as any other student in terms of learning, and she sees teachers as needing to understand this and ensure that pupils’ potential is reached. Thus both responses can be read as challenges to deficit constructions of traditionally marginalised groups of pupils.
This is consistent with Shields et al. (2005) and Bishop et al.’s (2003) practical desire to challenge teacher conceptions that view particular groups of pupils as being inferior. While Teresa did not offer any immediate solutions for how to address the problem of ‘deficit theorising’ among her colleagues, she displayed an engagement with ideas that she has come up against in teacher education and in educational policy that suggest possible ways forward. She framed her pupils, not as they are frequently described (as deprived, unmotivated, unintelligent, badly behaved or low achieving), but as bright and eager to learn. This reframing of students’ aspirations may be an important key to understand how teachers can change expectations, and therefore pupils’ achievement. It is a refusal to take the behaviour at face value and dismiss the pupils because of their behaviour:

Well, you watch TV and you see all the people in the hood and the black Americans – that’s what my kids are trying to be ... you get kids who are quite bright that dumb themselves down to be cool (Teresa, Interview Two).

Instead of accepting what she sees as self-destructive behaviour, Teresa challenged it:

I just talk to them about it and say, why do you want to make yourselves look thick? Why do you want to make yourselves look silly, when you’re not? (Teresa, Interview Two).

This is an important point for those involved in preparing new teachers. Given the challenges new teachers face in making sense of conflicting views about pupils (both deficit and optimistic) as illustrated by the ambivalence and uncertainty of this teacher, it is important that teacher educators and professional developers work to uncover and examine these contradictions with teachers as has Britzman (2003).

Iris also described her pupils, many of whom come from low income families, as being particularly smart. She described them as being literate in ways that older members of the community (including teachers) are not. This is despite a wider community perception of these young people as deprived or ineducable and as having poor written literacy skills.

Our kids are not stupid ..., but they have very limited reading and writing abilities, but apart from that ... they’ve got all the ideas and the wit and the humour (Iris, Interview Two).
Iris showed how she struggles with categories of difference, avoiding the ‘Othering’ of students on the basis of gender, ethnicity and culture. She described the school community as ‘our home place’ (Iris, Interview Two), indicating her inclusion of all cultures, including Māori, into a blend of ‘togetherness’. However, she did acknowledge the unique place of Māori in New Zealand and at the school, but also referred to the ‘multicultural’ nature of the community.

*I think our community’s actually decided to go multicultural ... At [our school] they don’t have any choice. That’s THE community, that’s who we are (Iris, Interview One)*.

*I look at my kids and I try not to ... I honestly can’t tell in my class who is who ... they all have multiple ... it’s such a mixture ... it’s who we are, over there and it’s not separate (Iris, Interview Two)*.

This could be interpreted as Iris resisting the singular category of ‘Māori’, by equalising all categories of ethnic difference, or it could be read as a reflection of views of ‘liberal tolerance’ or ‘multiculturalism’ that suggests we are all the same. However, there are also other layers to her understandings that suggest that she does not reject individual differences based on categories, but rather she is working out ways of understanding and including each student’s individual uniqueness. Listening to Iris talk about the creative and sometimes subversive ways in which she and her colleagues go about their professional practice contributed to this alternative story—of honouring the pupils—of respecting the differences of all those in the relationship; and of challenging mono-cultural systems of thinking:

*You know, just trying to break down that ... the whole school’s not that Pākehā/English. It’s lots of different places and things going on. But it’s just there—part of our whole thing (Iris, Interview Two)*.

This is an inclusive understanding of difference—difference within (Burbules, 1997); it is a conscious attempt to challenge the use of categorical systems of difference which are at risk of generating deficit theorising about the students based on differences (Weedon 1999). For example, while the current New Zealand curriculum attempts to reflect the bicultural relationships indicated in the Tiriti o Waitangi, the Pākehā culture (with its powerful British heritage) remains the dominant cultural influence on what is considered important in schools and in education generally. There is a strong emphasis placed on written forms of literacy (reading and writing)
and this is what students are largely judged by in national qualifications (Ministry of Education, 1993). Iris carefully presented an argument that while the students in her school have low reading and writing scores in standardised, culturally-biased tests, they are leading the country in terms of the visual, oral and critical literacies that dominate their world (text messaging, internet, film, multimedia ...).

*We’ve got a generation of highly visually, literate students ... I think we’re just the start of it, and everyone else is going to have it following behind* (Iris, Interview Two).

In this extract, Iris referred to the characteristics of her pupils at her school as being representative of the shape of New Zealand’s future population. She could have said that her students cannot read or write well, or that they have low literacy skills and that this is because they are poor, or Māori, or from families who do not care and so on. However, she has reconstructed their literacy to reflect the positive characteristics of their knowledge. This illustrates her positive incorporation of difference into the curriculum in her classroom, as well as a challenging of deficit theorising about difference—in this instance different knowledge. As a result of her observations, Iris uses the students’ strengths in visual literacies to develop their reading and writing (using, for example, their critical understandings of the content and production of the movie *Shrek* to move them into reading and writing tasks). This addresses the formal requirement for pupils to engage with literature, the media and society in order to get by in the dominant, white, middle-class culture while recognising the experiences of these students and what is important to them, through popular culture.

At the same time, in order to address the demands of mandated assessment, Iris described how she sets up activities that quickly address the fragmented component tasks required of the standards-based assessments of the senior secondary school qualification, and then gets the pupils back on to what she described as ‘real learning’—integrated learning which includes ‘big picture’ understandings and so on.

*I say [to the pupils], okay we do this because we’re made to, but here’s the learning bit* (Iris, Interview One).

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43 This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six in relation to standards-based assessment measures that fragment learning.
To me this approach illustrates a deep understanding and inclusion of the knowledge of the students because Iris draws on the pupils’ perspectives and life experiences to inform what and how she goes about delivering what she believes is expected of her in terms of delivering the curriculum content and the assessment standards. This extract also shows that she has a conscious, articulate understanding of her role in negotiating the accountability measures and equity outcomes in New Zealand educational policy. To deal with her resistance to policies that conflict with her beliefs and understanding of good pedagogy, she is prepared to use creative or subversive strategies without compromising the achievement of standards—either her pupils’ or those of her school. Her understanding draws on her own life experience, including the trauma she faced in her first teaching position because of the school management’s deficit and authoritarian approach to difference, and the way she selected her current school based on its educational philosophy. In the interviews, she frequently referred to the positive influence of her teacher education experience and knowledge gained, and she acknowledged the influence of collaborative understandings and practice from within her current school and work team. Iris’ experience represents an effective approach to negotiating multiple educational discourses—one where she has consciously used all the resources available to her in the formulation of her professional knowledge, while integrating her own values into her teaching practice.

Both Teresa and Iris described their students as ‘special’ and expressed some uncertainty about how they might describe or identify their students. Do they categorise their pupils in terms of ethnicity, gender or background, and the particular pedagogical challenges of working with students from marginalised communities creates? Or do they see this as succumbing to ‘political correctness’ by treating groups differentially. Both teachers showed how they resist labelling their pupils according to ethnicity, socio-economic status or academic achievement, or by using categories of difference that place marginalised groups as deficient (Scott, 1994). Their knowledge of the their pupils’ lives is drawn upon as a way to communicate with them better. Both Iris and Teresa expressed strongly held beliefs in their students’ potential and this drives them to demand high standards of them.

*But I did my first NCEA assessment and I worked it all out and basically I got a 30% pass rate. Having said that, half the class didn’t hand anything*
in anyway. So I was probably dealing with ... of the 50% of the class that handed anything in, 80% of them achieved type thing. ... [the kids] got a huge rev up; they got a real big rark up
text1}, and they were told that they weren’t thick and they weren’t going to be failing any more (Teresa, Interview One).

They’re not silly kids and if they were given the right teaching, they would be achieving excellent results (Teresa, Interview Two).

[I say to them] there’s nothing wrong with you guys – you’re just different from us and we need you to work on this bit, because you need it for stuff, but they don’t often get that message that there’s nothing wrong with them. But they know some cool stuff (Iris, Interview Two).

In fact, all the teachers in this study expressed a strong a desire to facilitate their students’ achieving their best. Such orientations to student learning are commonly emphasised in teacher education programs. In the case of New Zealand, the important role that teachers play in the academic success of their pupils has been driven to a considerable extent by attention to the educational experiences and outcomes of Māori students, and informed by influential research (Bishop et al., 2003; Hattie, 2002; Nuthall, 2002). In an Australian study on teaching Indigenous students, McDonald (2005) argues that expert teachers need to have a clearly articulated understanding of the interactions between race, history, school structures and peer relationships. As discussed in Chapter Two, Bishop et al. (2003) propose that similar kinds of knowledge and expectations are essential to challenge deficit thinking and the issue of the underachievement for Māori students. Nuthall (2002) found that teachers’ knowledge about ways in which classroom activities were best able to affect the quality of pupils’ learning was a key factor in all students’ success. Hattie (2002) sees teachers as the greatest source of variance that can make a difference in schools and found that expert teachers were able to produce deeper understandings of concepts in their students.

While there is some similarity in the dilemmas Iris and Teresa are grappling with, they present different responses. For example, while both Iris and Teresa believe their students are ‘special’, Iris appears to embrace the multiple cultures within her school and to have an inclusive understanding of these as being part of their shared

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44 rark up is a New Zealand English term meaning to give someone a good telling off.
community. It is almost as if she is visualising a new community or society ‘over there’—kind of beyond what is usually understood of New Zealand society. She resists labelling students negatively, but understands deeply the philosophical intent of policies, accountability measures and practices that promote equitable outcomes for pupils and which are based on labelling of social groups. This illustrates the impact of personal philosophy mixed with understandings of education policy and equity objectives as they work together in practice. As such, this is a good example of how professional knowledge emerges through an interweaving of policy, ideologies and practices. In this instance, Government and schools form accountability measures and Iris addresses these by drawing on her personal beliefs and experiences to create an environment in her classroom that is aimed at ensuring her pupils’ success. This is another example of what Stronach et al (2002) refer to as juggling an economy of performance and ecologies of practice—managing equity discourses—her own and others—in an environment of accountability standards. Through this process she forms and articulates her professional knowledge philosophy and practice.

On the other hand, Teresa is more resistant to the principle of policies and practices that target particular groups, based on her experience of the particular school policy about funding additional activities for Māori pupils to the exclusion of others. Although such policies are aimed at achieving equity (in this case, for Māori students at the school), she raises legitimate concerns about what happens to the many other ‘marginalised’ students at this school, and questions the underlying principles and effectiveness of the policies. In a school with multiple ‘categories of difference’ and multiple marginalised groups, the question of a ranking of ‘oppressions’ (Gewirtz, 1998) arises, particularly when funding decisions are considered. She expresses her concerns, in relation to this policy, about whether equity practices and accountability standards are having the desired effect of improving outcomes for the students or whether they are patronising and being used to excuse unacceptable outcomes. She attempts to ensure her own practices are fair by respecting each student, whatever their cultural background, placing similar expectations for success on all students and addressing each student’s needs. However, she is uncertain about how realistic this is, given the differing practices she observes—such as her colleagues’ low standards for their pupils and policies that benefit some pupils at the expense of others. In a way, she is combining inclusion of difference with a strong ethic of justice or fairness—
that is, she maintains her belief in the potential of her pupils and her teaching is based on the assumption that they are intelligent and capable.

Teresa chooses to actively avoid ‘Othering’ the students and does not see a dilemma with her actions because she views PC behaviour by her school’s managers as unfair and hypocritical. While she actively reacts against categorical and negative forms of difference, she does not respond by treating everyone the same. In Teresa’s responses there is an insightfulness—as well as some uncertainty—that is more usually associated with the views of experienced teachers. Both she and Iris articulate a ‘relational’ understanding of difference (Burbules, 1997).

The reactions of Iris and Teresa illustrate that teachers who are just beginning their professional careers are not, as is often assumed, unsophisticated and naive thinkers in relation to classroom practices and philosophies. Both Iris and Teresa have complex, even if still forming, working understandings of pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and social justice as these apply to their teaching practice. They consciously use their emergent understandings to make professional decisions. It is important that the perspectives new teachers bring to the field are recognised as valuable, and not only dismissively constructed as ‘lacking’ or the untested thoughts of novices.

One difference between Iris and Teresa’s experiences further highlights the role of teacher educators and teacher professional development agencies in working with new teachers to further the aims of social justice in education. While both teachers demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the relationships between policy, ideology and practice, Iris is more confident in her articulation of this. On the other hand, Teresa’s commitment is strong, but less certain. This could be explained as the result of individual characteristics. However, in my view, it is more valuable to situate these responses in relation to the kind of professional context in which they each work. Iris explains her work situation as collaborative, and her contribution to the school’s programme as being creative and valued. In contrast, Teresa sees few examples of the kinds of practices she believes to be effective for pupils’ academic success and frequently expresses feelings of professional isolation.

These two examples illustrate the situated and complex ways in which teacher professional knowledge forms (Britzman, 2003) and the ways in which two teachers
have addressed the prevailing equity agenda within an accountability environment (Stronach et al., 2002).

**Implications for practice**

In New Zealand educational policy, as well as for these teachers, fairness and justice are key aims, and the focus of a number of accountability measures. Given the contested and contextual nature of these concepts, it is important in teacher preparation to ensure that prospective teachers understand traditional and contemporary debates about justice, equality, difference and diversity, as well as the relationships between these. This includes fostering a critical understanding of current public debates about differing meanings ascribed to ‘equality’ and ‘difference’ and the underlying philosophical questions that arise, as well as what this means in practice in terms of addressing difference equitably.

This is particularly important in contemporary New Zealand because of the increasing diversity of the school population and because of challenges and pressures teachers face, particularly early in their careers, in addressing a radical educational reform agenda of equity in an environment of accountability measures. Teacher education and educational studies courses need to explicate the kinds of challenges and dilemmas created for teachers in this environment.

The excerpts analysed in this chapter provided vivid and telling examples of teachers’ attempts to reframe equity policies and practices and negotiate the dilemma of implementing categorical policies in their day to day teaching practices—such as deconstructing pupils’ differences in positive ways as Teresa and Iris demonstrated, and using this framework to drive their teaching practice. Such reframing provides valuable insights for schools, teachers, policymakers and teacher educators about how to work with ‘differences’, and how we might make use of categories of difference—not to define ‘Other’ as inferior, but as a site for ongoing mutual understanding.

The analysis in this chapter has also shown how learning to teach is not a linear, regimented process, showing instead that the formation of teacher professional knowledge is dynamic, and that this is particularly pronounced in the case of early career teachers as they encounter ideas to do with (in)justice and equity. I argue that we need alternative frameworks for understanding and talking about teacher
professional knowledge that acknowledge this process. Understandings of new teachers’ professional knowledge need to be reframed in ways that do not represent it as inferior or deficit, but as reflexive, engaged and sophisticated—and therefore as able to make important contributions to conversations about teaching and learning, and social justice in schools.

My analysis also challenges the placing of theory (as taught in university) and practice or experience (as learnt in the classroom) in opposition (Stronach et al., 2002). I argue that placing theory and practice in opposition is creating another false binary (Scott 1994) and that this is not as productive as recognising the complexity of negotiating a range of competing practical and theoretical discourses (Britzman 2003) or economies and ecologies of professionalism (Stronach et al. 2002).

I have shown in this chapter that how new teachers engage with the culture and values of their work environment is an integral element of their professional knowledge formation. The examples of how new teachers reframe key concepts suggests that working in schools where their ideas are incorporated into professional conversations and practices is indeed productive and powerful for their professional formation—as was notably the case for Iris. Such a workplace culture is important for all teachers, but especially so for new teachers as it is likely to assist in enhancing career satisfaction and maintaining their motivation to teach in socially just ways. It is also likely to have a positive effect on addressing teacher retention, which is a major concern in education. While there is relatively little research on the reasons why teachers leave the profession, the conversations in this study suggest that those who have considered leaving and those who have chosen to change schools have done so because they did not have these kinds of collegial professional experiences. They talked of mismatches between their own desires for educational justice and those of some of their colleagues; a sense of isolation from those with similar beliefs; and a lack of acknowledgement for the ideas they bring, as new teachers, to the professional discourse. This suggests that work is needed within schools to develop opportunities for ongoing collaborative, professional conversations between teachers—and especially early career teachers—and their school communities.
Conclusion

This chapter has focused on teachers’ negotiation of an equity agenda in an environment of accountability, two issues which have dominated New Zealand education since the beginning of the major reforms implemented over the past 15 years. I began by examining some of the underpinning ideas and historical debates that have informed and are played out in the policies and in teachers’ thinking about equity in relation to education. This was an attempt to better understand the dilemmas that these policies and ideas create for teachers in their professional practice. The teachers’ narratives illustrated the tensions that arise for new teachers, as they formulate professional knowledge, as well as tensions for others in the teaching profession who are attempting to address policies, accountability standards and principles of equity in day-to-day practice. By going beyond a critique of policies to examine teachers’ reflections on their enactment of these and related ideologies in practice, I have uncovered some of the concerns and debates teachers face, and the relationships between these.

The teachers engaged with a range of beliefs about social justice, equality, difference and diversity. Their responses were variously marked by conflict, ambivalence, uncertainty, confidence and subversiveness. This included challenging the traditional thinking of colleagues (such as beliefs that particular groups of pupils were not capable of advancing academically); reconstructing understandings of the pupils’ literacy, intelligence and educational aspirations; reframing or deconstructing pupils’ knowledge and the attitudes of colleagues to marginalised student groups; and finding enabling ways to contribute to positive academic and social futures for their pupils. The teachers considered deeply, in sophisticated ways, what the implications were for their professional practice and learning.

In this chapter, I have examined the macro-level context of teacher knowledge formation, illustrating the impact of school, policy and national contexts—the situated character of teacher professional knowledge formation—and the strategies they adopt to negotiate associated tensions and dilemmas. The discussion has attempted to do more than simply critique policy by considering how teachers and schools address social policy reforms in practice (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). I found that the teachers attempted to make sense of various, intersecting discourses arising from their personal
biographies, teacher education, recent ideological debates about equality, policy dictates, and philosophies and practices in schools and the community (Stronach et al., 2002). It is the coming together of these various influences and discourses that make up professional knowledge as evolving, and embedded in particular cultural histories and day-to-day practices. In the following chapter, I take a look at teachers’ professional knowledge formation at a micro level—that is, I examine the identity formation of new teachers.
Chapter Five: Professional identity formation of new teachers

Introduction

A central argument of this chapter is that professional identity and professional knowledge formation are inseparably entwined. The aim of the chapter is to address both how teachers form their identity within particular socio-cultural settings and how this formation is embodied in practice. For this analysis, I draw on poststructural arguments, which propose that ‘not only meaning, but also individual subjectivity, is produced within discourse’ and that ‘we learn who we are and how to think and behave through discursive practices’ (Weedon 1999, 104).

In Chapter Four, I examined the macro social and educational discourses that frame beginning teachers’ work in New Zealand. In this chapter, I turn my attention to the more micro level of identity formation and to how teacher identity is formed cumulatively and intersubjectively. The overall argument here is that teacher identity formation takes shape in interaction with others, specifically fellow teachers and students, and that this relational dimension is also integral to the development of professional knowledge.

The formation of teachers’ professional identity is of concern for new teachers themselves, teacher educators, schools and policymakers, yet often for different reasons. For policymakers, schools and teacher educators, teacher identity is relevant because of the need to prepare competent, confident, professional teachers to educate diverse student populations. This is particularly the case during times, such as the present, when there are related concerns about teacher recruitment and retention. For individual teachers, however, a more immediate imperative may be to work out the tensions and professional challenges involved in the process of becoming a teacher and in emotionally identifying as ‘a teacher’. All these concerns raise the question of what makes a teacher (and how), but also, as Britzman (2003) puts it, what kind of people can education make (and how). Early career teachers, then, are engaged in a process of knowledge and identity formation, or what I have called a process of both meaning-making and self-making. Chapter Four was concerned largely with teachers’ meaning-making—that is, their making sense of macro issues encountered in education and society in general. This chapter is about their self-making—their
making sense of what it means to be or become a teacher and working out what kind of teacher they want to be.

This chapter has three major foci, addressed in the following sections:

- **Professional identity and subjectivity**—a discussion of select key ideas associated with these concepts, particularly as they relate to teacher identity and this study.

- **Identity formation in ‘conversation’ with others**—an analysis of teachers’ ideas about pupils and colleagues, and how this contributes to professional identity formation.

- **Identity formation and contested socio-cultural and professional spaces**—an analysis of a number of vignettes illustrating teachers’ subject formation.

**Professional identity and subjectivity**

The following discussion offers an exposition of my working definitions of the concepts of identity and subjectivity, and is not intended to be a detailed elaboration of their intellectual history.

The concepts of identity and subjectivity have been the focus of much theoretical investigation and, as Weedon argues (1999, p.103), also of political struggle. Because of the different ways in which ‘identity’ and ‘subjectivity’ can be used, it is important to clarify how I have chosen to use the terms. While the terms are frequently used interchangeably, ‘identity’ is often used to refer to the way in which people view, describe or refer to themselves—self-identity or sense of self (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996; Mansfield, 2000; McLeod & Yates, 2006). The term ‘subjectivity’, in contrast, has a more abstract or general meaning and typically conveys the idea of the self as constructed, produced and contingent rather than a self-evident and fixed entity (Mansfield, 2000; McLeod & Yates, 2006). Additionally, subjectivity can refer to unacknowledged and even unconscious representations of the self and of cultural discourses (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996).

Much contemporary theory, particularly that influenced by neo-constructionism and poststructuralism, proposes that ‘identities are not simple, given, presumed essences that naturally unfold, but rather are produced in an ongoing process, mediated by
multiple historical and contemporary factors’ (McLeod & Yates, 2006, p. 38). Mansfield (2000) argues that subjectivity is a theoretical category constructed within discourse that remains permanently open to inconsistency, contradiction and unself-consciousness’ (Mansfield, 2000, p. 6). It is moreover a site of disunity and conflict, rather than a fixed, singular entity (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996; Weedon, 1999; Youngblood Jackson, 2001).

