

**Cultural Components of  
Early Childhood Teacher Education Programmes:  
Reflection for Lecturers**

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*ABSTRACT*

Early childhood teacher education programmes are offered by Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) where teaching-learning takes place between the student teachers and lecturers. Cultural components, in this study, are the references made from the culture by the student teachers and the lecturers, while implementing the teacher education curriculum. While there are a number of research projects related to diversity in early childhood education with regard to children, very few are from the perspective of teacher education. This study was intended to contribute to this gap. The research objectives were to discover the cultural components of early childhood teacher education programmes and to explore the impacts of these components on teaching and learning. Under a socio-cultural theoretical framework, twelve lecturers from three TEOs were interviewed. Three cohorts of student teachers from the same TEOs participated in focus groups. Using manual thematic coding, nine broad areas of cultural components were identified. These are bicultural contexts of Aotearoa, ethnicities and multi-culturalism, individual identities, cross-cultural interactions, comfort zone, female majority, socio-economic struggles, spirituality and technology. Student teachers reported feeling empowered when they shared components from their culture. Sharing of these components were found helpful for perception building. Lecturers acknowledged these components as they believed these contributed to their emotional and professional growth. The findings were applied to a Teaching as Inquiry model for developing a reusable reflection framework for the lecturers of early childhood teacher education.

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*ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP*

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Tahera Afrin

*LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS*

ALACT	Action-Look-Awareness-Creation-Trial
AUT	Auckland University of Technology
BICCC	Blueprint for Integration of Cultural Competence in the Curriculum
FGD	Focussed Group Discussions
ITO	Industry Training Organisation
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NZQF	New Zealand Qualifications Framework
PTE	Private Training Establishment
TEO	Tertiary Education Organisation

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In accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC), the final ethics approval for this research project was granted on 10 March 2015 (Ethics Approval Number 15/48). (See Appendix A)

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

In this chapter, I will introduce who I am and what my connections are to the research topic. I will discuss how I started this journey and steered towards finding the research goals, methodology, and theoretical framework.

This study is about the teaching and learning that takes place in a social setting within a broad range of cultures. For this study, the social setting refers to the early childhood teacher education classroom and the culture refers to the attributes of the lecturers and student teachers. Hereafter, I will discuss how I have experienced early childhood teacher education classrooms in Aotearoa New Zealand and how these experiences influenced the initiation, continuation, and completion of this study.

### 1.2 ‘Who I am’ and ‘what I want to know’

My experiences of early childhood teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand started half-way through my career. My first teaching experience was in a distant country, but very close to my heart where I grew up: Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. Soon after I started my career there, I moved to New Zealand with my parents and sibling. As a young immigrant I kept looking for opportunities to grow, to learn, and to be part of the workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand. “We teach who we are” was a realisation of mine when I came across the books of Palmer (1998, p. 1) as part of my Postgraduate Diploma in Education. I wanted to know more about this concept, explore assumptions around it, and get a deeper understanding as a lecturer.

I have been teaching in a foundation level early childhood teacher education programme for the last nine years. In these multicultural classrooms I learnt a lot from my students. Interactions with them, coupled with a reflection of those interactions, always made me interested to know more about how things work in their lives and how they align their learning with their own lives. When I think of myself as a learner, I find myself looking for associations between the learned concepts and my own life experiences.

Interestingly, when I think of myself as a teacher in an Aotearoa New Zealand classroom, dominantly having Māori and Pasifika learners, it is far different from my experience at the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh, as a student being educated to become a teacher. The concept of culture to us was very much linked to traditional values, festivals and

celebrations. In terms of ethnic groups, Bangladesh is highly homogenous like many other developing countries (Pariona, 2017). That is why, the concept of valuing children and families of different ethnic groups was only available via texts from books in Bangladesh. The only cultural components I could think of at that stage were the differences between socio-economic status (SES) in my fellow students. We learned to be inclusive of children from higher and lower socio-economic backgrounds. I grew up with a limited concept of diversity.