I use the term ‘identity’ to refer to how teachers explain or view themselves—for example, in terms of identity categories such as social, cultural or professional categories. In general, I use ‘subjectivity’ to indicate the constructed, situated and relational process of identity formation.

However, my approach to examining teachers’ professional identity draws in part on MacLure’s (1993) argument that analysing how teachers talk about themselves is more useful than trying to explain or define them in terms of sociological, contextual, professional or cultural categories. She views identity as a continuing site of struggle, and the idea of identity as a form of argument—a resource ‘they use, to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate’ (p. 312). So, identity is ‘claimed, talked about and otherwise used by teachers for particular discursive purposes’ (p. 313). I also draw on arguments that identity formation is a discursive and uneven, rather than linear process (Britzman, 2003) and that teachers draw on discrepant identities to make sense of multiple views, behaviours and contexts they encounter (Stronach et al., 2002).

I will now consider understandings of and approaches to studying teacher identity. In Chapter Four, ideals and expectations about what is means to be an ‘effective teacher’ (the macro considerations in the current environment in New Zealand), and different ways of being an ‘effective teacher’ were examined. Given this range of views, Chapter Five is concerned with how such discourses are enacted and worked out in teachers’ early careers—hence my focus and micro level analysis of teacher identity. Thus I make a distinction between, on the one hand, the subject positions set up for new teachers (by themselves, policy, schools, popular discourses and so forth) and, on the other hand, the kinds of people they become—how particular people become embodied as particular teachers.
A number of other researchers have investigated teacher identity and the processes by which teacher identity is formed (for example, Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Bolivar & Domingo, 2006; Britzman, 2003; Stronach et al., 2002; Youngblood Jackson, 2001). Beijaard et al. (2004) are concerned with explaining the characteristics that shape teacher professional identity and draw on poststructural arguments about the fluidity of identity. They describe identity as an ongoing process, one that is dynamic rather than stable, and argue that ‘professional identity’ implies both person and context. However, at the same time, they conclude that professional identity consists of ‘sub-identities’—teachers’ different contexts and relationships—that ‘more or less harmonize’ (p. 122), and that it is essential for teachers that these sub-identities do not conflict but are well-balanced. Similarly, in talking about teacher professional identity, Bolivar and Domingo (2006) claim that teachers build individual identity by creating an autobiography. In their cross-analysis of different individual autobiographies, Bolivar and Domingo sought to uncover the identity of teachers as a professional group.

Both these studies (Beijaard et al., 2004; Bolivar & Domingo, 2006) seek to clarify teacher professional identity, ‘self’ and ‘identity’ by obtaining a fuller picture of relationships, attitudes and behaviour as well as knowledge. To do this they use methods such as participant observation, analysis of documents and teaching biographies to draw out the characteristics of teacher identity (Beijaard et al., 2004; Bolivar & Domingo, 2006). Approaches such as these, and their justification, recognise the distinction between ‘modernist’ notions of the authentic self and poststructuralist understandings of the self, which they see as related to how people organise experience or stories (Beijaard et al., 2004; MacLure, 1993). This focus on individuals and their relationship to others has relevance to my study, and in the following section, I examine instances of such relationships. However, by seeking clarity, these researchers imply that it is possible and/or desirable for teacher professional identity to be defined or harmonised in fixed and certain ways. Writing from a broadly poststructural perspective, I understand identity as constituted within discourse and cultural practice (St Pierre & Pillow 2000, p. 6), as being in a constant state of flux or conflict, as shifting within discursive fields (Youngblood Jackson, 2001, p. 395) and thus as not necessarily structured (or structurable). I aim to take my analysis beyond characterisations of fixed qualities of teacher professional identity to
an analysis of its formation in relation to broader social, political and cultural contexts (Britzman, 2003; MacLure, 1993; St Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Stronach et al., 2002).

In this study, the ways in which the teachers talked about themselves suggests that identity formation is, indeed, a discursive process and that teachers negotiate a range of subject positions—both individual and socio-cultural. Identity categories (such as ‘new teacher’, ‘younger/older teacher’, ‘maths teacher’, ‘Māori’, ‘Māori teacher’, ‘male teacher in a female environment’, ‘mother’) were frequently cause for comfort or discomfort as they were defined and redefined by teachers as they recounted views and behaviour of others, and as their own positions were challenged by these and various ideas and beliefs. Further, discussing their pupils’ and colleagues’ views and actions also raised, and at times clarified, important issues for them regarding their own views and conduct. As I will show, these interactions also contributed to their formation of self as a teacher.

This process of negotiation further illustrates the notion that teacher identity does not form in a definable or predictable way and that learning to teach does not follow a linear process (Britzman, 2003). It also challenges analyses of professional identity that seek to define the ‘professional self’ by ‘types, stages and conditions’ of professional work (Stronach et al., 2002, p. 109). Professionalism then is not something to be resolved; there is no such fixed, single or unified entity as ‘a teacher’. Rather, a teacher’s professional self ‘mobilizes discrepant identities’ (p. 110) and presents as ‘shards of self-accounting’ (Stronach et al. p. 116), as teachers attempt to make sense of multiple views, behaviours and contexts they have encountered.

In summary, I understand and examine teacher identity as fragmented and consider its formation to be an ongoing process. Taking up subject positions is not seamless, nor without tensions and can create dilemmas and disunity. Becoming a teacher, and assuming the identity of ‘teacher’ involves a juggling between different desires and normative ideas of what a (good) teacher should be (Stronach et al. 2002). Rather than proposing that such dilemmas should be resolved or avoided, I argue that they are a crucial part of teachers’ identity (formation). Viewing teacher identity in this way allows an alternative explanation to accounts of new teacher identity formation as developmental or unformed (and therefore potentially inferior). Thus it also directly confronts deficit accounts of the knowledge and practices of early career teachers.
To further understand teacher identity formation, I draw on Bjerrum Nielsen’s (1996) metaphor of identity as a magic writing pad. According to Bjerrum Nielsen, a magic writing pad is like a palimpsest that allows previous text (writing and images) to be erased and overwritten by new text on the same surface. However, traces of previous text remain on a wax block below. Thus, while more recent text is more visible, earlier text is never quite erased. Further, the layers of text intermingle on the wax block.

For Bjerrum Nielsen, the magic writing pad represents the idea that ‘identity work’ involves moving between layers of (discursive) inscriptions and meaning, with traces of past inscriptions still present as new ones are received. Therefore, subjectivities and identity presuppose and influence each other but cannot be derived from each other. Bjerrum Nielsen argues against viewing identity as a construct only in the present. Rather she explains that identity formation, or what she calls identity work, is characterised by change (new inscriptions) and continuity (the impact of previous inscriptions).

While the magic writing pad metaphor has tended to be used to focus on young people’s identity formation (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996; McLeod, 2000; McLeod & Yates, 2006), I apply it here in a new situation—the formation of new teachers’ identity. Thus teacher identity is interpreted as shaped by both the inherited understandings of self as teacher and insights and new understandings derived from new situations. Teachers’ identities simultaneously have elements that are permanent and changing—while traces of subject positions and discourses remain, new scripts overwrite and intermingle with existing inscriptions. Therefore, I am suggesting that teacher identity formation involves a bringing together of inscribed and reinscribed discourses. Because messages from the past linger, teacher identity is not simply the creation of ‘new’ subjectivities. Ongoing identity work draws on past work; at the same time understandings and positions shift in relation to contemporary discourses and cultural practice (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996).

Identity formation in ‘conversation’ with others

In Chapter Four, my analysis of the teachers’ narratives suggested possibilities for reframing ‘difference’ in enabling and positive ways (Young, 1990), as part of the
shaping of professional knowledge. In this section, I place a different lens on teachers’ framing of difference by examining it in relation to their subject formation. One significant way in which teachers’ expressed their views in relation to particular educational practices was by commenting on the thinking and behaviour of others.

I begin by drawing on interview data in which the teachers engage with the beliefs and behaviour of pupils, colleagues, themselves and their professional communities.

**Pupils’ self-perception**

The importance of positive pupil self-perception for enhancing academic success has been debated by researchers for the past 30 years, and the link is widely accepted amongst teachers (Shen, 2002). Belief in this link also underpins research literature on what makes a difference, particularly for pupils from marginalised groups (Bishop et al., 2003; Shen, 2002; Shields et al., 2005). The teachers in this study also appeared to view pupils’ self-perception as critical to their learning, and a number of them expressed their frustration with their pupils’ low expectations of their ability to succeed and associated resistance to committing to their academic success for fear of failure. Teresa (Interview One), for example, who works in a school in an area with high numbers of Pasifika and Māori students and high poverty, sees her students as ‘dumbing themselves down, big time’. However, she refuses to accept her pupils’ disrespect of themselves:

> They got a huge rev up; they got a real big rark up, and they were told that they weren’t thick and they weren’t going to be failing any more and if they were acting up, they were going to be sitting by themselves in the corner, because they’re not going to muck around any more (Teresa, Interview One).

This extract and the following one were used previously in Chapter Four to illustrate how Teresa reframed her pupils’ intelligence, emphasising her meaning-making of discourses about difference. Here, I have analysed the same excerpts from a different angle to illustrate how Teresa makes sense of her own identity. Her interactions with pupils contributes to this self-making as do her interactions with colleagues, illustrated in the next excerpt.

Teresa further comments on the way she sees some of her colleagues responding to this behaviour.
Chapter Five: Professional identity

Excellence has not been expected from them by probably 70% of the teachers ... if they were given the right teaching, they would be achieving excellent results ... So no-one else had a problem with [pupils not handing in work] other than me (Teresa, Interview One).

This gives her a lot to consider about how she wants to ‘be’ as a teacher, because the contrast between her response and how she describes her colleagues is so great—the neglect she views in her colleagues compared to her own determination to reject deficit constructions of pupils (Shields et al., 2005).

In an interview the following year, however, Teresa’s determination has modified, because of her perceived difficulty with the school culture (both the teachers and the pupils) and perhaps a re-evaluation of her power and use of power as a teacher.

I’ve become a little bit more relaxed ... Like last year I had this plan and everyone was going to pass and I consistently got upset when on-one handed their work in and it took me a while to understand the nature of the school. But having said that, it doesn’t mean that it’s acceptable, and it is very much the culture of the school and it’s obviously something that’s gone on for years, but it needs to change ... there’s just a real culture of not really caring; there’s no real value for their education... and I think because it’s gone on for so long, the teachers just accept that only half the class is going to hand in their work, and it’s not right (Teresa, Interview Two).

She recognises the potential power of cultural practices or discourses (from both pupils and teachers) and finds it difficult to reconcile these with her own strongly held beliefs about the pupils’ potential and how best to deal with deficit behaviour and attitudes. The dilemma for Teresa is how to implement her preferred practice based on her understandings of education and social justice, and how to do this in an environment that does not appear to value the same qualities in teaching and learning that she does.

One way of interpreting what has happened here is that Teresa’s professional knowledge from teacher education has ‘washed out’ because she appears to have succumbed to deficit practices and beliefs that she sees as being commonly promoted in her school, thereby foregoing what she learnt in teacher education (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). However, this extract suggests to me that it is more complex than the ‘wash-out’ explanation admits. The interview data suggests, as does the work of Loughran et al. (2001), Russell (2004) and Zeichner and Tabachnick
(1981), that wash-out explanations are inadequate for explaining what happens to teacher professional knowledge. Instead of thinking of it as a process of washing out, it is more fruitful to understand it as a situated, pragmatic response. The teacher draws on and selects from multiple sources of knowledge and multiple beliefs and practices—both past and present—depending on the particular circumstances. In this way, we see how professional identity is overlain with past and present demands and is not a static entity (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996). While Teresa’s beliefs and values have remained, her practice is modified to take into account the circumstances in which she finds herself.

Tim, who works in a small, multicultural school, with pupils from both low and middle socio-economic backgrounds, showed how he is also concerned about his pupils’ resistance to engaging in all aspects of the learning process:

*I had cultural things where I had a number of Pacific Islanders at Year 12 who went into a 2-hour exam that they did know the material for and had been present during the teaching and refused to write anything. Rather than actually fail, they wouldn’t engage* (Tim, Interview One).

He understands this as a fear of failure on the part of his pupils but does not view what he describes as his colleagues’ authoritarian, non-educative ways as being effective approaches for addressing the problem. Tim is marking out a sense of his own identity as a teacher in the process of making sense of the beliefs and behaviour of colleagues. Tim continued, in his second year, to resist such approaches, and created his own contrasting identity as a teacher, despite pressure to change:

*It’s not actually selling out to the chalk and talk. It’s not adopting the male behaviourist mode of behaviour—of shouting and telling kids to be quiet ... I will not let [the other teachers’ lack of care and moaning] grind me down* (Tim, Interview Two).

He gains some power to stand by his beliefs through support and membership of an external professional group. There is evidence of a struggle for Tim in how he forms himself and identifies as a teacher. His immediate teaching context provides contradictory discourses of ‘best practice’ and, like Teresa, he challenges and resists what he disagrees with. Tim also seeks affirmation of his approach outside the school, while Teresa modifies her response to pupils’ non-engagement.
For both Teresa and Tim, the conflicts they faced and the distress about what they saw as collegial negligence eventually contributed to their decisions to change schools, as soon as they became fully registered teachers. This illustrates a dilemma frequently faced by new teachers, and the range of possible responses available to them. Even if their philosophy about teaching is underpinned with a sense of fairness, as discussed in Chapter Four, they are still faced with the need to meet school understandings and expectations of ‘effective’ teaching, in order to gain credibility and, indeed, to become fully registered teachers. They are assessed against national standards mediated through the philosophy and policies of the teachers and schools carrying out the assessment. Therefore, it can be risky for new teachers to challenge conflicting philosophies, even if it is completely contrary to their own beliefs, and to how they perceive themselves becoming as teachers.

I have been discussing how two teachers responded to the effects of their pupils’ negative self-perception, arguing that this response is entwined with a number of interweaving dilemmas. As discussed in Chapter Four, their desire to have their pupils succeed and to contribute to this through their own teaching practice is likely to have been influenced by the kinds of rhetoric they encountered in their teacher education programmes, and in government policy and educational research. This includes imperatives about teacher expectations of excellence, teachers’ responsibility to maintain high educational standards, and understandings of cultural difference.

I now turn to consider, in more detail, teachers’ identity formation in relation to their responses to collegial practices and attitudes, and particularly ‘generational’ differences. By generational, I refer not only to the respective ages of teachers but also the respective stages in their professional careers—that is teaching ‘generations’.

‘Generational’ subjectivities

At times during the interviews, some of the teachers expressed shock at the attitudes of senior colleagues to their pupils. And, contrary to what is often reported in research (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Corrie, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), these new teachers did

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45 Both Tim and Teresa spoke about this intention in their second interviews and acted on this decision at the end of the year, once they had gained full teacher registration.
not take on the views of these more experienced teachers. Nevertheless, encountering such differences in attitude and learning how to manage contradictory ways of being a teacher, was integral to the process of forming their own sense of being a teacher. Such encounters with diverse beliefs and practices is a form of learning intersubjectively and it can have a powerful impact on teachers’ professional identity formation.

For example, Iris was appalled when one of the heads of department, in her first school—in a low socio-economic suburban area—responded to her attempts to engage students in rich learning experiences by suggesting that her pupils need only to be prepared to be checkout operators and therefore such experiences were unnecessary. Such attitudes bluntly express deficit views of low socio-economic status and ethnic minority pupils, and assume that these pupils do not have aspirations or potential to succeed in more than unskilled work. This is clearly contrary to much research that suggests the need for teachers to believe in their pupils’ intelligence and ability and teach in ways that engage and challenge them to achieve at high levels (Bishop & Berryman, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; McDonald, 2004; Nuthall, 2002; Shields et al., 2005). Iris left this school very early in her first year of teaching and moved to another school with a similar profile but where her senior colleagues were interested in her ideas and committed to respecting pupils and taking their academic achievement seriously.

Tim similarly grapples with what he sees as destructive practices and attitudes of some of his colleagues. As he spoke about this, he also illustrated how his own views are socially shaped in a particular social and professional context—the discourses he encounters make available particular subject positions for him to occupy (McLeod & Yates, 2006). Thus what he said about the views and professional practices of others provides insights into how he perceives his own practice and contributes to his self-making as a teacher. He wants to:

create empowered learners ... Treating kids as you’d want to be treated ... with respect and dignity (Tim, Interview One).

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46 This refers to the constructivist teaching concept of providing interactive, collaborative opportunities in the classroom and resource-rich learning experiences for students.
Tim sees himself as enabling learning and his relationship with pupils as reciprocal and respectful. At the same time, he struggles with a range of desires and contested beliefs about teaching that can be problematic in practice—such as his understanding of policies that aim to address the learning needs of particular groups and the tensions involved in implementing equity policies in practice:

*The responsibility to have Pacific Island wharenui*47 *and Pacific Island language reflected. I mean we do it for Māori under the Treaty and all of that but surely as percentages come up in terms of Asian becoming higher and, I mean, working from a bicultural basis with wharenui, but if I’ve got 35% Polynesian and 10% Māori, I owe it to Pacific Island to try and get the learning and language and cultural surroundings for them as much as ... well not as much as, but in addition (Tim, Interview One).*

While he appreciates the need and importance of providing particular spaces for Māori, Tim is pointing out the need to also create spaces for Pasifika and to offer Pasifika languages within his school. He is attuned to the language, intent and underlying philosophies of policies that differentiate on the basis of cultural categories (discussed in Chapter Four). But in practice he sees that the implementation of such principles is not so straightforward, given the particular practices of school management with regard to teaching and learning—their traditional styles and expectations:

*My problem is that the Principal seems to want something else ... it’s a traditional model ... to have a controlled disciplinarian at the front [of the classroom] ... (Tim, Interview Two).*

By referring to the practices and views of others around him as creating ‘problems’ for him, Tim is signalling how he views himself as a teacher and how he is engaged in both meaning-making and self-making. He uses aspects of identity—his and others’—to make sense of his own teaching style and how he sees himself as teacher. That is, he does not see himself as a controlling disciplinarian, but as a facilitator of learning; not as a blind implementer of policy, but as someone who understands the dilemmas faced by teachers implementing equitable policies in practice. Thus, he is working out how to manage the conflicts he faces with the school management’s philosophy of

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47 *Wharenui* (literally ‘large house’) is a Māori term referring to a communal meeting house. Many schools have such spaces, usually for official ceremonies involving a Māori welcome (pōwhiri) or for teaching Māori language and culture.
learning and behaviour. This philosophy is at odds with his inclusive understanding of teaching practice, but it is nevertheless a powerful source of influence on his thinking and identity as a teacher. While he resists such practices and thinking, like Teresa, he maintains his own philosophy and practices as much as he can. What he observes, then, impacts on his sense of self as a teacher even though he expresses this as a counter-discourse. Thus his identity formation is tied up with the philosophy and practices of others, including those he rejects or resists. In other words, teacher identity is formed intersubjectively, in interaction, even in conflict with the views and practices of others.

In Chapter Four, I argued that teachers are caught between the contradictions and dilemmas of an economy of performance and ecologies of practice in the formation of professional knowledge (Stronach et al., 2002). What I have described here suggests that identity formation is similarly infused with tensions as teachers encounter multiple, contradictory views—both their own and others. Tim’s shifting views can also be analysed in relation to the notion of the self as a magic writing pad (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996). He is working across new and old views, juggling change and continuity in how he sees himself as a teacher and the kinds of teaching practices he values.

It is not only senior colleagues’ attitudes that impact on the identity formation of these new teachers. In a conversation with a group of older beginning teachers—Iris, Tim and Christine—about working with mismatches between their own philosophies and practices, and those of others, the attitudes of some of their younger colleagues came under scrutiny. These teachers’ views of the ‘younger’ teachers can by understood as a means for working out their own subject positions in relation to pedagogical responses to difference.

Iris, Tim and Christine appear to understand ‘difference’ as inherent in curriculum (including planning, teaching, learning and assessment). Their discussion about younger colleagues followed a long exploration of how to engage their pupils in ‘rich learning environments’ and the sophisticated pedagogical approaches they report

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48 By coincidence, the new teachers in this interview group happened to be in their forties and were referring to teachers in their twenties.
using in their classrooms. Iris, Tim and Christine appear to view their teaching role as engaging pupils through understanding their experiences and ‘differences’, and by responding accordingly.

However, they saw some of their younger colleagues as somewhat ignorant of the multiple realities of their pupils’ lives and unwilling to think beyond their own learning and schooling experiences when considering their pupils’ learning.

Iris: *Do you know what’s scary? ... Some of the new teachers that are coming through, that are young ... are as entrenched and old-fashioned and rigid as if they’ve been teaching for 20 years ... You’re getting a proportion of real control freaks ... just the approach to the kids of ‘you haven’t got it the first time. That’s okay; we’ll move on’ ... just this, “you haven’t got it yet; if you don’t want to learn then ...”*

Tim: *If the kids are not getting it, you try a different technique until they get it.*

Iris: *I almost wonder if they’re the ones in the class who have always been the good ones, and have done the work and therefore, “Look, I achieved. If there’s something wrong with you, it’s because you haven’t done anything.”*

Christine: *Or, they can’t say, “okay, maybe I have to change what I’m doing, because I’m doing it right ...”*

Iris: *Yeah, that’s very much the attitude—”well, I’ve done it right”. You know, there’s no second chances or just try something different (Iris, Tim and Christine, Interview Two).*

What they are describing is similar to Shields et al. (2005) and Bishop et al.’s (2003) explanation of ‘deficit theorising’ or of blaming the pupils. Further, Iris, Tim and Christine’s conversation suggests that because they are older, with life experiences beyond their younger, sometimes more experienced colleagues, they come to teaching with different expectations of their role, and different views of pupils and their lives. Therefore they may have different responses to classroom practices and different ways of self-identifying from these younger teachers.

It also suggests some of the potential problems of categorising cultural difference (Scott, 1994; Weedon, 1999). Iris, Tim and Christine’s criticism of the ‘younger’ teachers’ blaming of pupils for their lack of understanding or effort, and assumptions that pupils need to conform to a dominant norm, indicated their strong opposition to
such thinking. By talking about other teachers in this way, they create a picture of
themselves as teachers with contrasting values and beliefs—teachers who have an
inclusive approach, are prepared to adapt their teaching to suit their students, and
acknowledge their pupils’ differences.

This is another articulation of the kinds of generational differences that can occur.
While in my earlier discussion of Teresa and Tim, the differences of approach
expressed related to career stage—that is, more experienced or senior teachers—in
this example, we see the difference being viewed in terms of age.

The research on teacher education rarely discusses the chronological age of beginning
teachers and it is likely because it is assumed that all beginning teachers are young
adults; clearly this is not necessarily the case. Some beginning teachers may have, as
in these examples, more varied life experiences than some of their younger teaching
colleagues, including those who have been teaching for a little longer. The
combination of an identity as a beginning teacher with a self-identity as an
experienced adult and experienced, for example, engineer, administrator or manager,
preseats a particular context that is not often explored in relation to the education of
beginning teachers. The analysis here highlights the inadequacy of conceptions of
new teachers as naïve neophytes, views which also do not do justice to the impact of
teachers’ life experiences on their identity formation as teachers. This highlights the
importance of considering life experience as a contributing factor to the identity
formation of new teachers. New teachers are not ‘new’ adults and are not necessarily
naïve. This phenomenon also indicates particular challenges for those responsible for
inducting new teachers as well as for new teachers themselves.

Significantly, the ways in which many of the ‘younger’ teachers in this study talked
about their teaching, pupils and colleagues, does not fit the description of ‘younger’
teachers given by Iris, Tim and Christine, as can be seen with the examples of Jude in
the next set of extracts and Aroha’s response to Tiriti o Waitangi implementation,
discussed later in the chapter. Further, there were also ‘older’ teachers in the study
who, at times, used explanations that suggest assimilationist thinking. Thus, while
age, or generation, may contribute to a teacher’s identity formation, it is not a single
defining characteristic of this. Nevertheless, the ways in which Iris, Tim and Christine
talk about their concerns about colleagues in the extracts above shows how the
attitudes of others are used as points of contrast in the formation of their own professional dispositions and values. These examples provide insights into how the teachers have drawn on identity positions as a kind of resource or argument to make sense of themselves in relation to other teachers and as such they point to some of the ways in which professional identity is formed intersubjectively (MacLure, 1993).

One of the ‘younger’ teachers interviewed in this study, Jude, who works in a large middle-class school, with a small but significant Māori population, provides an illustration of how age or generation can be better explained as a reference point for identity formation rather than as a characteristic that defines who you are. She too finds the ideas and practices of some of her colleagues to be conservative and contrary to her own. She uses her interpretation of their actions and beliefs as a springboard to explain her own position as a teacher in the way MacLure (1993) sees identity operating. Her comments suggest that she has similar inclusive understandings of difference to the older teachers discussed above:

*The majority of teachers are concerned with student wellbeing and learning, but there are teachers that tend not to want to address external things—ignore the fact that a student’s parents getting divorced and so they’re not at home and they’re between homes night by night at the moment, and they won’t have their gear. I think some teachers, and a small minority, but they still get hung up on the little things, the things that ... really as long as the student’s at school it’s got to be a good thing. I think that’s one part of the philosophy that I don’t share in, but otherwise I think the school-wide philosophy is strong and fairly united and supportive and creative and communicative (Jude, Interview Two).*

While Jude acknowledged her colleagues’ commitment, she has some concerns about what she sees as the limits of their understandings of the broader social factors that impact on pupils’ lives and education. She sees their more traditional practices and views of pupils and their personal circumstances as a source of potential conflict for her own professional practice. However, she appears to have persisted with her preferred approach, with some reported success at gaining the support or trust of her head of department over time. Again, this provides an example of how interactions with the beliefs and practices of others contribute to identity formation.

*My HOD. Last year ... we didn’t clash, but he’s the traditionalist, and I came in with all these awesome ideas and think he was a bit taken aback*
by my enthusiasm, so I’ve had to go to him with ... what I want laid out on paper and he’s very accommodating this year (Jude, Interview Two).

She does, though, express some ambivalence about what she can do at a school level to influence and change the attitudes that concern her. She appears not to see herself as having a role, at this stage, in challenging and changing their views. Perhaps this is because she sees policies and practices of the school as counter-balanced by a generally constructive philosophy. This following excerpt was analysed earlier to emphasise teachers’ engagement with broader social issues affecting schools. Here it is used to illustrate how Jude’s identity forms as she makes sense of the beliefs and practices of colleagues:

I don’t know that the school is embracing [equity practices]. Like saying, “well what are we doing about that?”... and that’s a real shame to me (Jude, Interview One).

And actually pinning anyone down to do the job ... It’s quite sad. If I had more time, outside of what I’m already doing ... I would love to be helping with that ... It’s not just being ignored, but to actually pin anyone down ... it’s just not happened (Jude, Interview Two).

Perhaps she sees her capacity to intervene as limited by her position as a new teacher in the school, with little real power to effect change. This may be because of her self-identified ‘new’ or ‘young’ status, her awareness of being assessed for fully registered teacher status, and the need to ‘toe the line’ and ‘do the right thing’, in order to achieve this. It may also be her way of dealing with a ‘diversity’ of views held by her colleagues—the competing discourses, which she is negotiating. Her desire to be accepted, valued and supported has led her to resolve the situation by taking the line of least resistance in terms of colleagues but still carrying out her chosen approach to teaching and learning in her own classroom.

This discussion of generational subjectivities raises a number of points about the education of new teachers and their identity formation. I have shown that how teachers refer to themselves in terms of age or generation is not merely a defining factor but more importantly can be a reference point for viewing the self as a teacher. As MacLure (1993) points out, often teachers make sense of themselves by describing what they are not; this is another form of what I have described as the intersubjective processes that are a significant element in teacher professional identity work.
**Professional identities changing over time**

Teresa’s comments about how her views on pupils changed over two years and Jude’s comments about her identity as a young teacher indicate how teachers’ professional identities change over time, and quite rapidly in the early years of teaching. Jude showed her acute awareness of herself as a new teacher and her vulnerability, as well as her need to establish credibility amongst her colleagues. At the same time, she works out how best to interpret and address the differing philosophies and approaches she encounters.

The tensions illustrated here are not surprising for someone engaged in working through a range of new experiences and developing a sense of how she fits into the school as a teacher and a colleague. Her ways of dealing with these competing imperatives appear to be a pragmatic response to the tensions in the relationship between equitable practices and policies, the accountability measures she faces and her sense of herself as a new teacher—without, yet, an established credibility amongst her colleagues.

In the second year of interviews, Jude expressed a much greater comfort with the idea of herself as a teacher, alongside all the authority and credibility that can bring:

> [Last year,] I was a young first year, and this year I feel like I’ve put on about two years to my age, which helps. And I don’t look like a [Year 13] as much as I did last year (Jude, Interview Two).

She appeared to feel more accepted because she had proved herself, to the pupils, her colleagues and to herself, as a competent, inspiring and diplomatic teacher. She also indicates that she is more comfortable with describing herself as ‘a teacher’, whereas in her first year she was sometimes mistaken for a senior student. This identity as a ‘young’ teacher was a significant aspect of her formation or sense of self as a teacher. The way Jude refers to her age here in relation to that of her pupils and colleagues suggests that this was an important factor for her in the process of identity formation or self-making. This example also illustrates the importance for teachers to have a sense of confidence in their professional knowledge as it applies in practice, in order to identify comfortably as a teacher and to be confident in that identity.
A further example of the ways in which teachers’ identities can change rapidly is illustrated in the following vignette, taken from interviews with Robert, who works in a large city school with a high academic success rate. In Interview One, Robert expressed his concern about the time his school dedicates to cultural and sporting activities, and the cost to academic excellence:

*I think the first thing of the school education is for academic purpose ... We have too much time spent in the culture and the sports. I don’t want to say the culture and sports is not good. They are good but they should take up a reasonable time ... when they are too much the education for academic purpose will suffer* (Robert, Interview One).

His views are likely to be a response to the kind of school he is at and the mostly high academic achievers who choose to study more academically challenging subjects such as his. However, because he was (initially) educated in and grew up in an Asian country with very different cultural expectations from New Zealand, he has perhaps focused on adjusting to the dominant culture. Furthermore, his philosophy of teaching initially drew largely on discourses he encountered in his own culture, as he explained in his second interview, where he was more reflective about his views:

*I came from a background where the school is supposed to be academic only. But the first two years when I taught in the school I found the school encouraged sports and cultural activities. I felt not very comfortable, but now I find it’s different—I have different thinking. The reason is, I think, that our school encourages not just academic stuff, you know* (Robert, Interview Two).

He mentioned in this interview that he had changed his view from one that only privileged academic success to now recognising a role for sports and cultural activities in students’ educational lives:

*I think we kind of encourage them to strive for excellence in everything, you know—academic in the subjects, in sports and in cultural. Yeah, I think the way we do this is kind of develop their integrity or develop their confidence. Yeah, because I’ve got many kids in my classes—they are good at sport as well as their subjects, so it surprised me. I thought when they will spend the time in sports or cultural stuff, they will let their study go, but it’s not true, it’s not true ... Yeah, I’ve got a couple of guys, they are very good in my class and they are good at sports too. They are doing the hockey—you know, second hockey in the school. Yeah, they are very good, so I sort of changed my mind* (Robert, Interview Two).
There are significant changes in the way he spoke in Interview Two compared to how he expressed his views in Interview One. In the first year, sporting and cultural activities occurring in the school (especially those that took students out of his class) were positioned as disruptive to what he understood as the core function of schooling—academic excellence. However, in the second interview he observed that the students in his classes who excelled in extra-curricular activities often also excelled academically, and he began to see excellence as important in both academic and non-academic pursuits. He recognised that his view had changed, concluding that the development of the ‘all-round character’ of students was beneficial. Both his cultural background and being a new teacher were important factors in how he made sense of the balance of academic, sport and cultural life in a school. Nevertheless, the arguments and experiences he faced on a day-to-day basis are strongly grounded in a school culture that is very traditional and emphasises assimilation into a dominant professional, business world, rather than exploring differences of philosophy or understandings of education. Robert appears to have drawn on what Stronach et al. (2002) refer to as ‘discrepant identities’ to construct his identity from multiple views and actions within his teaching context.

While Robert has changed his view of the role of schools in encouraging sporting and cultural activities as well as the academic, he justifies this on the basis of his existing belief that students should be encouraged to strive for excellence. This change in view within an existing overall personal philosophy and belief system is an instance of how identity work involves the interplay between new and older inscriptions, allowing for both change and continuity in sense of self and attitudes (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996).

**Identity formation in communities**

My analysis so far suggests that the discourses encountered by teachers contribute in multiple ways to professional identity formation and that this involves processes of both change and continuity. New teachers’ identity formation is significantly influenced by the attitudes and practices of other teachers in their professional lives. Further, their participation and sense of inclusion in professional communities of teachers also appeared to be critical to their sense of identity as teachers.
All the teachers talked about being part (or not) of professional communities—either within their school communities or externally. These were not necessarily formally constituted professional associations and they differed depending on individual circumstances. I will now explore the role of these communities in the formation of teachers’ identity. As the teachers talked about their communities—both explicitly and implicitly—they revealed aspects of their sense of self as a teacher and how they contributed to or drew on community ideas and practices.

Tim, teaching in a school, which espouses what he perceives as traditional values, found that his school community did not provide the professional knowledge and practice he expected or respected, and he strongly resisted many of the ideologies expressed by his colleagues.

*My version ... is to co-construct knowledge or make knowledge with them, whereas other teachers ... look upon them as quote empty vessels or sponges into which you pour knowledge (Tim, Interview One)*

He expressed concern about the difference between the school’s philosophy and his own, and also between the philosophies expressed in teacher education and official discourses (such as the Education Review Office):

*I’ve seen a total disjuncture from what I was taught at college of education to what is expected by ERO (Tim, Interview One).*

*That’s the model that we were taught to reject at College ... and what I’ve been doing for the last year ... and that runs contrary to the school ethos (Tim, Interview Two).*

These differences have produced a sense of isolation for him within the school, and in particular, concern about the upcoming assessment for his teacher registration:

*I’m feeling exposed, because I’m new ... very isolated and exposed (Tim, Interview Two).*

However, he chose not to take up the ‘traditional’ practices with which he disagrees. This suggests that he has a robust sense of his own identity as a teacher and that he intends to survive and, in a sense, to resist, despite his unhappiness and the strong disjuncture he experiences. Nevertheless, I had a sense that Tim’s involvement with an external group of like-minded teachers who work together on curriculum and assessment matters was important for maintaining his perspective and enabled him to
continue to practise in ways he preferred. This group provided a reference point for him, for both his professional practice and identity formation. It also enabled him to justify the choices he made and to uphold a sense of himself as a teacher that drew on subject positions in which he believed. Tim’s interactions with this group of colleagues, then, has contributed to both his meaning-making and self-making.

Another teacher, Iris, teaching in a suburban school in a low socio-economic area, is quite explicit about the ways in which her colleagues, her teacher education experience and her self study contribute to her identity formation:

> This is where I think [the teacher education programme I did] was ideal for me. Like you can go in and trust what you’ve got and believe in which was really strong—and go in and change it, and just stick to your guns. I’m quite good at doing real resistant, sneaky enough to do so (Iris, Interview One).

She sees her teacher education experience as allowing her to develop her own teaching style or identity, and to put into action the practices she believes are important. This was critical for Iris’s professional knowledge formation and illustrates how identity formation does not simply happen in schools or in isolation in individuals’ minds. Teacher education is another powerful context in which new teachers make sense of multiple subject positions that contribute to their identity and professional knowledge. Iris also actively takes on the responsibility for her ongoing learning as a teacher:

> I would say that I’m in charge of my training ... I do 10 hours, at least, development of my own a week ... What I’m doing is theory, reading and research (Iris, Interview Two).

Teacher education, educational theory and research are, then, further resources for her knowledge and identity work as a teacher—discourses that make subject positions available for self-making. Similarly, her interactions with colleagues contribute to this self-making:

> We are working on new ways of trying to get kids involved with the learning ... it’s essential that we take on the new ways of teaching ... we’ve been talking about it; we’ve been putting it into place and now you do it ... it’s stunning in that you have lots of collaboration ... I’m just picking up so much from [my colleagues] and then putting it in with, I think, my good ideas and it’s become really strong (Iris, Interview Two).
Iris uses ‘we’, clearly locating herself as a teacher within this community. She links this collaborative environment with ‘good teaching practice’ as well as noting its contribution to her identity as a teacher. She is able to both contribute something to the professional community and receive something of value to her as a new teacher—this can be understood as maintaining, writing over and rewriting her sense of identity as a teacher (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996). Because of such reciprocal relationships, she sees herself as learning and as a committed, competent teacher:

They really value what I bring in. I’m not a total learner. They get really excited about the different ideas and we’re really encouraged to bounce stuff off against each other and go for it (Iris, Interview One).

This process of actively learning with her colleagues is not the socialisation into traditional ways of teaching, as suggested by Beck and Kosnik (2000) or Villegas and Lucas (2002). Nor does it represent the giving up and conforming, as happened to some of the teachers in Corrie’s (2002) study of new teachers engaged in ongoing group professional conversations. Iris comes across as an active learner, using what she can glean from research, colleagues, teacher education and the pupils:

I know it sounds really vain, but ... I think I’m a really good teacher, but I think I’m potentially going to be a really excellent teacher. I’ve still got lots of stuff I need to know. It’s frustrating; I sort of wish I could plug into somebody else’s brain and just have that 10 years, and use it with what I know ... (Iris, Interview Two).

In this section, I have shown that the interaction with the ideas, attitudes and actions of pupils, school management, other teachers and teacher educators becomes a crucial factor in the professional identity formation of early career teachers. The ways in which the teachers described themselves involved reference to a number of sometimes, contradictory identities or subject positions. Thus, at a micro level, teachers develop their sense of self discursively in interaction with others. In the following section I extend this discussion to examine identity in relation to particular socio-cultural contexts.

**Identity formation and contested socio-cultural and professional spaces**

Bjerrum Nielsen’s (1996) concept of the magic writing pad is a valuable metaphor for understanding teachers’ identity formation in relation to the identities of others. This
metaphor is also helpful for examining identity formation in relation to contested socio-cultural and professional spaces. By contested spaces I refer to particular contested situations or issues, which generate strong debate amongst, for example, teachers, the public and politicians. In this discussion I draw again on MacLure’s (1993) notion that teachers use identity as a kind of argument or resource to explain or make sense of themselves in relation to other people and the world at large. How teachers talk about themselves in relation to particular concepts or issues is examined as a way of understanding their processes of self-making. Again, it is argued that professional identity is formed interactively, as teachers draw on discrepant identities to make sense of multiple beliefs and behaviours (Stronach et al., 2002).

I now present a number of vignettes from the interviews that relate to three areas of contention in education in New Zealand and examine how teachers construct identity in dialogue with these issues, namely:

- Spirituality as it relates to curriculum and culture
- The Tiriti o Waitangi, and education for Māori
- The intersection of ethnicity, gender and curriculum.

**Spirituality, curriculum and culture**

For one group of older teachers—Iris, Tim and Christine—during the second set of interviews, a discussion about religion, culture and teaching revealed a range of contradictory personal and spiritual beliefs confronting teachers, and the difficulties in working through these in their classrooms and schools. This discussion also revealed the teachers formulating their identity in relation to how they respond to the views of their pupils, as well as to official school and education policies, and cultural discourses.

On a number of occasions, Tim identified himself as having spiritual leanings and referred to his own Catholic schooling as a student. As he works in a multicultural Catholic school, religion is a prominent consideration for him. However, his uncertainty and internal conflict about the enactment of religion in the school, the wider school community and the cultural context emerged in his disquiet about what
he regards as the imposition of the Irish Catholic faith on the predominantly Pacific Island, as well as Māori and Assyrian student population.

_We seem to have a group of Irish Catholics [...] who’ve got a different culture, in terms of religion or a different culture generally, which sends a message of, in terms of religiosity or spirituality, to the rest of the school. So you’ve got competing groups of ... spirituality, in terms of Pacific Island, um, Assyrian, which is a different sort of spirituality (Tim, Interview Two)._ 

Tim (Interview Two) sees spirituality as ‘a contested space at school’, and as providing a particular dimension to his school’s educational philosophy. He also recognises a potential conflict between religious beliefs and curriculum, in the teaching of such things as reproductive technology: ‘and also when the religion is running counter to science (Tim, Interview Two)’.

His interrogation of the juxtaposition of a Western faith with non-Western cultural groups appears to raise questions for Tim about his own faith and interpretation of Christianity; it also raised issues for him related to social justice, school knowledge and curriculum. The questions he, Iris and Christine raised about spirituality and its relationship to curriculum illustrate how negotiating contested aspects of school curriculum and culture are part of the process of teachers’ identity formation. Tim recognises the range of perspectives present in his school, the potential conflict with scientific knowledge and his view of himself as a teacher. This shaping of his teacher identity in relation to his spiritual identity and the school’s particular faith, in turn impacts on how he applies his professional knowledge, including the National Curriculum, in the classroom. In this, Tim makes sense of what he sees as contradictory spiritual and cultural identity positions, including his own, the school governors and the pupils’ (Stronach et al., 2002). He moves between layers of discursive meaning—present subject positions and discourses of religion and culture intermingle with his past experiences, particularly of religion, in the process of working out his teacher identity (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996).

Other teachers in this group also commented on the role of religion and spirituality in their pupils’ lives, similarly demonstrating how professional identity and knowledge form discursively, in an ongoing process of interaction with present and historical events and experiences (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996; Britzman, 2003; McLeod & Yates,
2006). While not teaching in religious schools, Christine and Iris nevertheless expressed concern about the impact of what they described as extreme religious beliefs entering their secular schools, via the wider school communities and students. Iris refers to a ‘closed narrowness’ she hears from some students when they discuss religious themes related to curriculum. She links this with a lack of tolerance of diversity:

It’s not the nicest kind of Christianity, that’s coming in, and the kids ... it makes them very intolerant. ... you know, anti-gay, anti-sex, anti-condoms, anti, anti—preaching the vision and hate (Iris, Interview Two).

She is also concerned about the emotional safety of her students as they interact with extreme religious views that preach negativity towards particular groups of society (homosexuals, for instance) and particular practices (such as safe sex). She and Christine link what they see as an infiltration of Christian fundamentalism in their schools, with the presence of Māori students:

And it’s because we’re getting a higher number of Māori students. I’m sure of it, because it’s mostly the Māori kids who are involved in this, where I am, in this religious whatever it is (Christine, Interview Two).

Such comments appear to suggest that she is blaming Māori for promoting damaging Christian fundamentalism. Yet, this is countered by her views, expressed elsewhere in interviews, on how teachers can ensure equitable outcomes for all students, including those disadvantaged by historical and social circumstances. Her observations about the effects of fundamentalism are underpinned by concerns about its impact on student learning and success, and her fears that religious fundamentalism could be undermining.

Christine describes herself as a teacher with high expectations of both pupils’ behaviour and their academic success:

It’s really important to have high expectations of [all your students] too. And for them to know that you’ve got high expectations of them ... I mean, even in my alt[ernative] class I had high expectations. My alt class is doing the best of the Year 11 alt classes, cos I expect them to ... I want them to believe in themselves (Christine, Interview One).

The ‘alt’ class is a less academic course, offered for pupils with a record of lower achievement within her subject discipline. Christine attempts to create a learning
environment, which addresses potential barriers to learning and where pupils look out for each other:

*All my classes, my kids know that it’s a safe environment – that they’re not allowed to put each other down or themselves down or the subject down (Christine, Interview One).*

Christine’s apparent cultural blaming, then, is more likely to arise from her concern about the current revival of religious fundamentalism in New Zealand, in particular such powerful, charismatic groups as the Destiny Church (which attracts high numbers of Māori and Pasifika people). These concerns also arise from her personal beliefs and earlier experience with religion. She was particularly troubled by what she saw as contradictions within organised religion, such as child abuse by clergy, which was ignored by the church. She recalled an incident when an ordained priest from her home town was found guilty of child abuse, but allowed to continue working with children for years. As such, the religious beliefs she has encountered, both in the classroom and over the course of her life, as well as the powerful messages that new fundamentalist religious groups are sending, combine to influence her responses as a teacher to religion and to student learning. The key point here is that encountering and managing conflicting points of view and divergent outlooks are central to professional identity formation. In this case, religion and spirituality are singled out for attention, but the larger point is the significance of negotiating conflict and difference for becoming a teacher.