From my childhood, I was fascinated with the concept of identity. I was interested in differences between myself and others and how these differences become cultural when grouped in social organisations. When we came to Aotearoa New Zealand and I started my teaching career here, I had an opportunity to think about my identity in a strangers' society. I learnt that intercultural competence can be a lifelong journey where I can learn to know my cultural limitations, acknowledge everyone else's culture, integrate them as learning opportunity, and thereby grow my cultural and professional identity (Grey, 2013). I neither wanted to hold myself back from mingling with society in Aotearoa New Zealand, nor did I want to forget my identity as a Bangladeshi. This diasporic period, the experiences, the confusions, the dilemma, the reflections, the discussions, and the interactions inspired me to develop a research project based around cultural components in the classroom.

'What I want to know?' was a confusion for me. At the initial stage, I merely had an idea that I would like to know things that would help me to grow as a lecturer, and as a tertiary educator. This willingness brought my inquiry close to the classroom. I developed my research questions for an area that interested me as an individual, as a migrant teacher, and as a reflective practitioner. I was often amazed that relating the lecture to the learners' life could make them interested in their studies. I also noticed that learners have a lot of experiences from their own lives and cultures to share with others. These observations lead me to formulate the key research questions:

- What are the cultural components incorporated in an early childhood teacher education classroom?
- What impact do these components have on student teachers in terms of learning?
- What impact do these components have on lecturers in terms of reflective teaching?

This study should shed a light on how to encourage lecturers to reflect on their teaching practice, promoting learning from their students (student teachers), and develop themselves professionally. This research aimed to explore ways for lecturers to reflect on their classes and to identify cultural components, to think on their significance, and to use these components more eloquently in practice.

Reflection has wide-ranging definitions (see chapter two). A simple one to mention is “stop, think and change” for educators to be able to reconsider their actions to improve future practices (O’Connor & Diggins, 2002, p.9). For understanding reflection, as in this research, it is important to know how the lecturers and learners add content and context from their own culture in an early childhood teacher education classroom. This study also considers that the programmes in different Tertiary Education Organisations (TEO) may have these components as shown or hidden. In this study, I will explore whether or not the cultural components have any impact on students in terms of reported learning, and on lecturers in terms of teaching and reflecting. From the findings, I will formulate a model of reflection for lecturers to consider, regarding cultural components.

### ***1.3 Cultural components- ‘what did I mean?’***

The next challenge was to define cultural components. Culture itself is such a large concept, it was hard to narrow it down to one definition to frame this study. My experiences of tertiary teaching made me realise how difficult it was to set a parameter around this concept.

Teaching at tertiary level is complex (de Lautour, 2009). The complexity arises from and between many roles an early childhood lecturer may have within the organisation. To identify added components of cultures to the contents of a tertiary teacher education classroom is challenging. I had a period of reflection, to determine a set of elements that I could use as a framework. I was informed by the anthropological view (Jenks, 2005). This view explains the idea of culture as the way of life. Similar to the student groups, the discussion around many ways of lives can be diverse. The study here uses the definition of cultural components based on my own experiences of teaching. Current research in the area of early childhood education and related teacher education programmes (Afrin, 2009; Ball, 2012; Sanchez & Thorp, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2015) also added concepts to this particular definition. In this study, cultural components of early childhood teacher education classrooms include:

- reference to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and biculturalism in New Zealand;
- childhood and home experiences that are shared in the classrooms by the learners (student teachers) and the lecturers;
- comparison of their own and other cultures while analysing perspectives or views;
- references to significant people, time, events, and festivals that relate to the topic;
- discussion around rules, norms, and values in peoples' lives.

#### *1.4 Te Whāriki: Inspiration of the study*

This study is framed by the early childhood education curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (the woven mat) (Ministry of Education, 1996; 2017a). The first version of this curriculum, which was the first bicultural early childhood education curriculum, was published in 1996. A second version of the same curriculum came out recently with some changes. In both documents, some bicultural dimensions of Aotearoa New Zealand are presented. The newer version emphasises the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) (Orange, 2013) by having a flip side design of the cover, one side in te reo Māori and the other side in English (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Both sides start with the commitment to the treaty content. It acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi as Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document, signed in 1840 by the representatives of Māori and the Crown. *Te Whāriki* confirms that central to this relationship between Māori and the Crown, lies the spirit of partnership, and the obligations for participation and protection. *Te Whāriki* also draws attention to the welcoming of immigrants in Aotearoa New Zealand in the context of Tiriti-based partnership (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