Not all of the teachers in this group explicitly identified religious influences on students in terms of socio-political issues, but several touched on this aspect indirectly. For example, Iris clearly locates her thinking about the relationship between culture, religion and colonisation, with that of Irihapeti Ramsden, who was an influential Māori nurse educator:

*She was good. Yeah, just that whole, you know, putting Christianity on top of a Māori culture and it’s nothing to do with it. She just refused. She was just so blunt about it. Cut the crap, you know. What’s it got to do with us? Nothing. It’s religion; it’s colonial (Iris, Interview Two).*

Ramsden led the development of the concept of ‘cultural safety’ in New Zealand (Ramsden, 2003). This concept was originally developed in nursing education, but can also be applied to other areas of social and professional life. It takes a
Chapter Five: Professional identity

consideration of ‘clients’ beyond knowing about their cultural, religious or ethnic ‘needs’, to an engagement with the sociopolitical context of beliefs in professional practice. Ramsden’s thinking was also clearly connected to issues arising as a result of colonisation, with regard to attitudes to ‘Other’, and she was outspoken in her challenging and questioning of power and powerlessness for (especially) Indigenous people. She also saw Christianity as part of the colonisation of tikanga Māori\(^{49}\) and saw no need for pre-European Māori spiritual practices to be taken over by a Pākehā framework to give them credibility (Ellison-Loschmann, 2003).

Cultural safety is informed by a number of understandings of difference, including a belief that nurses (and I would add teachers, doctors, social workers and others working in the human services field) need to be open-minded and flexible in relation to cultural, sexual, physical and ethnic difference, to understand their own beliefs and values and not blame victims of historical and economic processes. In addition to conveying elements of a Freirean outlook (Freire, 1970), the concept of cultural safety is based on categories of difference, including Tiriti o Waitangi relationships for Māori, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity—categories identified by Ramsden as traditionally including groups of people who are invisible or discriminated against. As such, cultural safety has resonances with Burbules’ (1997) explanation of systems of thinking about difference as diversity, because it recognises difference in a diversity of categories. In some respects, cultural safety offers a means for addressing the practical application of policies based on categories of difference. In other words, culturally safe practices challenge professionals to avoid making assumptions about people different from themselves—such as, ‘all Māori are kinaesthetic learners’ or ‘Indian women in arranged marriages are controlled by their husbands’. However, it also challenges practitioners to go beyond recognising and valuing difference (and different categorical groups) to critically reflect on their own professional context and personal assumptions in relation to their ‘clients’. In this way, the notion and practice of cultural safety is also consonant with Burbules’ (1997) ‘diversity as relational’ system of thinking.

\(^{49}\)‘Tikanga Māori’ refers to ‘Māori cultural practices’ or ‘ways Māori’.
In the second interview with Iris, Tim and Christine, the discussion illustrated their attempts to make sense of not only individual beliefs or faith but also how the contested nature of spirituality intensifies concerns about culture, cultural identity and difference. This is recognised implicitly and explicitly by the teachers, and is connected to their sense of self as teachers. They draw on a range of diverse personal and professional experiences, relating them to their current, new experiences, thus overwriting or intermingling past and present inscriptions in the process of self-making and meaning-making (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996).

Tim and Iris both expressed concern about how they see rigid, authoritarian Christianity impacting on their pupils’ readiness for life:

*We’ve got ... that religious overlay, in that the almost guilt inflicting sin-nature of people, and the different ways that different groups, ... which is another added pressure, ... and so that puts a different spin on to things, which is not altogether positive (Tim, Interview Two).*

*Personally, not being a fan of religion, I find it really worrying the amount of religious stuff coming in, mostly from our Pacific students, and just bad stuff ... It’s fundamentalist. You know, it was like I suggested that not everyone saw God. Aw [mimicking horror]. You know, or that it was a tale. We were doing film, where it was Delilah, so I explained who Delilah was and, you know, that this was a story. And it was like shock, horror. And it’s coming in and there’s no-one questioning it, you know, which I do. I’ll probably get called on it (Iris, Interview Two).*

These latter comments show how Iris is challenging pupils, as well as the school, in her attempts to address the conflicts she faces—within the classroom and between her professional practice and the various spiritual beliefs that enter the classroom and school.

The excerpts, above, illustrate how teachers’ identity work involves drawing on multiple experiences and knowledge. Both Tim and Iris draw on contemporary social, political and cultural ideas to explain how they view spirituality working in the classroom. In addition to raising questions about macro policy and philosophical issues, such as the relationship between religious belief and secular education, these interview excerpts point to how, at a more micro level, the teachers’ sense of self—their identity as a teacher—is forming. While the teachers’ own personal religious or spiritual beliefs remain relatively firm, they are in a sense writing over these with the
range of viewpoints encountered in schools—their pupils’ and families and, in the case of Tim, the school’s religious base. This is at times confronting to their own beliefs and therefore their identity as teachers.

New teachers, then, face many challenges in how they might address competing understandings in their classrooms—by confronting or challenging pupils’ or colleagues’ views, by avoiding contentious discussions, by subtly negotiating their way around the pupils in order to influence them. Iris, Tim and Christine reported trying all these approaches. A key dilemma for them was a desire to maintain respectful relationships with the pupils and the school, while addressing concerns about the effects they saw on pupils’ well-being of fundamentalist beliefs and religious sects. They express their views to their pupils, at times, despite the potential to upset them—thus exposing them to different spiritual beliefs. This is important work for teachers—educating for tolerance and difference—and it is an important part of new teachers’ understanding of the impact of powerful beliefs (their own and others’) on the teaching-learning relationship. Such experiences contribute significantly to the formulation of new teachers’ professional knowledge and identity as a teacher. In expressing their own views to pupils and in interacting with the ideas and beliefs of others, multiple discursive inscriptions—past and present—are in play, and both shape and are part of the process of self-making (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996).

The teachers’ narratives also show some of the ways new teachers formulate and shape decisions about what they can and will say and do in their professional practice. It shows something of the process of identity formation arising from the tensions they are negotiating between who they are (their identities as teachers, spiritual beings, social commentators, role models and so forth), what they can do and say in the classroom (what is allowable for teachers ethically), and how what they do, in practical terms, fits into their ideas of teaching and fostering student learning, while respecting diverse beliefs.

This complex relationship also offers another perspective on the ways in which teaching in contemporary New Zealand involves a juggling of equity discourses in the context of accountability standards—what I have examined as an instance of Stronach et al.’s (2002) analysis of the juxtaposition of an economy of performance and ecologies of practice. Teachers consider pragmatic questions such as whether
challenging differing beliefs in the school will jeopardise their teacher registration, alongside intellectual and ethical questions about how best to educate young people.

**The Tiriti o Waitangi and education for Māori**

Another significant issue that emerged on a number of occasions during the interviews was the impact of the Tiriti o Waitangi on educational policy, teachers and pupils. Often the teachers were prompted by my specific questions but they also raised these issues of their own accord. The Tiriti o Waitangi and its implications for practice are engrained in New Zealand education through Government policy and legislation, teacher education rhetoric, school policy, and the ideologies of many teachers, as discussed in Chapters One and Four. This has been especially so since the Royal Commission on Social Policy (1988), which recommended that Tiriti o Waitangi principles be incorporated into Government policy. As discussed in Chapter One, the Tiriti o Waitangi is also the subject of significant ongoing political and public debate raising questions about national, as well as individual identity for many New Zealanders.

Chapter Four examined some of the ways the teachers negotiated the Tiriti o Waitangi and other educational policies in terms of equity goals and accountability standards. In this chapter on teachers’ identity work, I take a close-up look at one Māori woman teacher’s experience of implementing educational policies aimed at improving Māori educational achievement (an aim arising, in part, from Tiriti o Waitangi obligations). My focus here is on the ways in which Aroha’s experiences contributed to her identity work as a Māori teacher. It analyses new teacher identity formation in a culturally and socially situated context and illuminates ways in which multiple and shifting perspectives are powerful resources in the shaping of professional knowledge and identity (MacLure, 1993).

Aroha’s narrative statements illustrate something of what it is like for Māori teachers to be caught between the contradictions of school/educational policies and goals related to the Tiriti o Waitangi and the provision of effective education for Māori pupils (Stronach et al., 2002). She also expressed something of what it is like as a Māori teacher in a predominantly Pākehā school. She spoke about what she views as the resistant attitudes of colleagues, their lack of knowledge of Tiriti o Waitangi
principles and obligations, their resistance to addressing equity policies and inequitable practices, and a power imbalance based on the ethnicity of the teaching and management staff. This combination of factors appears to have forced her into a situation of confronting power and powerlessness.

In my experience as a teacher and teacher union delegate in New Zealand, Māori teachers are frequently called on by non-Māori colleagues to provide advice on, or solve their ‘problems’ with Māori pupils. This is rarely recognised as an additional professional responsibility, so these teachers often have increased workloads compared to their (also overworked) Pākehā colleagues. Furthermore, Māori teachers are often expected to lead time-consuming extra-curricular programmes for cultural, language and sporting groups, which frequently involves touring with pupils throughout New Zealand and contributing to school-wide ceremonies that require Māori protocols:

*That’s a lot of extra time, ... you know, family visits, pōwhiri, you know* *(Aroha, Interview Two).*

This experience of Māori teachers is similar to that of Indigenous Australian teachers discussed in a study by Santoro and Reid (2006), who also had increased expectations placed on them by schools to solve Indigenous pupils’ ‘problems’. In her first year, Aroha was able to say ‘no’ to taking on such additional responsibilities. While she seemed initially to resist being placed in this role, by her second year she was part of a small group of Māori teachers who were responsible for educating non-Māori staff in how to be effective with Māori pupils. This appears to have been a response to the expectations of school management that the Māori teachers would carry out this work in addition to their normal workload and, because of the cultural make-up of the school, there was particular pressure on just a few Māori teachers:

*In terms of culturally [my school] has a high European rate. There are only about 170 Māori students there,*\(^{50}\) *and three Samoan students. And they recognise the fact that our Māori students aren’t achieving, and so they’re trying to put in a system where there’s that support there, but there’s only three Māori teachers up there—two guys and me, you know* *(Aroha, Interview Two).*

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\(^{50}\) This is still significant in a school of approximately 800 pupils
Aroha expresses a sense of powerlessness in that she feels she has no choice, but also a sense of frustration at the essentialist assumption underpinning her school management’s attitude toward Māori students’ achievement and Māori staff.

Beginning Māori teachers face a number of specific tensions and dilemmas. From my reading of Aroha’s narrative, the school’s management makes the assumption that everyone involved (including this teacher) wants to improve Māori achievement. To be fair, the senior management team is highly conscious of the expectation that they need to meet mandated equity standards (see discussion in Chapter Four about the National Administrative Guidelines) and they are also likely to be concerned for their pupils’ success and keen to ensure that Māori achievement is raised within their school. Yet they are also happy to hand over responsibility to this group of teachers to implement the school’s plan, with what appears to be only limited consultation about what form that plan might take:

*We’ve had a lot of talk, but no-one’s come to us directly to see what can be done ... our principal wrote our objectives for this year, and we’re supposed to do all these P[rofessional] D[evelopment] sessions with the staff and we’ve been given no PD time (Aroha, Interview Two).*

However, less thought appears to have gone into the time, resources and commitment involved in implementing the suggestions proposed to achieve the management goals. The group asked for time to develop the professional development programme and for a Māori dean position to be created:

*We hadn’t been officially approached [about doing the PD]. We just had it chucked at us. What would be your thoughts and views? And we’re like, that’s bloody fantastic, you know, cos that’s a step forward in raising the achievement rate for our students—that’s awesome. However, don’t expect we’ll be doing it for love. You make sure you give us the time that we’re allowed and money.*

*We had submitted a proposal for a Māori dean, but we’re getting all the usual runabout, you know, who’s going to do it; you know, what’s going to be the role, blah, blah, blah. We’re just like, look there’s a need there. Give us the “yes “and we’ll sort out the details, you know ... we haven’t heard back from them (Aroha, Interview Two).*

As discussed in Chapter Four, schools and teachers face a dilemma because in order to achieve equitable outcomes in terms of the academic achievement of traditionally ‘disadvantaged’ pupils (in this case the school’s Māori pupils as identified by the
Ministry of Education and school policies), it must target that particular group. This potentially leads to the pupils, and Māori staff involved, being ‘Othered’ because of this classification and the presumed ‘deficiencies’ of students who are thus categorised. Delegating responsibility of this matter to the Māori staff assumes their affinity with the Māori pupils. Yet, while these teachers may well be committed to similar goals as suggested in the above quote (and may, indeed, have the skills and knowledge to achieve them), they face further professional and personal challenges. Māori teachers are singled out from their colleagues and given additional work that involves potential confrontation with their peers:

So, culturally, I think our school’s got a lot of work to do. And the staff members as well. Cos, last year when we had bicultural sessions and we were practising Māori pronunciation, you get all the groans from the staff, you know; er, how useful is this going to be in maths, or this doesn’t apply in science. So, you’re banging your head against a wall with them. No wonder it’s going to be hard for us to reach the kids.

Yeah, like one thing the bicultural committee came up with—one idea, was ... cos we have Year 9 nohos,§ where the Year 9 students stay overnight at the marae. So we thought we should have a staff noho. At the beginning of the year, we go on to the marae and we do stuff, then we can meet some of our literacy and learning objectives, blah, blah, blah, and then the next day we could go for a staff trip somewhere—boost morale and that. So, we got this idea, we put it together and we went back to our departments to submit to them what support there would be. Like science said, aw look, not relevant at all, not helpful. Maths, aw yeah, it’s okay. So, if we’re not getting the support from staff...

The majority of the staff said, nah, not interested, not if we have to do Māori things. Okay, when [the Principal] asks us whether we have met our objectives, we’ll go, no, and here’s why (Aroha, Interview Two).

This situation highlights one of the pressing practical problems in implementing equity policies, which is that in order to address inequities for particular groups, the group must be targeted, thus potentially ‘Othering’ that group. The narrative also captures the difficult position in which Aroha finds herself—caught between policy

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§ A noho marae is a residential workshop that takes place on a marae and is often hosted by local Māori. There is usually a focus on the particular interests of the group(s) present. Local history is shared and discussions/debates take place about such things as identity, language, culture, current issues related to the Tiriti o Waitangi or the particular interest of the guests. It is intended to be an open and honest time of learning about oneself and each another.
and practice, as she negotiates the challenges in education in New Zealand. As such, it offers a further dimension to how teachers balance policy imperatives with day-to-day practices (Stronach et al., 2002).

There is also a sense in Aroha’s narrative that she and her colleagues feel unvalued as Māori because they are given no formal power or authority within the school, yet are expected to contribute with no guarantee of improved outcomes. How can they ethically and morally refuse to take on the agenda of the management team and the Government to improve outcomes for Māori students? Yet how can they have any effect, if they have no real power—such as time, status, funding? And how can they work with colleagues who are resistant to the initiatives—colleagues whom they are, in a sense, expected to educate?

The experience described above is significant from a macro sociological perspective as well as at a more biographical level. Aroha’s narrative here came out of interviews conducted during her second year of teaching. In Interview One, she spoke little of being Māori or of particular Tiriti o Waitangi or equity issues related to Māori pupils. However, in this narrative (one year later), her identity as Māori is much more to the fore. This suggests that her (somewhat imposed) engagement with the school’s goals for Māori has had a significant impact on her identity work; it also shows how this involves a layering of new inscriptions over existing ones (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996). In the next section, I examine teachers’ work in relation to identity categories—ethnicity, gender and teaching discipline—and continue with Aroha’s story of self-making.

**The intersection of ethnicity, gender and curriculum**

Aroha appears to be negotiating between being ‘a teacher’ and being ‘a Māori teacher’ and the similar and different responsibilities that each of these identities brings. As Stronach et al. (2002) and Scott (1992) argue, identity is not singular and is cut across by difference and contested affiliations. Therefore we need to examine the ways in which ethnicities, gender, profession and teaching discipline, for example, intersect and the dilemmas this generates in the formation of professional identity. While identity categories are embodied in an individual and may or may not conflict, multiple identity categories may compete politically for primacy (Ladson-Billings,
2004). In this instance, the policy dilemma faced by Aroha and her Māori colleagues creates, in turn, a dilemma for her about her sense of who and how she ‘is’ as a teacher. This identity dilemma is troubling because she has been marked as ‘Māori’ and therefore different from the Pākehā ‘norm’. This does give her some authority and she gains respect within the group that she is working, as well as from some colleagues outside this group. However, at the same time, she expresses the need to be respected and included as a member of the wider group of teachers—and not only as a Māori teacher known primarily by her ‘difference’ and being ‘Other’.

_It’s a bit hard, because my role up there is split in two, because they bring in a Māori perspective, really. And I’m the only Māori female up there, so they’ve being talking about my role there, as a Māori teacher, I’m meant to be a role model for the Māori girls at [the school], but nothing definite has come to me. It’s everything I hear around me, you know. ... but then I have very little to do with a lot of the Māori girls, cos I don’t get very many coming into my areas. So I push that aside and I just concentrate on teaching the kids that are in my classroom (Aroha, Interview Two)._

In this extract, Aroha specifically identifies a number of subject categories related to ethnicity, gender and ‘the professional’—Māori, Māori woman, teacher and so forth. She also points out that, although she works in an academically oriented humanities curriculum area where she has little contact with Māori students—because Māori students frequently choose not to take such academic subjects—senior management still assume that she is the right person to improve outcomes for the school’s Māori students, simply because she is, essentially, Māori. She is also chosen (or assumed), as the one Māori woman on the staff, to be the role model for Māori girls. This situation highlights the multiple identity categories in play as Aroha tries to negotiate becoming and being a teacher.

Aroha is profoundly ambivalent about being ‘Othered’, about being positioned as a role model, about management practices and motivations, and about the policies and their impact on teaching and learning in the school. These matters are all fundamentally connected to identity processes—to developing a sense of self as well as a sense of professional identity. At the same time, she is prepared to work with colleagues to enable them to recognise Māori knowledge as part of the mix of valid and valued knowledges in the school. She understands the moral and ethical reasons
for this debate over the last 20 or so years—and she wants to support and collaborate with peers whom she respects.

Interviewer: So do teachers come to you all the time with, “I’ve got the Māori kid in my class, what do I do?”

Aroha: Not so much, basically because I’ve put out there that I don’t think I’m qualified or experienced enough to deal with what those problems are. I know our HOD of Māori gets lumped with a lot of it. And when he comes to me and asks for help, I give it because I like him. I’ve got a lot of time for him and he’s loaded with a lot of work (Aroha, Interview One).

This excerpt is from the first year of teaching when Aroha felt able to set her limits and boundaries clearly. She also acknowledged the advantages of her providing a Māori perspective in her teaching:

Well, for [one of my classes], cos we’re doing the [New Zealand] topic, me being Māori has helped a lot, in terms of giving a Māori view, but because my grandfather is English, so I’m still maintaining the European view as well (Aroha, Interview One).

Nevertheless, by referring to her English heritage, she also points out that identity cannot be simply defined by one aspect of a person’s cultural or ethnic background. This illustrates how a teacher’s professional self can mobilise discrepant identities (Stronach et al., 2002).

As noted above, in her second year of teaching, she was much more outspoken about the way she had been positioned by school management and also more critical of the resistance and ignorance of some of her colleagues.

In Interview Two, Aroha more readily volunteered her views about being Māori and about addressing political issues in her teaching with her students. In the following extract, however, she identifies her engagement with societal issues as being part of her role as a social sciences teacher (rather than her identity as Māori):

As a [social sciences] teacher, like all those things [societal issues] do impact on ... especially like with [one of my classes], I’ve got quite a few kids who like to debate. So they’ll come in and go, miss, can we discuss today about the hikoi. What are they marching for? What do they really want? Okay, we’ll talk about that. Okay what do you know? What do you think they’re marching about? I mean I didn’t know, myself, that much.
So, in that respect, I don’t mind taking the time out (Aroha, Interview Two).

She appears to brush off this engagement with Māori issues as something she does as a matter of course. However, a closer reading of this extract suggests that she is taking a more political stand by choosing to explore important cultural and political issues in contemporary New Zealand. While the issues she faces—such as school management’s assumption that, as Māori, she can best address the school’s equity targets—bring to the fore a number of identity questions for her, at the same time her identity work enables her articulate the issues themselves. That is, she is making sense of herself as Māori and as a teacher as she explains and makes sense of the context in which she lives and works. So, her identity and the issues are being constructed in a kind of dialogue with each other.

The issues of gender difference and gender identity also came up for a number of teachers. By having bestowed upon her the role of ‘Māori woman role model for Māori girls’, a further dimension of difference was added for Aroha, forcing her to consider taking on the role of ‘woman as carer’ as part of her identity work. While such dimensions of difference are likely to have been encountered by a number of teachers in this study, few commented directly in the interviews about a sense of their own ‘difference’ from the dominant culture in their schools. For one teacher, though, his gender created a different set of issues. Andy talked at length about the difference he felt as a male teacher in a predominantly female staffroom and what he viewed as his exclusion (by dint of being male) from the community of women who gain support through what he sees as being ‘female’ ways:

*Whilst I’m a bloke and sometimes I don’t need it, it can be tough ... I’m not sure if it would be different for [a new teacher], if you were a female, because there is an awful lot of hugging and stuff going on between females. Quite often. Maybe some tears and stuff, but there’s a lot of sort of hugging and things like that (Andy, Interview Two).*

His companionship and professional support came from a single woman of a similar age and professional background:

*She’s a senior teacher; five years she’s been a teacher ... we sort of arrived on the scene together; ... we’ve got [our previous professions] in common, and she’s really down to earth ... She’s about my age, and she’s not married or anything like that, so she’s not like always rushing off to*
Andy appears to be unaware that his description of this teacher could suggest that he sees women’s role as essentially nurturing—in this case nurturing him. His description could also be his way of explaining or justifying his forming a relationship with a woman other than his wife, or it could be part of his trying to find his place in a community of (largely women) teachers and his identity as a teacher.

Tim, in contrast, also works in a school where he has a predominance of women colleagues. However, he barely comments on gender at all, although from his descriptions of his experience it is clear that it was a contributing factor in how he and colleagues constructed their relationships. He rejects the stereotypical approach he sees in his male colleagues’ teaching:

*In terms of the behaviour of the kids, it’s fairly hard for males there. Three of them take a traditional approach to being male, whereas I take a more cooperative … because coming into teaching I was looking after my daughter who was from like nought to three and I discovered that being a traditional male doesn’t work, either with girls or with children. And so I try and minimise the traditional male behaviour (Tim, Interview One).*

Tim appears resistant to traditional male stereotypes and is comfortable taking on cooperative or collaborative teaching practices, even though he views this as being unusual in male teachers. He refers several times during the interviews to his aversion to controlling, male behaviour, and to the focus in his teacher education programme on cooperative and student-centred learning. Further, being principal caregiver to his child for a number of years is likely to have influenced his perspective on male and female stereotypes. This illustrates the interplay of a number of contextual and personal factors in the formation of teacher professional identity, and how this self-making process is entwined with meaning-making through an understanding of macro social issues.

Apart from the comment above, Tim does not focus on gender difference amongst colleagues or pupils, although he frequently discusses race and socio-economic status. However, his sense of isolation or difference comes from another binary, one based on the divide between the arts/science teaching disciplines.
Chapter Five: Professional identity

There seems to be at least two tribes who are vying for power and the tribe that I'm associated with... have been totally annihilated... In a small school, difference of philosophy can become exacerbated and the differences between management and different departments, if management is of a particular... background, then the fight... can become acute (Tim, Interview Two).

He sees this division between disciplines as a reason for victimisation and ghettoisation of his department. This and previous excerpts suggest that Tim is aware of the influence of gender, ethnicity and curriculum affiliation and associated subject positions on teachers' practices. His dissatisfaction with the philosophies and practices within his school may be linked to his finding a place for himself as a teacher.

Teresa, who teaches in a vocational rather than academic subject, similarly sees herself and her department as not so much disadvantaged as ignored by senior management:

*The principal hasn’t come over to four] block once this year and I haven’t that support from her—and that’s disgusting, but in other ways that’s great because probably it would be more political bickering anyway* (Teresa, Interview One).

This conveys a sense of alienation and a division within the school between different discipline areas. Tim and Teresa’s experiences are perhaps a reflection of the way particular types of knowledge are valued differently. The effect of this on new teachers’ identity is evident in the way Teresa expresses her disgust about what she appears to view as discriminatory practices of senior management.

These examples illustrate further the multiple standpoints that teachers encounter and juggle as part of their identity work. Here what is evident is how multiple subject categories of gender, ethnicity and teaching discipline affiliations interweave in the forging of teacher identity (Stronach et al., 2002).

I have illustrated how teachers speak and act from a number of different subject positions to make points about particular issues or concerns—or, as MacLure (1993, p. 312) puts it, they use identity to ‘justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate’. I have analysed this as a type of intersubjectivity in which professional identity is formed.
interactively, in negotiation with the views and actions of others, and in the sense of explaining important and contested issues in society and schools. Thus, while I have examined biographical narratives and individual identity work, I have argued that professional identity formation is not a solo or individualistic process.

**Implications for practice**

A key issue for those involved in initial teacher education is how new teachers can develop confidence in their own professional knowledge and their own identities as teachers. Therefore, it is critical that the ways in which both identity and professional knowledge are shaped and negotiated are understood by teachers, teacher educators and policy-makers. While understandings of identity and subjectivity are contested, I have been arguing that teacher identity work takes place in interaction with others and in the context of particular school cultures.

The excerpts analysed in this chapter have shown how experiences of early career teachers involve multiple inscriptions and re-inscriptions of knowledge and subject positions. The kind of close up analysis provided here of the layers of subjectivity (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996) and the linking of identity with professional knowledge formation offers those engaged in the education and induction of early career teachers a fruitful way to conceptualise both teacher professional knowledge and teacher identity that goes beyond viewing them as neatly resolvable and definable by sets of characteristics. Such an analysis helps to take account of the multiple personal and professional experiences and identity positions on which new teachers draw. This suggests that opportunities for teachers to explore multiple discourses and cultural debates should be part of teacher education.

I have also shown in this chapter how teachers’ identity work often involves negotiating contested socio-economic and professional spaces, and that this frequently has a high emotional impact on teachers. The excerpts examined in this chapter suggest that it was important for the teachers to be part of and contributing to a professional community as they establish their place in the profession, and their self-identity as a teacher. Again, such matters should be central concerns in both pre-service and in-service teacher education.
I have also argued that it is important to move away from deficit or even well-intentioned developmental understandings of new teacher identity formation. The exploration, of cultural safety, a concept developed in New Zealand nursing education, suggests a fruitful alternative and a way forward from deficit or developmental approaches to teacher education. This concept also offers new possibilities for rethinking difference and category politics in teacher education.

A further analysis of the interview excerpts revealed how particular groups of new teachers—such as Māori teachers and older early career teachers—face particular sets of issues in the process of self-making. It is thus crucial to into account different personal and professional contexts when examining teachers’ identity work and not assuming that all new teachers face the same kinds of dilemmas. This is consistent with my overall argument that teachers’ identity formation involves making sense of a range of discrepant identities and takes place intersubjectively.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued that poststructural interpretations of teacher identity as fluid and contested are more useful than understandings of teacher identity as resolvable into a set of normative or developmental characteristics.

I have shown that identity work does not take place in isolation within an individual, but happens inter-subjectively, in light of the views of others and the broader school and cultural context. I have thus attempted to build an analysis of what makes a teacher, how particular beginning teachers make sense of themselves and the kinds of teachers they are or are becoming (Britzman, 2003). This process of grappling with multiple identity positions—for example, ‘teacher’, ‘Māori’, ‘male’—alongside the perspectives of others—those of colleagues, pupils, educational policy and debates—is a crucial element in teachers’ identity and professional knowledge formation, linked, as well to their finding a sense of place in the teaching community.

I have applied Bjerrum Nielsen’s (1996) metaphor of the magic writing pad to the study of teachers’ identity formation, to develop an argument that teachers draw on both their own existing subject positions and new views, attitudes and behaviour that they encounter in their day-to-day practices. This is an application, in a new situation, of a metaphor which has more often been used to focus on young people’s identity
formation (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1996; McLeod, 2000; McLeod & Yates, 2006). I extended this argument, with MacLure’s (1993) proposition that teachers use identity as a kind of resource to explain and make sense of themselves in relation to others. This framework provides an alternative to attempts to define identity by sociological, contextual, professional or cultural categories and takes account of the fragmented and discrepant identities that are drawn on in the process of self-making (Stronach, 2002).

This chapter has been framed by the argument that teacher professional identity is entwined with teacher professional knowledge. It has shown the significance of thinking of new teacher professional knowledge differently—not as deficit or developmental, necessarily; nor as wash-out (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981) or apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) alone, but as negotiation of multiple interweaving discourses.

Finally, while Chapter Four was concerned with the macro context—teachers juggling powerful social, political and educational discourses, in this chapter I have considered the micro aspects of professional knowledge formation—embodied identity and how this is worked out by teachers. The following chapter takes a particular issue—a recent educational reform—to bring together the micro and macro issues that teachers address in the formation of professional knowledge.
Chapter Six: New teachers negotiating policy reform: a case in practice

Introduction

This chapter considers new teachers’ working out of a major educational reform of the New Zealand senior secondary school qualification—the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)—and the associated assessment system. It provides insights into new teachers’ emerging educational beliefs and philosophy about assessment and learning. I extend my analysis of how teachers negotiate competing discourses of professional knowledge through a case study of a specific educational issue—one that is particularly relevant for secondary teachers in New Zealand in the educational reform environment.

I develop this as a case study of both a particular educational reform and of the formation of teachers’ professional knowledge and identity in relation to educational reform. A further rationale for this case study is to elaborate the tensions between equity goals and the standards-based assessment methodology embedded in the NCEA design. The chapter begins with an analysis of the reform itself as a way of providing a background to the analysis (later in the chapter) of teachers’ identity work.

The NCEA assessment reform has dominated New Zealand secondary teachers’ lives for the past six years, having overturned an assessment system and philosophy that had been in place for over 50 years. The policy change emerged in the wake of international reforms to curriculum, assessment and educational management. The design of the new qualification has created much professional and public controversy regarding the ideologies underpinning different types of assessment, largely because of the change from norm-based assessment (a system designed so that fixed percentages of students pass and fail) to standards-based assessment (where students are assessed against prescribed criteria). The reform and associated debates have had a powerful impact on how teachers think about their professional practice, and on how they understand and implement assessment.

How new teachers work out the NCEA provides a specific instance of how they shape their professional knowledge and identity, both in the context of this particular issue.
and in relation to educational reform generally. Further, their responses to this reform intermingle with their experiences of and reflections on the process of learning to teach and understandings of education, and more broadly on the evolving views of the relationship between curriculum, assessment and educational success.

Seeing students succeed and fail in high stakes testing, such as the NCEA, forces teachers to confront their own beliefs and desires about equity and inclusion in education. This is particularly acute for new teachers who, often for the first time, see contradictions between their desire to give all pupils a fair chance at success and the limits of their own power to consistently achieve this. This complicates, and even frustrates, their desire to ‘make a difference’ in practice. Such issues continue to confront teachers, even with the advent of the NCEA, which has stated aims to achieve both equity of educational outcomes and high standards of educational excellence.

Questions about the purpose of education are perennial ones for educational policymakers and reformers. Understandings about the purpose of education (and therefore about the role and responsibilities of teachers) are embodied in the types of assessment systems that exist in educational settings. The NCEA qualification reform directly brings to the fore questions about the purposes of education and equally raises fundamental questions about the purposes of assessment and qualifications. This includes questions about whether qualifications are regarded as a means for providing students with entry into university, or as the basis for ranking students, or for sorting students into vocational or academic career pathways, and/or for deciding which groups of students are successful and which are failures. These then are matters that are powerfully implicated in visions of social justice and in practices of social exclusion and inclusion.

As discussed in Chapter One, New Zealand’s education system underwent major changes during the 1980s and 1990s, in response to global economic reforms. Educational reforms aimed to improve New Zealand’s overall skill and knowledge base, and its competitive performance internationally. The reforms, introduced by the 1984-1990 Labour government and continued by successive National and coalition governments, aimed to provide a ‘seamless’ education system, from the beginning of schooling throughout tertiary education (Lee & Lee, 2001). The development of the
NCEA was one of these reforms. Talking with new teachers during its implementation period (from 2002-2004) affords vivid insights into how educational policies are struggled over and enacted.

Because of the public and professional controversy created by this assessment reform, it was important for new teachers to work out their own viewpoint in relation to the heated discussions that were taking place around them. One overall aim of this chapter is thus to provide insight into the translation of educational policy reform into day-to-day teaching practice and how this process is worked out by new teachers. I argue that a close-up study of new teachers’ responses—their ambivalences, uncertainties and beliefs—offers a valuable perspective on both the implementation process of educational reform and the formation of professional knowledge and identity during a period of intense reform and policy upheaval. As I will show, the new teachers’ ambivalence conveys some of the broader, ongoing dilemmas that the reform generated for teaching and assessment. The ambivalence arises largely in relation to the qualification’s intention to seamlessly achieve a compromise between equity and excellence. New teachers’ responses illustrate how those engaged in policy implementation (rather than policy design) perceive and encounter tensions in this intention. The NCEA reform and associated debates underline the significance of questions about assessment and of how qualifications should be designed—who should make judgements about pupil learning and what purposes they should serve.

In the first part of the chapter, I provide a brief background to the New Zealand secondary school qualification system, and summarise the most recent major changes, including key features and workings of the new qualification and the stated rationale for this reform, according to official Government documents. I discuss this and the history and key features of this reform in some detail in order to contextualise teachers’ responses and also to reveal the policy and stated equity rationales that underpinned the reforms. This background analysis is needed to understand the way the policy reform has enabled the teachers to undertake important identity work (as discussed in the latter part of the chapter) and to formulate professional knowledge, particularly on equity and excellence in education. In this earlier section of the chapter, I discuss key issues and disputes that have plagued its implementation, and how major stakeholders—academics, researchers, teachers, pupils and government
agencies—have responded to them. The perspectives of new teachers are then discussed, attending closely to the ways teachers have negotiated the policy, as well as the surrounding controversy and rhetoric in the process of implementing the reform in their day-to-day lives, and in the context of their own emerging beliefs and philosophies about assessment and learning. This provides a lens on how teachers work out their teaching philosophies, where they stand in relation to such important and longstanding issues regarding the relative value of vocational and academic subjects, the purpose of education and assessment, student motivation, the organisation of knowledge, and educational excellence.

**Qualification reform**

Until 2001, the New Zealand senior secondary qualifications system was dominated by three qualifications, one at each of the final three years of school. These qualifications used a norm-based form of assessment. The Years 11 and 13\(^\text{52}\) qualifications (School Certificate and University Bursary) were externally assessed, usually by national examination, and were statistically scaled. The Year 12 qualification was internally assessed by schools but externally moderated based on the previous year’s School Certificate grades. These qualifications were originally designed to select certain students for an academic future, and did not recognise the achievement of a significant proportion of school leavers (Hall, 2005). The decision to change came about after many years of debate, and was intended to address the inequities of an assessment system that has functioned as a form of gate-keeping.

**The National Qualification Framework and the NCEA\(^\text{53}\)**

As part of the reforms set out in the Education Act of 1989, a national curriculum was developed for schooling, and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was created, with ten qualification levels, from foundation certificates to doctoral degrees. Both secondary and tertiary qualifications are placed on this framework (or

\(^{52}\) At Year 11 students are usually aged 15-16 years and at Year 13 (the final year of schooling), aged 17-18 years.

\(^{53}\) The information in this section is synthesized from a number of sources: (Lee & Lee, 2001; New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2001; Philips, 2003; Strachan, 2002; Strathdee & Hughes, 2001)
understood to be equivalent to a particular NQF level) and students are able to collect transferable standards that can be combined to form qualifications.\(^{54}\)

The direction taken for the change in senior secondary qualifications in New Zealand was one of the major reforms. It followed the rationale for curriculum reforms and the development of the NQF and was influenced by a change in assessment philosophy internationally. The rationale given by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) for the reforms to the national qualifications system (the NQF) and the NCEA qualifications for secondary school can be summarised as:

- To remove barriers to low achievers, so that they can achieve at the same level as the elite, and the equalising of the effects of race, class and income.

- To increase the number and range of vocational subjects in the secondary school curriculum, so that equal status and credentialing would be given to academic and vocational subjects.

- To provide flexible learning pathways in order to meet the needs of a diverse range of students.

- To provide high quality, detailed profiles of student learning for employers (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2001).

This list of aims clearly demonstrates an application, in policy, of the strong equity agenda underpinning the Education Act of 1989 (as discussed in Chapters One and Four). While there is a focus on ‘low achievers’, there is also an intention to cater for all students—‘a diverse range of students’. There is a stated intention that students should gain the skills for lifelong learning (Hipkins, Vaughan, Beals, Ferral & Gardiner, 2005). At the same time, the intention is to provide a qualification that is

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\(^{54}\) It should be noted that many qualifications offered, particularly in tertiary education organizations, are designed locally by the institution, either because there are no national unit standards or because the institution wants to develop its own unique qualification. These qualifications are approved and recognised by the Government alongside the NQF. Thus, national unit standards and the NZQA form of standards-based assessment are not always used.
highly regarded internationally, and with specific achievement standards that can be included on nationally administered student achievement records.

The NCEA qualification was introduced over a three year period (2002-2004) during which time teachers were closely involved in trialing it and contributing to decisions about the content, assessment criteria and procedures for their subject areas. There are four levels, which relate to the NQF levels. Levels 1-3 correspond to each of the final three years of schooling, and Level 4, which is also assessed in the final school year, replaces the University Scholarship examination for the highest achieving students. At the time of this study, Level 4 was structured in the same way as Levels 1-3.\textsuperscript{55}

Student learning is measured against broad learning outcomes, called ‘achievement standards’, and each of these has three levels of achievement (or three passing grades)—\textit{achieved, merit or excellence}—as well as a \textit{not achieved} grade.

In addition to these achievement standards, unit standards (a form of standards-based assessment which has been offered since the early 1990s, for credit towards national vocational tertiary and secondary qualifications on the NQF) can also be credited towards the appropriate level of NCEA. Consequently, secondary schools can now offer a range of courses combining one or other, or both, achievement and unit standards. Results are recorded, on a national database,\textsuperscript{56} for each student, and unit standards can be credited to other national qualifications that sit on the NQF. Unit standards are graded as \textit{pass} or \textit{fail}, and mostly take the form of prescriptive, behavioural statements of discrete skills.

Each NCEA subject is now divided into as many as nine achievement standards at each level, with specific criteria for each of the three possible grades. The NCEA qualifications are made up of combinations of subjects requiring a minimum number

\textsuperscript{55} Following a public outcry about the variability of student results between subjects in the 2004, the Scholarship (Level 4) exams now use a norm-referenced element to assessment, reflecting the competitive intention of this qualification. One of two recently published reviews, comprising a group of practitioners and assessment experts, examined the purpose, nature, scope and intent of the qualification and made recommendations about its design and operation with these in mind. The other review looked at the setting and management of the Scholarship exams and the performance of the NZQA.

\textsuperscript{56} This is the same database used to record student achievement of both unit standards and national qualifications.
of achievement standards for each. They are awarded, at each level, to students achieving sufficient credits from an acceptable combination of literacy, numeracy and other standards. Thus, students can gain the NCEA at Levels 1, 2 and/or 3. At least half of the achievement standards for credit towards each NCEA subject must be externally assessed, and internal assessments are developed and managed by schools, with external moderation. However, there is a national database of exemplars of marked student work and assessment tasks that is available to assist teachers. Schools also develop and manage their own reassessment policies and procedures for the internal assessments. How many reassessments the students are permitted, and the timeframe for resubmission, are decided by schools, so, while some schools may allow students to resubmit their assessments, others may not. While the internal assessments are moderated within schools and externally, teacher judgements have become a crucial part of the assessment of student learning for internal components of the NCEA. For most students and teachers, this was a major change from the previous system that had consisted predominantly of external assessments, where students were awarded a percentage mark (and associated grade) for an end-of-year exam of the full year’s work.57

Another significant change arising from this reform is the attempt to assess vocational and non-traditional subjects equally alongside the academic subjects, in a single qualification. This includes practical subjects such as technology, drama and dance. Prior to the introduction of the NCEA, it was possible to assess alternative, less academically demanding versions of traditional subjects (such as, Communications English and Practical Mathematics) using the existing unit standards on the NQF. However, this is the first time that many of these subjects have been included within the same qualification system as the academic subjects, in ways that allow them to contribute equally to the NCEA qualification itself. This change was an attempt to narrow the divide between academic and vocational subjects. This was one of the equity interventions foreshadowed by the 1989 Education Act. Promoting lower status, non-academic subjects, which have traditionally been more popular with lower achieving students, was an attempt to redress privilege. While this reform has changed

57 The information presented in this summary of the NCEA is available on the National Qualifications Authority website, www.nzqa.govt.nz.
the ways schools and teachers think about non-academic subjects, it has raised other issues about the academicisation of practical subjects and whether this is fair for all students. Questions about the status and treatment of academic versus vocational and practical subjects were raised by new teachers in the interviews, and created a number of dilemmas and ambivalences.

The reforms to the New Zealand senior secondary school qualification resulted in a number of public debates. Such debates have also added to the dilemmas facing the teachers in this study, and were a further context that they needed to navigate. The public debates underlined the wider social and educational significance of the reforms, and created additional pressure for the new teachers to engage with the fundamental issues about education, assessment and equity raised by the assessment reforms. I will now outline the key debates that have arisen regarding this reform in order to provide a background to the kinds of issues with which the teachers grappled.

**Debates about the NCEA**

For the past seven years there has been extensive media coverage about the NCEA, giving it greater prominence than any other educational issue or educational reform since the 1989 Education Act (Elley, Hall & Marsh, 2005). Debates presented by the media, researchers, school principals and the Government focus largely on the ability of the NCEA to address two distinct but related goals—to meet the needs of diverse students, therefore promoting and enhancing equity goals, and to provide a credible qualification that promotes high educational standards. These two goals were often seen in tension, and this was also articulated in new teachers’ responses to the reform.

Much of the focus of those critical of the NCEA relates to such matters as quality and comparability of standards and levels of achievement, and therefore the matter of accountability. Specifically, debate has focused on the reliability, validity and manageability of student results and the qualification (Elley et al., 2005; Hall, 2000, 2005; Locke, 2004). On the one hand, the most vocal in this debate (Elley, 2003; Elley et al., 2005; Hall, 2000; 2005; Locke, 2001, 2004) are concerned about the reliability and validity of the NCEA and the NQF, on a number of grounds. On the other hand, those in favour of the NCEA support it on the basis that the reform clearly attempts to reduce inequalities perpetuated by the previous normative assessment
system. They see the need for New Zealand’s education system to address issues of social justice and educational failure, and this reform as one important way to do this (Hellner, 2002; Langley, 2002; Middleton, 2004).

Debates about the NCEA broadly fall into three areas—reliability and validity, the fragmentation of knowledge, and the impact of standards-based assessment on student motivation.

Firstly, there is concern about reliability and validity because of the way standards-based assessment has been applied in the NCEA. The specific issues include the variability in level of difficulty for achieving different standards, the variability between the achievement of the standards in different subjects, the contextual inconsistencies encountered between schools, tasks and questions, prior knowledge, timing of assessments and the reassessment procedures employed by different schools (Elley, 2003).

There is also concern that there is not sufficient rigour in a system that relies on teacher judgement for up to half of the assessment standards. This concern is based on an analysis, not that standards-based assessment per se cannot be reliable and valid, but that the NCEA, as well as the unit standards used in schools and tertiary institutions, lack pedagogical rigour, because the knowledge assessed internally is not assessed in objective, external settings (Hall, 2000).

Conversely, concerns about the variability of assessment practices and the limitation of having only three grades of achievement are frequently dismissed on the basis that they can easily be resolved as part of the implementation process. Counter arguments to concerns about reliability, validity and rigour are that the previous system was neither rigorous nor fair because it too was affected by variable contextual factors, such as the time of day that assessment took place, the questions asked and the prior knowledge of the pupils (Langley, 2002).

Those concerned about the reliability and validity of the NCEA have more recently acknowledged the importance of the equity agenda in the qualifications debate, recognising the reform’s potential to promote social justice aims by assessing and credentialing what each student knows. They do not recommend a return to the previous norm-referenced system, which they agree was unfair to the large numbers
of students who were excluded from success. Instead, they have attempted to find ways of addressing the dilemmas of ‘competing educational and social principles’ (Hall 2005, p. 254) that are created in practice when including equity aspirations in a high stakes qualification such as the NCEA. At the same time, recommendations for improving reliability, validity and rigour are recognised and are being addressed by the NZQA.

A second concern is that the reforms have been ideologically driven without proper consideration of education theory (Hall, 2005). The result, it is argued, has been the implementation of a ‘pure’ form of standards-based assessment and the fragmentation of knowledge into discrete achievement standards which impact on the internal coherence of courses, (Elley et al., 2005). A consequence of the division of NCEA subjects into a number of achievement standards, has been a change in the way courses are designed and how pupils are taught and assessed (Alison, 2005; Hall, 2000; Hipkins et al., 2005; New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2006). This has been recommended as an area for revision. One suggestion for maintaining the integrity of programmes of learning has been to blend norm-referenced assessment with the existing standards-based assessment (Elley et al., 2005; Hall, 2005; Locke, 2001). This has been taken on board by NZQA and has been incorporated, initially, into the Scholarship examination (Ministry of Education, 2005b).

A third focus of the NCEA debate concerns the suitability of standards-based assessment in high-stakes examinations. The key argument is that competition is needed in such qualifications, and that standards-based assessment, while being suitable for formative feedback, it is not a consistent measure of success or achievement (Elley et al., 2005). This concern is, in part, because of a perception that excellence is not adequately recognised within the NCEA, and in part because of concerns that without competition, student motivation is reduced, especially for high achieving students.

The question of student motivation has been a focus of much discussion and part of the evaluations carried out recently about the NCEA that explore the perceptions of teachers, schools, pupils and/or parents (Alison, 2005; Hipkins et al., 2005; Meyer, McClure, Walkey, McKenzie & Weir, 2006; New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2006).
The debates have been discussed here in detail in order to give a sense of the climate in which teachers are trying to work out the reforms. Such debates have contributed to a number of modifications to the NCEA and a developing understanding of the issues that need to be addressed by educators and policymakers, as well as acknowledgement of the advantages of the reform. There is recognition of a need to address issues related to reliability, validity and manageability of the qualification and student results (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2006). The reasons for such revisions stem largely from concerns about student motivation and teacher workload, as well as the credibility of the qualification. On the whole, the increased flexibility of the courses now offered by schools and the resulting increase in the number of students gaining credits and qualifications (including traditionally low achievers), is viewed as a positive outcome by participants in the evaluations identified above. Thus, in terms of addressing equity, this qualification is largely viewed as having the potential to achieve its aims.

While those for and against the reform have begun to listen to each others’ concerns and beliefs, debate is likely to continue about the philosophy and practice of assessment and senior secondary school qualifications. It is how teachers work out such policy reforms and make sense of the associated debates and ideas that is the focus of the next section.

**Teacher professional knowledge and assessment reform**

The reform to the qualification system in New Zealand secondary schools provides an opportunity to analyse how new teachers negotiate professional knowledge in an era of educational change. New teachers are surrounded by public and professional debate, and I am suggesting that such reforms compel teachers to deliberately consider the purposes of education and assessment and their roles as teachers. The NCEA reform therefore provides new teachers with an immediate imperative for working through their personal beliefs about the function and purposes of qualifications, how assessment might be used in the learning process, how qualifications function with regard to academic and vocational subjects, and the challenge of achieving equity goals when working within a framework of high stakes qualifications. That is, how teachers negotiate the issues and debates associated with
this reform, as identified above, contributes to their meaning-making (knowledge formation) and self-making (identity formation).

Many of these and related matters emerged in my interviews with new teachers. Key areas of discussion included student motivation in relation to the NCEA, the challenges of credentialing both vocational and academic subjects within the same qualification, curriculum design, and the credibility of the NCEA. I now turn to examine the teachers’ responses to the implementation of this policy reform, attending in particular to the ways in which their working through of the debates and policy implementation impacted on the formation of their educational beliefs and philosophies. While the discussion was focused at times on a particular educational concern (such as student motivation), more often these points were interwoven with other important matters—such as their understanding of the use of assessment as a process of learning and as a credential for employment or higher education.

**Student motivation**

The impact of the NCEA on pupils’ motivation was frequently discussed in the interviews. Teachers described examples of both increased and decreased motivation, due for example, to the inconsistencies between credits and workload:

I’ve looked at the amount of credits that are being awarded for certain standards and couple of them don’t match ... for example, [one] is worth four credits and [another] is worth three, despite them having to do a 10 minute performance, as opposed to a three minute performance. So, for me the work involved doesn’t add up ... (Jude, Interview Two).

No matter how much work you put into it, you’re still going to get the same as someone else who managed to just meet the standard (Paul, Interview Two).

They also commented on the unfairness of the way merit and excellence grades are allocated:

A credit is worth the same, whether it’s an achieved or an excellence ... I don’t like the way that there could be four categories; four elements and the students could get excellence for three of those elements and a merit for one of those elements and they’re only allowed a merit. That bothers me. And the fact that a student could get three merits and one excellence and have the same mark as a student who’s virtually excellent (Teresa, Interview Two).
Several of the heads of department in the NZCER study (Hipkins & Vaughan, 2002) similarly expressed concern (although to a lesser extent when they were interviewed in the second year of the study) that the broad band of achievement could be demotivating for students—especially high achievers and those who like to have a percentage mark. For one head of department, the concern was also about the difficulty in obtaining the highest grade (excellence) because of the overly high standards set to obtain it (Hipkins & Vaughan, 2002; Hipkins, Vaughan, Beals & Ferral, 2004; Hipkins et al., 2005).

Student motivation is a confronting issue for new teachers because it highlights their role in contributing to student learning and engagement. The motivation of both higher and lower achieving pupils was regarded by the teachers as an important issue to understand. Interview responses included discussion of a number of features of the new system that appeared to be motivating students or had the potential to be motivating. For example, teachers frequently referred to the increased motivation for lower achieving students created by having assessments occurring throughout the year:

\textit{It’s not an exam at the end of the year, where they have to know everything—and don’t know what’s going to be picked out. (Jude, Interview One.)}

\textit{I see it as being very accessible to them; very fair (Iris, Interview Two).}

These comments reflect the view of the qualification as a process for learning—an opportunity for formative assessment and also as a change from the competitive, norm-based system to one where success is achievable by all, as part of this process. These comments also illustrate the importance the teachers place on education being fair and accessible to all pupils; this ethos of fairness was discussed in Chapter Four. Moreover, there was overwhelming support for allowing students the opportunity to resubmit internal assessments that was initially judged as unsatisfactory, as this was seen as a fair way to assess and a chance for more students to achieve success:

\textit{I like the system ... with our guys, you know, because you can have another go at it. I think that’s really fair, because sometimes they don’t quite make it the first time (Iris, Interview Two).}
It’s good for the kids, in that they can pick up the internals, because you’re there; you can assist; you can help; you can mentor; you can practise; you can resit and resubmit (Tim, Interview Two).

I think the assessment system is very good for my kids, because they can resubmit stuff. They get more than one opportunity to do stuff (Teresa, Interview Two).

Nevertheless, pupils’ responses to completing the assessments, or the sometimes limited effort they appear to put in, caused some teachers a degree of puzzlement. The following excerpts have also been used previously for another type of analysis. Here, I interpret them from a different angle, for a different layer of meaning:

I did my first NCEA assessment and I worked it all out and basically I got a 30% pass rate. ... 12 out of 20 kids hadn’t handed anything in ... (Teresa, Interview One).

I had a number of [students] at Year 12 who went into a two-hour exam that they did know the material for and had been present during the teaching and refused to write anything. Rather than actually fail, they wouldn’t engage ... they just responded by not doing it ... (Tim, Interview One).

This puzzlement is not necessarily unique to the NCEA and the teachers’ surprise may be due to their facing this kind of student reaction for the first time. However, it could be argued that both the teachers and the pupils were adjusting from the previous system, where the qualification was awarded based largely on the end of year results. It is possible that the use of examinations in the standards-based system for external assessments and during the year in schools may cause conflicting messages about the purpose and function of the qualification. Nevertheless, there are suggestions, in later interviews, of teachers adjusting to responses such as these from their students, by refocusing them on the NCEA assessments as a process to be done together in order to experience success.

The teachers in my study also discussed motivation for higher achievers, responding to a view of the qualifications as a way of demonstrating excellence, or as being a competitive tool. As was also shown in the NZCER study (Hipkins et al., 2005), not all higher achieving students, however, are always motivated by the new system. For example, pupils from a traditional academic subject, in the example below, reportedly
appear to have a view that the NCEA is a means only to gain a qualification, rather than to achieve excellent educational standards:

*I think the higher achievers—generally students will just settle for achieved. They see no difference in getting an excellence ... They got achieved for their first internal, and that was good enough for them. I’m like, you could all have got excellence. No, but we got four credits anyway.* (Aroha, Interview Two).

What is of interest here is not only the change that has come about in pupils’ approaches to managing the credits and grading system of the NCEA. It is also that teachers appear to view the assessment system as a process for learning as well as for credentialing. On one hand they see the advantage of the NCEA as allowing better opportunities for all pupils to succeed at something and gain credits towards a qualification. This indicates the benefits of the qualification as a means for providing ongoing feedback during the learning process. On the other hand, the teachers recognise both the importance of the credentialing function of the qualification itself and the links between pupils’ success, motivation and excellence. That is, they recognise the need for the qualification not only to achieve equity, but also to foster and measure excellence.

Further, the teachers are coming to terms with how educational policy (in this instance, the new senior secondary school qualification) is interpreted by their pupils. This is frequently different from their own interpretation, and can lead to different kinds and levels of pupil motivation. This suggests that teachers are ambivalent about the effects of the NCEA and that the reform cannot be viewed as being a clear-cut ‘good’ or ‘bad’ thing. For example, in the previous extract Aroha expressed what she saw as the weaknesses of the NCEA for higher achievers; but she also saw its strengths in terms of its equity potential:

*Every student has the chance to achieve. School C[ertificate] system, you either passed or you didn’t, end of story. This one—every student, of every different learning ability can leave school with something—good.* (Aroha, Interview Two)

This illustrates the difficulty of implementing a policy seamlessly. It is not easy or even possible to address equity through policy without raising issues of which people are advantaged or disadvantaged and how. Encountering the practical implications of
implementing this assessment reform is one powerful way in which teachers are continually confronted with questions about assessment, equity and curriculum. This suggests that professional knowledge is not a relatively straightforward process of learning what is right, but instead involves a complex negotiation of interwoven discourses and effects.

The issues discussed by the teachers in my study overlap with those raised in the more formal evaluations discussed above. However, it has not been my intention in this thesis to revisit in detail teachers’ evaluation of the NCEA itself. My focus is, rather, on what an analysis of the teachers’ sense-making of the issues and dilemmas the reform introduces can tell us about broader educational debates. Through their work with pupils on the NCEA, teachers are articulating their own beliefs about the purpose of qualifications, and their understandings of assessment. They are making sense of these matters as they play out in conversation alongside the pragmatics of implementing policy in their daily professional lives. For example, Aroha expressed her belief in the qualification as a means to achieve excellence and the frustration she felt with her pupils’ differing viewpoint:

*I want my kids to pass and do well—not just pass, I want them to do well (Aroha, Interview One).*

*I’ve got four kids ... that I want to sit scholarship history, cos they are bright. They don’t want to do it, because they don’t want to put in the extra amount of work ... You know, “what’s the difference between an excellence and an achieved?” So in that respect, I get frustrated with the system (Aroha, Interview Two).*

Andy, Robert, Aroha and Tim commented on the constraints of policy reform on their educational beliefs and practice. This indicates the value they see in thinking of curriculum as a way to promote learning about new and interesting knowledge, as well as a means for achieving a qualification:

*It’s just a treadmill of NCEA [assessments]. But all of the learning and all of the curriculum is now streamlining into NCEA, which is a bad thing. We’re being driven by assessment instead of the overall curriculum ... curriculum is huge and assessment is increasingly what’s driving it (Tim, Interview Two).*

*They’ve narrowed things down a little bit, in terms of your scope of teaching, because morally you feel you shouldn’t teach outside it, because you don’t want to jeopardise the kids’ chance of passing ... as opposed to*
“well this is really interesting over here, why do you think this happens?”
(Andy, Interview Two).

If you want to get your students to get achievement, to get merit, to get excellence, you have to look at the assessment first. I think that is not right
(Robert, Interview One).

I find, the curriculum document [for my subject] doesn’t really match the NCEA system ... I look at the external assessment to see what will be covered ... I think I should have [used] the curriculum document, but if I just took it from that, I can’t get my students to get satisfactory results
(Robert, Interview One).

Their rules and their guidelines – I think there are still a lot of problems with this NCEA (Aroha, Interview One).

The point is we’re stuck with NCEA aren’t we? We’re stuck with it
(Aroha, Interview Two).

The sometimes conflicting understandings they bump up against appear to be a trigger for their thinking about the multiple purposes of assessment, high stakes school qualifications, student motivation and so forth.

In a biographical sense, the teachers are working out their own viewpoints in relation to the surrounding debates and the policy itself and this is an important aspect of their professional knowledge or meaning-making. As well, it illustrates something of teachers’ self-making—how they work out what kinds of teacher they want to be—through their responses to the kinds of values reflected in the qualification. A clear example of this was the coming to the fore of their ethos of fairness and desire to implement equity policies, as shown in Chapter Four. Further, while the desire for equity is reflected in policy, at the same time teachers must juggle this with increased imperatives placed on them to achieve both equity and excellence in this new qualification.

**Credentialing of both vocational and academic subjects**

Another topic of conversation that created ambivalences for the teachers was the credentialing of a wider range of subjects in the new qualification. This was viewed as an improvement in some ways but one that also created dilemmas for the teachers and schools. In terms of equity, the credentialing of both vocational and academic subjects
allows pupils the opportunity to be successful at and gain qualifications for subjects at which they excel.

It’s great now that [my subject] can be assessed at the NCEA level. Before, it existed in some schools, but there was no benchmark and they just were teaching their own curriculums, but now it’s actually geared towards the assessment. They can get credit ... (Jude, Interview One).

Finally the practical subjects are recognised as a qualification (Jude, Interview Two).

This, again, reflects Jude’s desire for fairness as well as her recognition of the ways in which different knowledge traditions have frequently been valued differently—that is, hierarchically. These views parallel those of teachers in the PPTA and NZCER evaluations (Alison, 2005; Hipkins et al., 2005) who tend to be positive about the equal credentialing of non-traditional subjects—including technology, drama and dance—alongside academic ones.

This suggests that the intended outcome of the NCEA to address the barriers to low achievers via a different credentialing regime is viewed as having some positive effect (Strathdee, 2003). However, while teachers acknowledge that the changes are potentially fairer to those pupils undertaking vocational subjects, the increased academic focus in technical subjects is also problematic. A concern about the reduction in time spent on practical components was also reported in the NZCER and PPTA evaluations, and reflects Strathdee’s (2003) concern that this may disadvantage those who had traditionally succeeded only in more practical subjects. This came up indirectly in my study through a conversation about the technology curriculum:

Three out of the four achievement standards that you do in technology now, this year, are written. So it’s no longer a practical subject (Teresa, Interview One).

The NZCER and PPTA evaluations further identify how schools overall are addressing this concern. My study, however, brings a different perspective, by examining the kinds of educational issues the reform, as well as local responses to it, raised for classroom teachers.

The interview discussions about changes to the relationship between vocational and academic subjects raised questions about the positioning of certain curriculum areas
as practical or academic, debates about the students’ ability and subject choices, and the potential of the qualification to contribute to process of learning as well.

Conversations in the interviews about the academic/vocational divide frequently focused on the new technology curriculum and the NCEA achievement standards—which have a greater focus on theory than previous qualifications. This is a topic that has created much controversy amongst teachers because of the move away from practical assessments and the impact this could have on traditionally lower achieving students. In my study, a debate arose about what is of key importance in the learning process. One teacher saw ‘the value in learning the processes of design as well as the practical, which is mainly what it was before’ (Teresa, Interview Two). The benefits of teaching and of assessing the thinking behind the design process for technology, however, were strongly debated by this teacher and others in her interview group:

Teresa: If they learn the process, they can apply it to absolutely anything. ... It’s all about learning processes ... and evaluating and developing and modifying ... The process is more important than the product.

Andy: Yeah, I hear what you’re saying, but I’m thinking that at Year 11 level, perhaps many of those kids are not going to get that ... It’s too advanced for them ...

Teresa: It’s teaching them thinking. It’s teaching them that thinking about thinking.

Andy: Well it is. Absolutely. There’s nothing wrong with that, but for some kids it’s just not going to be where they’re at. (Teresa and Andy, Interview One).

Teresa appears to strongly subscribe to the philosophy of the new technology curriculum, seeing the associated NCEA course as providing a process for learning and progressing. Andy is trying to articulate his sense that the purpose of qualifications are for as many pupils as possible to succeed, alongside his view of the students as having predetermined yet diverse abilities or interests. The debates in which the teachers engage illustrate how they position themselves in relation to common beliefs about the NCEA and assessment in general, as they work out both what they believe and what kinds of teachers they want to be. This negotiation of multiple viewpoints alongside policy imperatives impacts on both their knowledge
formation and identity work—and represents as well, the intersection of an economy of performance and ecologies of practice (Stronach et al., 2002).

Teachers’ recognition of the value of credentialing vocational/practical subjects reflects, in part, a commitment to equity. However, contradictory discourses about knowledge and ability (practical versus academic students) are also circulating and these generate questions for teachers. For example, Andy’s (Interview One) questioning of the appropriate timing for teaching the design process rather than the practical—’is it too early to teach them that’ and ‘When are they best suited to learn those things?’ and ‘it’s too advanced for them’—suggests that he is questioning the ability of kids to think academically, their level of skill and whether teachers should be teaching at higher levels, conveying a social developmental model of learning. Teresa (Interview One) also considers this, but has a different view, believing that it is important to teach them ‘that thinking about thinking’. Implicit in these questions and beliefs, are competing assumptions about intelligence and ability. For example, drawing on her own experience, Teresa suggested that ability and skill can be harnessed and improved by particular kinds of learning environments and that it possible for teachers to influence this:

How I’ve been taught at tertiary education [is influencing my teaching].
The course that I did was all thinking about thinking and now I’m able to teach it a lot easier (Teresa, Interview One).

Andy suggested that pupils do have definable ability—’I’m finding the schooling is not moulding to the students’ ability’—and that the educational environment should be adjusted to suit this. It is not clear whether he means that the school should try to improve or harness the particular intelligence or ability of its pupils or if he means they should accept where the pupils are and maintain lower or higher expectations of them, depending on the ‘ability’. However, it is clear that ability is considered to be a factor that should be taken into account when planning curriculum delivery.

Such differing assumptions also shape views about equity and the kinds of expectations teachers can have of students—’How far can/should students be pushed?’ and ‘Is it possible or appropriate to make a practical subject fit into an academic paradigm?’ One consequence of the reforms, perhaps unintentional, is that traditionally practical subjects have become more academic rather than being valued
for their practical characteristics. The dilemma here is that the equalisation of vocational and academic subjects in this way comes up against the weight of cultural history that tends to find traditionally marginalised groups of pupils choosing and succeeding at more practical subjects. Thus the change has not disrupted the practical/academic binary in a way that necessarily advantages marginalised groups as the practical component has been eroded.

Another unintended side effect of the academicisation of the technology curriculum has been the return, in many schools, to the use of more practical unit standards instead of the academic achievement standards (Hipkins et al., 2005). This somewhat defeats the purpose of the new qualification to equalise vocational and academic subjects, but it is an attempt to address the problem of how to best serve the pupils undertaking these technical subjects. Comments from teachers in this study suggest that there are no easy solutions to this problem and show how attempts to address it have been met with a certain ambivalence on their part. They see a benefit in terms of equalising the status of all subjects, but the disadvantage is that ‘academicising’ vocational subjects may, in fact, disadvantage traditional students undertaking these subjects because of the reduction of the practical components of such courses (Strathdee, 2003).

The interviews discussed here provide insights into how teachers see the changes influencing the vocational/academic divide, particularly in relation to the technology curriculum and other non-traditional subjects. They also illustrate the consequences of teachers’ being caught in the policy and practice nexus (Stronach et al., 2002) as they work out their views on the purposes of assessment and its relationship to equity. The teachers in my study, like those in the NZCER study (Hipkins et al., 2005) expressed ambivalent views, including both scepticism and hope, in relation to the reform’s equity goals. The relationship between the vocational and academic subjects and their relative status are challenges that need to be worked out by new, as well as experienced teachers.

I have been arguing that negotiating the implementation of this reform gave an urgency to new teachers working out what purpose qualifications serve and what roles assessment plays in shaping student learning and their future lives. As this case study suggests, it confronted teachers with contested understandings, as well as forcing
them to address questions arising from their notions of fairness and excellence, and how these are played out, even if not achieved, in their own classrooms and schools.

For new teachers, one challenge relates to their desire for fairness, their understanding of the effects of the unequal status of various school subjects, and the compromises that arise when, for example, practical subjects are reformulated into a qualification based on largely academic standards such as the NCEA. These are important matters for beginning teachers to work through and it is crucial that they have opportunities to examine, in teacher education and in schools, such assessment issues in relation to their teaching philosophy and policy agendas, such as equity. This would enable them to better articulate their own beliefs and values alongside those of schools and educational policy. This approach would represent a bringing together of both macro educational and educational reform issues and micro matters of individual professional knowledge and identity formation.

Curriculum design

The teachers had much to say about the potential the NCEA offered for redesigning the curriculum, particularly in terms of offering greater flexibility of delivery, for example, for assessment design and structure. They also commented on how the competing aims of the NCEA and its flexible learning pathways create dilemmas for them as practising teachers and how they juggle learning aims with high-stakes qualification aims.

In reflecting on assessment aims, the new teachers made connections to the delivery of quality learning experiences for their students and to overall curriculum rationales and design. Paul talked about adapting an interesting class activity for an NCEA internal assessment task:

*Year 12s, they made little models. So I turned that into an NCEA assessment, because I thought it would be something that would be really enjoyable—really fun for the kids (Paul, Interview One.)*

Paul was positive overall about the NCEA because he saw the qualification as allowing for assessment processes to be learning experiences and as ways of students gaining success in what they are good at doing. He illustrates how he has used the
flexibility of the system creatively within his course—a point also made by the NZCER evaluative study (Hipkins et al., 2005).

Iris appreciates having two ‘streams’ of English in her school because it allows some pupils to take two years to complete all the Level 1 achievement standards (and gain a full NCEA subject). Thus, they are able to cover the content in depth and in ways that allow them to succeed. This illustrates the advantage of the NCEA discussed by Hipkins et al. (2004) of being able to develop not only traditional academic courses but also local and context-based ones to suit particular student groups. The approach used in Iris’ department achieves the aim of the new qualification to allow for flexible learning pathways, and her comments illustrate her understanding of curriculum and assessment working together. The reform, then has forced these teachers to consider the role of high stakes qualifications in addressing an equity agenda in education generally.

Iris and Tim, however, identified dilemmas they faced in relation to how they can continue to provide deep learning experiences while still meeting the assessment deadlines:

My goal is now just to get them to pass and so a lot of that richness has gone last term (Iris, Interview One).

I would like them to do their own research under guidance and learn how to research … so I’m constantly trying to teach them … how to do things, whereas they and the community and the school are looking for what they need to pass NCEA, so there’s a bit of a disjunction there. (Tim, Interview One).

These practical challenges are not uncommon and perhaps reflect a realisation of a common teaching experience, but they are intensified in relation to these immediate reforms. However, they do underline contrary philosophies of assessment that teachers must balance—that is, assessment as a constructive learning process (with constraints imposed upon it) and assessment as a means for completing a qualification. These examples illustrate the teachers using their professional knowledge to negotiate the mandated system, at the same time as they are shaping their knowledge of the ways in which curriculum, assessment and learning are enacted in the current educational environment. Their commitment to fairness nevertheless generated some of the dilemmas they faced when juggling macro
educational agendas of equity and accountability with micro aspects of professional knowledge and identity—such as working out their own teaching philosophy and implementing it in this broader context.

Despite the new qualification allowing for flexible pathways, the teachers continued to face conflicting pressures to do with the practical (meeting assessment deadlines) and the professional (providing quality learning experiences). To achieve what she believes is necessary for both the pupils’ learning and the achievement of their qualification, Iris suggests that there is no choice:

[You] don’t have any choice. You can say that to students. I say, okay we do this because we’re made to, but here’s the learning bit (Iris, Interview One).

In this example, she shows her awareness of the dilemma placed on teachers to comply with the NCEA requirements and her determination to ensure pupils’ learning is meaningful beyond the qualification itself.

These are further examples of teachers shaping understandings of professional knowledge through the practical application of policy. As my discussion has shown, the teachers understand the links between curriculum, assessment and learning and they are developing ways in which pupils can benefit from positive aspects of the reform and, at the same time, address the contradictions that can arise with the multiple aims of the qualification. These interviews also illustrate some of the ways in which the thinking of pupils as well as policy debates contribute to teacher learning and the complexity of this relationship.

*Credibility, reliability and validity*

As noted above, concerns about the quality of the information provided about pupils and the qualification itself have dominated responses to the introduction and implementation of the NCEA. Debates about the reliability and validity of the new qualification system and the impact of the changes on the integrity of existing courses have featured prominently in the media and educational fora. Consequently, the teachers in this study—and their peers—were exposed to a wide range of views on these topics.
The teachers in my study were particularly observant about the implementation process of the NCEA. One area of observation related to resourcing, workload and accountability:

Personally I’m quite glad that I’ve entered into teaching now when it’s coming through because of not having to change things half way through or anything. ... the way that I teach and assess (Paul, Interview One).

There’s so much extra marking that you’ve got to do now, with NCEA, and it’s all sort of, got to be done by a set time, especially if you’ve got external moderation (Aroha, Interview Two).

[Setting and marking resits is] not a problem ... but that’s a heavy workload for me (Iris, Interview Two).

While Aroha and Iris both believe there has been a greater workload since the reform, Iris more readily accepts this situation (overall she is very positive about the benefits of the reform for her students and teaching style). Paul sees the advantage of entering teaching at the start of the new system and this is perhaps a comment on the perceived impact that the changes have had on teachers who were familiar with the previous system and the relative upheaval of the reform.

Workload and accountability were frequently commented upon, particularly by those teaching smaller, sole-charge subjects, where they are frequently left alone to prepare and mark assessments. The external moderation reports are often the only feedback they receive.

Trying to do NCEA Level 1, 2 and 3 and being sole specialist, it’s quite scary ... The workload’s always an issue. I’ve set up Level 3 [subject deleted] this year. That was quite a lot of work, because there was no-one to help me (Tim, Interview Two).

I’ve had to do all that myself. ... but I don’t have anyone who’s come back to me and actually done the real feedback—the real critical analysis of what I have produced (Andy, Interview One).

As well as experiencing workload issues associated with teaching and assessment, particularly in the new environment of internal assessments, these beginning teachers

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58 In order to protect teachers’ identity, I have not specified which subjects these are. However, I refer to such subjects as the senior science specialisations, applied arts subjects and other subjects that tend to occur only at senior school level.
are also recognising the responsibilities that are placed on teachers in general. There is a realisation that while they are accountable through external moderation, they are largely left to make assessment decisions on their own—especially if they are sole specialists. On the one hand this represents professional autonomy, but on the other it produces a sense of isolation and a keen awareness of the expectation that they will, or rather must perform as professionals. For most, this is the first time as teachers that they have not been closely monitored. Being placed in this position is like a handing over of the mantle or official identity of ‘teacher’, whether they are ready or not. The requirements of this reform, then, have a significant impact on the teachers’ self-making as well as their knowledge formation, by forcing them to work out, often on their own in the classroom, what they think and what kind of teacher they are.

Trust and responsibility are central issues in the implementation of internal assessment (Hall, 2005; Hellner, 2003). Several teachers in my study raised questions about consistency of teacher judgements, in terms of the level of support/guidance they provide pupils in the process leading up to assessments:

_I think it is easily rigged (Christine, Interview Two)._  

_So, within a school the variation per student is totally dependent on (a) the teacher (b) the department (c) the practices and policies, so I think that NCEA is a crock of shit, because basically the variation per teacher, per class, per subject is so variable that we’re not actually measuring achievement at all (Tim, Interview Two)._  

_[A key issue is] maintaining the same standard across schools for the internal [assessments]. That’s tough, because there’s no doubt that people marking, if you know the student, you’ve probably got a better chance to pass them, because you know them and you can conference them and all that sort of stuff. So there’s the subjective thing, almost. It depends on how much the teacher wants to do for the student – how many opportunities you give them (Andy, Interview Two)._  

These comments underline the importance these teachers place on the quality of the professional judgement of teachers. They dispel simple notions of objectivity, illustrating both the advantages and risks of teacher subjectivity when assessing student work. While Christine, Tim and Andy are critical of the reform, Andy recognises the complexity and tensions created by the assessment system. For example, he also sees teachers as having a better understanding of their pupils’
knowledge and the opportunity to ‘conference’ them. He and Tim also questioned the use of external examinations:

_There’s a lot of resources put into public exams at the end of the year for Level 1 (Andy, Interview Two)._  

_[External exams] are crap. They give you the ability to pass exams (Tim, Interview Two)._  

Fragmentation of the curriculum has been identified as a significant potential effect of the new assessment reforms (Hall, 2000, 2005). The teachers in my study offer varying views on this, in part because of the different ways in which each subject is managed and in part because of the particular educational philosophy they have developed or are developing. Some of their comments reflect Hall (2005) and Elley et al.’s (2005) concern that course integrity is lost in standards-based assessment. They also see a narrowing of what is possible to teach and limitations placed on curriculum innovation. Christine found that, although she wanted to overlap two areas of the curriculum, she was expected to teach only what related to the particular achievement standard she was teaching.

_But they learn it later on in the year, so my HOD’s calling me in and saying, ‘You can’t do that’. We’re not supposed to have crossing over from one Achievement Standard to the other. Everything’s got to be isolated. It’s just bizarre. Life’s not like that (Christine, Interview One)._  

_In my subject area, far too compartmentalised. It’s not realistic... I teach a lot more ... about 20% again more than they need for NCEA. But if you don’t then they’re not prepared for NCEA, Level 3 (Christine, Interview Two)._  

These expectations are not only from her school, they are also requirements for her subject area. Thus, in order to prepare students for external examinations, she finds herself having to teach to the assessment rather than the curriculum, or rather to what she believes to be educationally sound principles. This is another instance of how teachers must juggle accountability standards with issues of principle and fairness.

Tim also referred to the fragmentation of knowledge in the NCEA, observing that standards-based assessment has an impact on the types of knowledge to which students are exposed:
Information and mastery of knowledge will be completely redundant. The finding and assembling and analysing and it’s the use of advanced concepts—of getting that vast quantity of information down into useful things that they can do with it, which will be important. So from that angle NCEA—the internal—is useful … (Tim, Interview Two).

On the other hand, some teachers believe that they have the freedom to teach different achievement standards within a course concurrently:

The thing is the way that you teach the Achievement Standard … well the way I’m doing it, you teach them all together (Teresa, Interview One).

What I do find though, with Level 3 now, you can double dip into the subject (Aroha, Interview Two).

I try and combine things. So, for instance, we do short stories, but … off the short stories—we did our speeches and we did dramatic things. In fact we were supposed to just do static image, but we did a moving one as well. And so I like to use everything twice, so if we do research … so our formative research was on the director from the film, that we were studying. So I sort of get around it a little bit (Iris, Interview Two).

On the one hand, Christine’s view reflects Hall’s (2000; 2005) concern that the new qualification is not structured so that the achievements standards hold together to form integrated programmes of studies. However, she also commented that school or Government interpretations of NCEA can generate quite unsettling concerns for beginning teachers. She feels trapped by what she views as a fragmentation and narrowing of knowledge fields, and consequently she opposes the reformed qualification. On the other hand, Teresa, Aroha and Iris professed to being more strategic and aim to use the new system to the advantage of their pupils without, apparently, falling into the trap of compartmentalising their teaching and assessment strategies. They were acutely aware of the division of subjects into discrete standards because of the way the qualification is structured. Like Christine, they expressed an understanding of educational principles that construct knowledge as integrated and complex rather than made of component parts. The latter three, however, have worked with the mandated system to apply this understanding in practice. This highlights the importance, when considering the formation of teachers’ professional knowledge and identity, of taking account of particular circumstances and issues—in this instance, the different teaching subjects, schools or departments—and the potential to learn from these differing experiences and situations. That is, it is not always helpful to
make general statements about the nature and characteristics of the professional knowledge of beginning teachers. Contextual factors add to the dynamic and sometimes uneven process of professional knowledge and identity formation.

Several of the teachers also commented on the impact of standards-based assessment on the way teachers design, teach and assess their courses (Hall, 2000; 2005). For instance, Robert and Tim were concerned about the way assessment for NCEA drives their teaching:

_Since NCEA is introduced to the schools, I sort of derive my teaching from the assessment. ... we don’t look at the curriculum sometimes—we just look at the assessment. ... We find how to let my students pass or how to let my students get merit; how to get excellence (Robert, Interview One)._  

_The problem that I have is the assessment driven rather than curriculum driven ... (Tim, Interview One)._  

_I think the entire school, and the entire learning, is now directed towards NCEA ... I think the problem is teaching towards NCEA and being driven by NCEA. The teachers, the kids the curriculum, the knowledge ... They’ll work for NCEA, but that means that everything else takes a back seat, so they’ll be juggling portfolios of NCEA across departments and time, and they’re not actually learning; they’re looking at the next task that they have to pass. So you’re not actually teaching the curriculum or information; you’re teaching the things they need to know to pass the NCEA. It sucks (Tim, Interview Two)._  

This may not be a change from the past, when teachers prepared pupils for external exams, based on subject prescriptions. Nevertheless, this provides a telling example of new teachers working out the interaction of assessment and learning discourses in their classroom practice. As Tim put it, the issue is whether learning is assessment driven or curriculum driven, and he is attempting to evaluate the relative merits of these two approaches. This reflection succinctly captures the juxtaposition within the NCEA agenda of a social justice dimension—recognising what students can do by assessing them against discrete standards—and its design which emphasises the measurement of component parts of knowledge and counters the educational principle that courses need overall coherence (Hall, 2005). Teachers are confronted with the potential contradiction embodied in this juxtaposition through delivery of high stakes qualifications, because they are forced to juggle their desire for pupils to succeed with their desire to follow through on sound learning theories—theories that propose that
student knowledge and thinking is extended and that teachers engage them through intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivation.

The comments discussed in this section reflect practical, day-to-day concerns about as well as strategies for implementing educational reform. The implementation of the new qualification was one of many changes faced by the beginning teachers. Yet they share, alongside their more experienced colleagues, the practical issues of its introduction. Further, all teachers have had to make sense, in their own ways, of a range of competing ideas that circulate about the NCEA. This has, as my interviews suggested, also confronted their beliefs about the function and purpose of qualifications in general, thereby giving urgency to their professional and personal need to work out these matters. While policy reform and controversy is not new in education, this reform has created a high level of debate and for the new teachers the experience was intensified with their involvement with policy controversy for the first time. As such, it has impacted significantly on their identity work as well as their formation of professional knowledge.

**Implications for practice**

The new teachers in this study, while engaged in the change process alongside other teachers, were also negotiating their own professional standpoints in the context of contested ideas. They were negotiating not only discourses and policies about the qualification reforms but also those related to day-to-day interactions with pupils, curriculum and assessment, and these were in dialogue with their own life and educational experiences. Britzman (2003, p. 11) refers to this as a being part of the process of dealing with ‘contradictory realities … conflicts and crises that structure the work and narratives of learning to teach’.

Like their colleagues, the teachers here were negotiating political imperatives to meet national and school guidelines and outcomes for accountability, as well as their own theories in practice (Britzman, 2003; Stronach et al., 2002). At the same time, they were working with pupils’ interpretations of the assessment system, which, at times, differ from their own (and that intended by policymakers). Thus, this case study of the assessment reform shows how difficult it is to implement policy seamlessly and the importance of understanding the experience of teachers in this process. My analysis
also suggests that as well as ensuring teachers understand policy intentions and implications for how they implement policy, teacher educators and schools have an obligation to take account of further contextual aspects of teachers’ lives, as discussed above. This includes preparing teachers for specific circumstances and for variations of, for example, the type of school, the location of the school community and the specific characteristics and requirements of particular curriculum areas and the associated assessments.

This study also shows some of the hazards of introducing reforms and their impact upon teacher workload and stress levels. However, there is also some evidence to show that the multiple debates related to the reform, as well as the teachers’ existing beliefs, while presenting dilemmas, have enabled teachers to articulate important educational principles about education, assessment and curriculum. Teachers in this study were forced to confront questions of equity in education and assessment and address the dilemmas associated with their desire for fairness, in an environment of accountability. From this we can see that it is important for teachers to engage in situated analyses of the impact of policy reform on teaching.

Significantly, there was evidence in the interviews of ambivalence about the reform because of the uneasy compromise between equity and excellence. Like many educational policies, the NCEA attempts to seamlessly achieve both equity and excellence. The analysis in this chapter suggests that new teachers need to be prepared to understand as much as possible about such tensions and the relevance of these to the formulation of professional knowledge and identity. This needs to be addressed in pre-service teacher education as well as in schools in ways that allow teachers to recognise and grapple with these tensions, rather than succumb blindly to policy dictates—for instance, through professional conversations that encourage teachers to deconstruct their roles in implementing policy, or to reflect upon the impact of their beliefs and practice on pupils success and so forth.

This discussion also raises questions about the ways in which teachers, policymakers, academics, pupils and parents construct the purpose of qualifications—as border control, as success for all, a ticket for the future, or as a process of learning. Equally important are the broader questions it raises about how knowledge is constructed and
what counts as knowledge. It is important, then, for teachers to have a well-grounded understanding of these issues and to be able to express and defend their beliefs.

This case study of teachers’ negotiation of policy reform has illuminated the importance of teachers making sense of how they go about teaching in a new environment and how they view themselves as teachers—the micro dimension of professional knowledge—as well as how we can assess and deliver the curriculum in ways that address broader social and political debates of justice, difference, success and equity which are critical for professional practice—the macro dimension of education. One way that teacher education and schools can do this is by ensuring opportunities for teachers to discuss and debate the complexity of issues such as the relationship between social justice, assessment methods and difference. Another way is to ensure that as well as such ‘meaning-making’ activities, teachers’ ‘self-making’ is understood to be part of this process.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has developed a case study of the transfer of educational reforms into day-to-day practice by a group of new teachers. In particular, it has considered how a group of new teachers negotiate a review of the senior secondary school certification system and the dual policy imperatives of equity and accountability, and how this negotiation contributed to their identity work.

This case study has explored how, particularly during times of educational reform, teachers find themselves juggling competing discourses—in this instance of equity and excellence. I have shown how the NCEA policy reform has opened up debates about assessment, teaching, learning and qualifications, both in the public arena and in the educational sector. My analysis illustrates how new teachers negotiate these debates as they implement the reform. These reforms are part of the context for the formation of their understandings of assessment and learning, and their views on the purposes of qualifications and assessment. I have illustrated how teachers formulate their beliefs about the relationship between qualifications and social justice in the context of increased accountability and curriculum controls, and how they have attempted to negotiate the relationship between accountability, excellence and equity in high stakes qualifications.
The reform, then, has had a powerful impact on how these teachers make sense of important educational issues about assessment, curriculum and learning. While teachers are likely to encounter such issues as they begin their careers, this particular reform has brought these issues forcibly into the limelight obliging teachers to articulate their own beliefs and philosophy and to address the implications of them for their teaching.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This thesis examined the professional knowledge of new secondary school teachers in New Zealand, their negotiation of multiple discourses encountered in policy and practice, and their processes of professional identity formation. It has also been a study of policy reform. In New Zealand, as elsewhere, educational and social reforms carried out over the past 15 years have brought about major changes to the way in which education is managed and implemented. These reforms emphasise market ideologies that promote consumer choice and responsibility, and put in place controls to measure and monitor quality and effectiveness. At the same time, the reforms emphasise equity ideologies aimed at alleviating social inequalities. Teachers’ negotiation of the juxtaposition between an accountability culture and the dominant policies of equity was a major focus of this study.

This chapter first revisits the overarching questions that drove this research, and the rationale for the approach taken. It then summarises the contribution of the thesis to the fields of research on teacher education and professional knowledge and its implications for teacher educators, teachers and policymakers. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for possible future research.

The overall questions

The initial decision to research new secondary teachers’ professional knowledge came from my professional role as a teacher educator at the time I began this study. This decision was also motivated by my desire to address, firstly, concerns, in New Zealand and elsewhere, about the recruitment and retention of secondary teachers—especially those in the early years of their careers—and, secondly, concerns frequently expressed by educational agencies, school principals, teacher unions, the media and the general public about teacher quality and whether teacher education is producing ‘good enough’ teachers.

I have argued in this thesis that in order to address these concerns, it is necessary to understand, in-depth, the processes of learning to teach at a critical time in teachers’ careers—the first two years of teaching. This is a time when teaching philosophies, beliefs and identity are likely to be most actively shaped and a time when the teacher
education experience is fresh, as teachers interact with policy and practice discourses encountered in schools.

I have further argued that there is a need to go beyond simply describing and evaluating beginning teachers’ experiences of induction and initiation into teaching. Descriptions and evaluations are useful to find out what sorts of issues and practices are occurring for new teachers, and inferences can be made about what is or is not effective with regard to teacher retention, commitment or satisfaction. However, the approach adopted in this thesis offers an alternative way of examining these issues by exploring the multi-faceted processes of becoming a teacher in the current environment. Such a close up study of teachers is important as it allows a fuller understanding of how teachers make sense of competing policy agendas, and social and cultural change within schools and society. This, then, provides deeper insights for teacher educators, policymakers and schools into how teachers build, shape and sustain professional knowledge—what I have described as strategies and processes of meaning-making and self-making.

An additional intended aim of this study was to reframe the contribution of an often neglected group of teachers—early career teachers—and to challenge perceptions of their knowledge as being deficient. Because early career teachers’ knowledge is fresh, they are more likely to be able to articulate in vivid and distinctive ways how teachers make sense of policy reforms. Therefore, this is a study of both teachers’ professional knowledge formation and how they address and implement educational policy in a rapidly changing social and political environment.

It was evident in the interviews with the teachers that the educational reforms that dominate their lives were critical in contributing to their professional knowledge formation. It was also evident from the ways in which teachers talked about their professional work that they were grappling with powerful discourses of equity, social justice and difference, concepts that firmly underpin New Zealand’s educational and social policies. In the current era, teachers and educational institutions are increasingly required to meet accountability standards in relation to equity policy agendas.

How teachers negotiate this emphasis on achieving equity within a culture of accountability measures became a particular focus of this study. Within such an
environment, teachers are caught between contradictions and dilemmas generated by diverse ideologies (their own and others), educational and social policy, and professional practice. A core aim of educational policymakers is to have schools and teachers implement policy, and this is often presented as if it were a relatively straightforward process. I have shown, however, that this is far from a seamless process. I argued that the complex impact of policy implementation on teachers’ professional knowledge and identity warrants analysis. In interpreting new teachers’ experiences, I have examined how teachers negotiate this complexity and the associated tensions in their professional practice, and what this does to their identity as teachers. Thus, this thesis has attempted to do more than only critique policy by considering how teachers and schools can address education policy reforms in practice.

In this study, I have drawn on poststructural understandings of knowledge and identity to build a situated analysis of teachers’ narratives during an intense period of professional learning. Teacher professional knowledge formation is not fixed or definable by a set of characteristics. It is socially, politically and culturally situated rather than the result of a developmental or stage-dependent process. Further, I propose that identity formation is central to the process of professional knowledge formation.

The discussion of professional knowledge formation was organised into three sets of arguments:

- **The macro context of teachers’ knowledge formation**: I argued that crucial to teachers’ knowledge formation is their making sense of the discourses of social justice, equity and difference that have circulated in New Zealand for several decades. This ‘sense-making’ occurs alongside their personal beliefs and the professional ‘commonsense’ philosophies they encounter, and is mediated through accountability standards set up in educational policy. My analysis illustrated how teachers juggle the tensions and dilemmas created by this juxtaposition.

- **The micro dimension of professional knowledge formation**: I examined processes and practices that contribute to the formation of professional identity. The argument here was that individual teacher subjectivities are shaped by and produced within a range of professional, social and cultural discourses encountered
by teachers. I analysed discursive practices that frame teachers’ working lives and through which teachers work out who they are or should become, and how to think as a teacher. This brings an important perspective to the debates about what knowledge is required of new teachers and how identity forms.

- *A case study of educational reform*: This analysis brought together the macro and micro contexts via a close-up analysis of how teachers made sense of a recent educational reform of senior secondary school qualifications. It involved an analysis of how the reform challenged teachers’ beliefs about assessment, justice and what counts as success, drawing attention to the tensions between equity, academic excellence and standards-based assessment. This analysis provided insights into teacher professional knowledge formation in relation both to a specific reform and to processes of educational reform in general, illustrating the complex, dynamic and unpredictable nature of such reform processes.

**Findings and contribution**

This study has illustrated the contingent nature of professional knowledge, and the ways in which multiple layers of influences and subject positions interweave recursively in identity formation. It takes analyses of teacher professional knowledge beyond merely describing their experiences to analysing, at a number of levels, teachers’ meaning-making and self-making. This enabled a close-up and situated understanding of how teachers’ knowledge and identities form. It also provided implicit directions for how teacher educators and school leaders might address concerns about teachers’ preparedness to teach in diverse classrooms and address social and cultural issues, at the same time as account for the quality of their teaching in relation to policy.

**Equity and accountability**

I have shown in this thesis that teachers’ negotiation of competing political and conceptual debates about social justice, equity and difference is central to the formation of their professional knowledge. The study showed that teachers juggle the apparent contradictions that arise between their desire for justice, policy imperatives and educational rhetoric. This is particularly relevant in New Zealand with recent educational reforms aimed at alleviating social inequality.
The thesis analysed the ways in which teachers make sense of equity discourses in educational policy and practice, and the apparent contradictions that arise from placing tight accountability standards on schools and teachers to achieve associated equity goals. This analysis suggests that addressing such contradictions is not simply a matter of ‘resolving’ them. Rather, the debates, cultural discourses, personal beliefs and professional context for teachers need to be acknowledged and articulated. Teachers also need to understand and justify equity policies and findings, and deconstruct the language of equity.

Additionally, the analysis illustrated the importance of considering the intersection of subjectivity and socio-cultural contexts for the shaping of teacher identity. This thesis, then, offers a distinctive approach to analysing early career teachers’ narratives which recognises the ‘messiness’ of knowledge and subject formation and its relationship to policy implementation.

**Teacher professional knowledge and identity**

The thesis extended a narrative research methodology, using a poststructural approach that went beyond the presentation of ‘teachers’ voices’ to seek understanding about what the teacher narratives suggest about how professional knowledge and identity form. Staged interviews (over two years) were used for uncovering something of the process of change in the early years of teaching. The metaphor of the ‘magic writing pad’ or ‘palimpsest’ was also used to understand the process of identity formation. This illustrated the recursive, multi-layering of subjectivities, dispelling staged or developmental understandings of professional identity formation, and illustrating the entwining of professional knowledge and identity. This was useful for analysing the discursive practices that frame teachers’ working lives and through which they work out who they are, or should become, and what and how they (should) think. This approach contributes new perspectives to debates in teacher education about teacher preparation and the kinds of knowledge needed by teachers in these ‘new times’.

The study challenges common notions that, once they begin teaching, teachers rely on their biographical experiences as school pupils in favour of academic and professional learning acquired during teacher education. Such explanations of how teacher professional knowledge and identity form are no longer adequate. Teachers neither simply take on the philosophies and practices of more experienced colleagues, nor
simplistic interpretations of their own prior experiences as school pupils. Rather, they use multiple sources of knowledge in diverse ways to make sense for themselves in particular settings.

As well as extending understandings of the ways professional knowledge and identity form, this study challenges deficit theorising about new teachers’ knowledge and celebrates the contribution that early career teachers can make at a stage in their lives when they are actively shaping their ideas and teacher identity. This is important for the field of teacher education because of the dominance of developmental or stages-based research which is based on the premise that new teachers need to progress from a state of naïvity to one of expertise gained from experience (their own and that of senior colleagues).

This study indicated a critical need for teacher education (both in-service and pre-service) to provide opportunities for teachers to explore multiple discourses in cultural debates, policy and personal/professional beliefs and practice, as it relates to individual contexts.

**Policy reform**

This study also offers a fresh look at New Zealand’s new senior secondary school qualification—the National Certificate in Educational Achievement. This reform had a significant impact on secondary schools and on the way teachers, and New Zealanders in general, think about education, achievement and success. Rather than offering another evaluation of its effects, the analysis offered in this thesis provides an in-depth examination of how its implementation impacts on shaping teachers’ beliefs about assessment, educational equity and student achievement and intelligence. It was found that the reform significantly challenged new teachers to question these beliefs, their educational philosophy and their views about what counts as success.

This case study of educational reform drew attention to the tensions between equity, academic excellence and standards-based assessment, and contributes to understanding how teacher professional knowledge forms both in the context of a specific educational policy reform and in relation to educational reform in general. The analysis illustrates the complexity of implementing policy and addressing teachers’ desire for fairness, even within a qualification system specifically intended
to achieve this. It shows how professional knowledge forms as teachers negotiate specific policy implementation, illustrating the importance of a situated analysis of both the process of educational reform and the process of professional knowledge and identity formation.

**Implications**

While this study took place in a particular setting and at a particular time in educational history, it also has a broader contribution to make to understanding teacher education and professional knowledge within a climate of neo-liberal educational reform.

*Implications for teacher retention, satisfaction and commitment*

One stated reason for carrying out this research was to gain insight into how teachers build, shape and sustain professional knowledge. Such understandings are important for addressing concerns about teacher retention, satisfaction and commitment.

I have argued in this thesis that there is an urgent need to articulate fresh approaches to professional knowledge and identity formation in pre-service and in-service teacher education. Developmental models suggest that if teachers do not achieve a particular stage at a particular time, in particular ways, they may be inadequate as teachers. This has the potential to affect motivation and commitment, especially for new teachers. Teachers need to be involved in a process where they uncover discourses impacting on their practice and identity formation. They need to have opportunities and skills to engage with situated analyses of the particular educational issues that they encounter and how they can contribute to educational and social change. This includes employing such processes as the concept of ‘cultural safety’ or the analysis of pathologising practices, which require the deconstruction of potentially damaging theories and finding positive and fruitful ways to change.

Further, the knowledge and work of early career teachers needs to be recognised as being of value to our understanding of education. At this stage in teachers’ careers, they are most likely to make decisions about whether to stay in teaching and what kind of teachers they are and will become. Therefore, it is critical for the retention of teachers to ensure their satisfaction and commitment. New teachers’ knowledge and
identity formation, then, needs to be acknowledged by schools, teacher education and policymakers. One way to do this is to actively engage their ideas in decision-making.

This study illustrated something of the emotional impact of teachers’ work, especially when they are committed to addressing equity of achievement. The teachers’ motivation for this came from multiple discourses in education and teacher education, their personal beliefs as well as legislative requirements. As discussed in Chapter Four, current research about student success and satisfaction suggests that teachers have an important role to play. It would be easy, therefore, to blame teachers for students’ failure. While teachers’ commitment to student success is crucial, this study showed how important adequate resourcing is to retain committed teachers. There is a limit to how long teachers can sustain such an emotional commitment, without taking easier options such as leaving teaching, leaving ‘difficult’ schools or reducing the amount of time and emotional investment they have in their students’ wellbeing and success.

While it is difficult to suggest solutions to this, it is critical to acknowledge the emotional impact and to seek ways to actively address it. This study suggests that one way is to open up discussion and debate, through professional collaborative practices/conversations, professional supervision (as occurs for counsellors), or a type of sabbatical or study leave (similar to university academics).

Such key issues need to be addressed through research, policy and professional practice in order to address concerns about teacher retention, satisfaction and commitment.

*Implications for teacher education—pre-service and in-service*

This study also indicates some important requirements for teacher education concerning the kinds of knowledge new teachers need. I argued above for the need to take an alternative view of teacher professional knowledge and identity formation that considers the order and dis-order of this process—rather than trying to define how teachers should think and who they should be or become. This view needs to be extended to teacher education to avoid the setting of unattainable, predetermined standards and expectations that lead to disappointment and/or disillusionment.
As discussed above, it is also important that teachers are well-prepared in terms of their knowledge about social justice, equity, difference and the socio-cultural contexts in which they work. This is crucial for understanding what it means in their professional practice. It is urgent that it is addressed so that socially just practices are established and maintained in schools and so that teachers can implement their ‘ethos of fairness’, as illustrated in this study. A key way of doing this is to ensure that the broad contextual studies such as educational philosophy, educational history and educational sociology are covered adequately in teacher education and in ongoing teacher professional development.

The need to include identity as part of the consideration of professional knowledge has also been highlighted. This study has shown the situated nature of professional knowledge formation and how this occurs as teachers draw on their own and others’ experiences, ideas and practices. Therefore, it is important for teachers to articulate their identity positions and how this impacts on their teaching practice as well as on student achievement. Part of this discussion concerns how teachers can be encouraged or challenged to think and act in ways that do not contribute to deficit accounts of students and other teachers—such as by deconstructing deficit theories. I have discussed both these matters in this thesis and argue that work which is already being carried out in some New Zealand schools needs to extend to all schools as well as to tertiary education institutions. Attention also needs to be given to breaking down the perceived divide between universities, schools and Government agencies by exposing the differing (and similar) agendas of each.

**Tensions and limitations**

This study was small-scale and interview-based, with the intent of having new teachers reflect on their practice and experience. I deliberately did not set out to observe or evaluate their teaching performance. While this could be another useful area of study, the focus of this study was on how teachers articulate their experiences and the importance of this for teacher education and teacher commitment. The research of others and the analysis of policy were used extensively to enrich the analysis in this thesis.

This study extends beyond the extensive work already carried out on student teacher professional knowledge by considering what happens immediately following teacher
education. The PhD timeframe necessarily placed constraints on the kinds of analysis I could make, and I was able to interview the teachers only in the first two years of teaching. For example, because these interviews were carried out during teachers’ probation period and prior their to becoming fully registered as teachers, concerns about registration may have led to a sense of pressure to conform to colleagues’ and school practices. However, while studies carried out over a longer period are another area of possible study, this one was deliberately focused on teachers’ knowledge and identity formation at this transitional time. The staged interviews enabled analysis of both change and stability at this time.

There are inevitably limitations with any research methodology. This study used a qualitative approach, as discussed in depth in Chapter Three, rather than, for example, surveys. Issues of power arise with the direct involvement of the researcher with the ‘researched’. In this study, group interviews were used, partially as an attempt to minimise these issues. Further, care was taken to manage group dynamics so that the teachers all had opportunities to express their views freely and especially in interaction with peers.

In New Zealand, there are particular ethical issues associated with the Tiriti o Waitangi and the interviewing of ‘Other’. There is also a social urgency to address equity issues in relation to the Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori. Therefore, in this research it was necessary to work out ways of addressing these matters, while acknowledging the challenges of working as a Pākehā researcher with ‘Other’—in particular Māori. This was achieved through sensitivity during the interview process and by my being well informed and knowledgeable about the implications of the Tiriti o Waitangi for Māori in educational settings. Again, management of dynamics within the group interviews was crucial to allow for open discussion of these important issues and experiences.

**Future research**

Building on findings from this research, a number of further studies are suggested, relating to three themes: teacher professional knowledge and identity, educational reform and practice and new teachers.
Research about teacher professional knowledge and identity

Further research about teacher professional knowledge and identity formation is needed in order to continue to address concerns about teacher retention, satisfaction and commitment. This includes carrying out detailed studies similar to this one but over longer periods of time—beginning at the start of teacher education and extending over the first 5-10 years of teachers’ careers.

Another example of this could be cross-generational studies of teachers’ negotiation of multiple educational and social discourses and how this impacts on their professional knowledge and identity—focusing, for example, on the impact of pre-service and in-service professional development, and understandings and implementation of equity policies, assessment philosophies and how teachers reconcile the dilemmas inherent in the current qualification system.

In teacher education, research is needed on the kinds of work being carried out in New Zealand in relation to teacher identity, equity education and Tiriti o Waitangi education, and how this impacts long-term on teachers’ knowledge and practice, and on student achievement. Such research needs to go beyond blame to finding ways forward.

Research about educational policy reform and practice

Situated analyses are needed, such as this one of teachers’ meaning-making and self-making in relation to particular social and educational issues or concerns. For example, research is needed, particularly in secondary schools, to evaluate and address the impact of educational policy implementation on how schools address issues of Māori student underachievement. This could include case studies of schools changing practices aimed at improving student success, or talking to policymakers and school principals (as well as teachers) about their interpretations of equity policies or specific educational reforms.

It is also critical that research about educational reform, equity, teacher knowledge and educational practice is made accessible and useful for teachers and schools, in constructive ways.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Research about new teachers

Further research is needed to address the negative consequences of dismissing the knowledge that early career teachers bring. This could include applied research, such as studies that establish or work with collaborative communities of teachers working to address particular educational issues within or across schools.

There is also a need for research that examines the identity formation of specific groups, such as older early career teachers, Māori teachers and others from minority groups. Research using methods similar to this current study would provide deeper insights into particular dilemmas faced by these teachers—for example, the impact of negotiating multiple identity categories in the process of becoming a teacher.

Final words

A number of key messages emerge from this study. Firstly, early career teachers are teachers too! They have a huge amount to contribute through their extensive, current knowledge of education and thoughtful, considered approaches to addressing specific contemporary educational issues. Their experiences and contributions to education need to be taken seriously.

Secondly, teacher identity is a crucial aspect of teacher knowledge. It is urgent that this insight is articulated in teacher education (pre-service and in-service) as one way of addressing teacher retention, satisfaction and commitment to equity.

Finally, it is laudable that educational policy in New Zealand attempts to address equity issues. For this to work in practice, teachers must be well educated, in a range of contextual studies—in both pre-service and in-service settings. Detailed consideration needs to be taken of teachers’ roles and knowledge in implementing these policies, and how to assist and resource them to address the dilemmas and contradictions they face, in sustainable and meaningful ways.
Appendices

Appendix A: Plain language statement

Rachel Patrick, 17a Acheron Road, Mana, Porirua

I June

Dear [Teacher’s name]

I would like to invite you to participate in two group interviews as part of a research project called: *How do beginning teachers in culturally and socially diverse classrooms in New Zealand secondary schools shape their professional knowledge landscapes?* I am enrolled as a PhD student at Deakin University, Australia, and am undertaking this research under the supervision of Dr Evelyn Johnson, who is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education.

The aim of my project is to investigate how you and your peers view and deal with professional issues in education during your first and second year of teaching. I am also interested in the influences on your thinking and your teaching.

If you agree to participate, you will take part in two three-hour conversational interviews (spaced one year apart) with a group of five teachers at the same stage in their teaching career as you. In the first of these group interviews, which will take place in July this year, you will be invited to discuss your experiences as a new teacher, and your views of some of the professional issues facing you as a newly qualified teacher in classrooms of diverse students, the key influences on your thinking and teaching practice, including those from when you were a student teacher and in your current teaching position. The second interview will take place in July [next year] and you will be invited to update or consolidate your thinking about the issues discussed in the first interview. I have attached a copy of the sample interview questions, to assist you in your decision about whether or not you wish to participate.

I anticipate that by taking part in this research you will gain professional insights into your own and others’ teaching, that these insights will assist you in your work. Each interview will begin with an informal chat over a cup of tea/coffee and finger food to allow you to get to know your fellow group members a little. This will be followed by an introduction to the session and an exploration of the questions provided.

Interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed for analysis. All the information collected will be treated by me as strictly confidential and pseudonyms will be used in all spoken and written material about the research to protect your identity. Only myself as the researcher and transcriber will have access to all the audio-tapes and transcripts, although members of your interview group will have access to the audio-tape and transcript of your interview sessions. Identifiable consent forms will be stored separately from codes connecting your name with your pseudonym. All data and transcripts will be kept, for six years, securely at my workplace in a locked filing cabinet, in accordance with Deakin University guidelines, after which time all data on computer disc and audio-tapes will be erased and all written material shredded.

Since this research would involve your participation in group interviews, I should point out to you that your views and comments will be known to other members of the group, as a result of the interview experience. As the researcher I will not be making your individual views known to anyone else beyond the group. I also intend to discuss confidentiality with the group and establish groundrules to reduce this risk. However, it is always possible that your views...
may be related beyond the group by another member. I draw your attention to this risk as part of the decision you make about whether or not you wish to participate.

Although as researcher I will be protecting your identity such that your name or position will not be associated in any report with the information you provide me in the interview, we operate in a relatively small teaching community, so there is a slight possibility that some people may recognise your views as they are written in the research report. I draw your attention to this risk as part of the decision you make on whether or not you wish to participate.

It is not my intention that you unwillingly reveal information about yourself, and you will not be probed to reveal personal and private issues. Rather you will be invited to talk about issues relating to the influences on your perspectives on the professional issues of teaching, learning and education. However, in the unlikely event that you become upset during the interview for any reason, you will be free to withdraw your consent and leave the interview at any time.

Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent at any time. In this event, your participation in the research would cease immediately and any information obtained from you will not be used. You will also be asked to read and authorise the interview transcripts and remove or change anything you do not want to be included before they are used for analysis.

Findings of the research will be documented in the doctoral thesis submitted to Deakin University, and will also be submitted for publication in academic journals or books and presented at conferences. While teachers involved in the research will be given pseudonyms, you may choose to have your identity known. You will be informed of the results of the research and may be invited to share in conference or workshop presentations about these, or invited to contribute to the publication of articles. In this case you may choose to have your identity revealed.

If you would like to take part in this research, please complete the attached consent form and return to me in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by **30 June**.

I have also included additional copies of this letter and the consent form that I would ask you to pass on to other first year secondary teachers you know.

If you have any questions about the research or your participation in it, please contact me, Rachel Patrick, (phone 237-3103 ext 3871 (work), 233-9094 (home) or 021 339095 (mobile), email rpatrick@actrix.co.nz), or the principal Deakin supervisor, Dr Evelyn Johnson (phone 0061 3 9244-6411, email indigo@deakin.edu.au).

Thank you for considering this information.

Regards

Rachel Patrick
Appendix B: Consent form

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSENT FORM:

I __________________________________ of __________________________ hereby consent to be a subject of a human research study to be undertaken by Rachel Patrick

and I understand that the purpose of this research is to investigate how beginning teachers in New Zealand secondary schools shape their professional knowledge and practice, and the influences on this development. More specifically, the project aims to examine how newly qualified teachers think about with professional issues as teachers in diverse classrooms, and that the research will involve groups of teachers in conversational interviews sharing views and experiences.

I acknowledge

1. That the aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.

2. That I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in such a research study, and to have my conversation in the interview sessions audi-taped for research purposes.

3. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.

4. Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.

5. That I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________

Please provide phone and email details, so that you can be contacted to arrange the interview times.

Phone (home): ______________________ Phone (work): ______________________

Phone (mobile): ____________________ Email: ____________________________
Appendix C: Sample interview questions—Interview One

**Theme #1 – Issues of concern for new teachers**

a. How are you finding your first year of teaching and what are some of the professional issues facing you as a teacher?

b. You all work in different schools and with students from many different backgrounds. Given the expectations of you as a teacher (eg through your school’s charter and the NAGs59), how do you see your role and responsibility as a teacher in working with these students?

c. How do you view and manage working in a classroom with students from diverse academic, social and cultural backgrounds?

**Theme #2 – Influences on professional knowledge**

d. How has your thinking about teaching, learning, schooling and students developed over time – prior to teacher education, during teacher education and over the time you have been teaching?

e. What people, incidents, experiences have been and are currently key influences on your professional thinking and practice?

f. How have these influences shaped your professional thinking and practice – including your thinking about the issues discussed in questions a, b and c?

**Theme #3 – Ongoing professional development**

g. Tell me about any action you would like to take, for example with your colleagues in school, to continue shaping your professional knowledge and practice?

59 The Ministry of Education’s National Administration Guidelines, especially the NAGs that place obligations on you as a teacher.
Appendix D: Sample interview questions—Interview Two

Theme #4 – Issues of concern to second year teachers

h. How has the last year gone for you, and what are the key professional issues facing you as a teacher?

i. Last year we talked about your work with students from many different backgrounds in relation to the school and the Government’s expectations of you as a teacher (eg through your school’s charter and the NAGs). How do you currently see your role and responsibility as a teacher in working with these students?

j. How do you now view and manage working in a classroom with students from diverse academic, social and cultural backgrounds?

Theme #5 – Influences on professional knowledge

k. How is your thinking about teaching, learning, schooling and students different from or similar to your thinking one year ago?

l. What people, incidents, experiences have been key influences on your professional thinking and practice over the last year?

m. How have these influences shaped your professional thinking and practice since last year – including your thinking about the issues discussed in questions h, i and j?

Theme #6 – Ongoing professional development

n. What kinds of professional development have you been involved in over the last year?

o. Tell me about any action you would like to take, for example with your colleagues in school, to continue shaping your professional knowledge and practice?
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