Teacher education programmes are profoundly influenced by *Te Whāriki*. As indicated by this curriculum document, the teaching and learning practices in Aotearoa New Zealand embrace the Māori concept ako (Māori word or kupu, which means to learn and to teach) (Pere, 1994). Also, because the bicultural dimension is an essential component of ako in early childhood, it opens the door for all cultures to be integrated into the curriculum. Therefore, Te Tiriti o Waitangi not only encourages incorporating Māori tikanga, but also promotes a respectful environment for other cultures. Overall it encourages individuals to express their customs and share them with others with confidence in the context of Aotearoa. *Te Whāriki*, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi not only emphasise tātaiako for educators (competency for teaching with sufficient cultural knowledge of the Māori world), but also influences the practice of acquiring cultural competencies both at early childhood and at tertiary level. These documents, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017a), and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Moon, 2013; Orange,

2013), gave an immigrant teacher educator like me the courage to look at the cultural components of early childhood teacher education and to formulate this study.

### *1.5 Theoretical framework of the study: Reflection for lecturers*

I believe that this study will be a helpful source for lecturers of early childhood teacher education to reflect on their practice. The study is based on reflection of my own experience as a lecturer. I feel cultural components play an important role in my teaching and I want to explore how these components are inclusive of many cultures impacting me and my learners. I want to seek guidelines for my ongoing thoughts around cultural components of teaching. I would like to quote the following to represent my feelings. “When inquiry touches issues intimately connected to one’s life, learning becomes all important, as important as practicing their art is to committed musicians, painters, or poets” (Conle, 2003, p. 13). I think that from the same inspiration, the lecturers in early childhood teacher education programmes reflect on their practice, either deliberately or unknowingly. Use of socio-cultural theories, such as, Vygotsky’s theory of cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1986) and Bronfenbrenner’s theory of ecological development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), can extend the link between the classrooms and the home worlds of student teachers and lecturers.

Socio-cultural theories of development are underpinned by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (Ball, 2012). His theory of child development explains how children learn from the context with the submerged knowledge of their culture from birth or even from before birth (Vygotsky, 1986). He calls it cultural mediating. In the context of adult teaching and learning, Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory of human development suggests that people construct knowledge through experiential learning (Fry, Ketteridge, & Marshall, 2009; Vygotsky, 1986). Experiential learning refers to the learning that happens from experience. Early childhood teacher education classes can offer a wide range of such learning if they include the experiences of many different people in the class, from many different social contexts. Socio-cultural theories are extended to ecology in Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) theory. Bronfenbrenner, in his ecological theory of development, identifies several systems, such as microsystem, mesosystem, exo-system and macro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). These systems are discussed in detail in chapter two. Briefly, these systems exist from close to far proximity to individuals. Each of these systems influence one’s life either directly or contextually. Bronfenbrenner (2005) extended his theory to become a bioecological theory of human development. In

the bioecological theory, Bronfenbrenner adds how the complex intertwined systems around individuals can produce different results due to the biological make-up of an individual over time.

The ecological theory of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) can be intensively used in tertiary classroom for reflection. At tertiary level, students come with experiences from many different settings that impact on them. Ecological theory values these experiences in different settings. Bio-ecological perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) can also be applied on a limited scale to tertiary classrooms. Individuals' biological make-up and its influence may be too complex to reflect upon. This complexity is explained by the metaphor of a ponga frond by an early childhood teacher education lecturer (de Lautour, 2009), where she explains how her role is intertwined with the students' role, just like the larger and smaller fronds in a stem of the ponga fern.



Figure 1.1 Image of ponga frond (Pip, 2007)

The circular shape of the frond represents the social settings that connect them together. The intricacy is supported by the ecological theory and the micro, meso, exo and macro systems in the theory. The ponga frond represents individuals situated in many stems, but somehow connected. Thus, using ecological theory for reflection can include concepts that the lecturers and learners add from their diverse experiences in the early childhood teacher education classroom.

This study created a path to investigate cultural components brought into the classroom by the lecturers and student teachers. I wanted to make the path reusable for other

lecturers by providing a framework. This is when I needed to explore suitable reflection models. For reflecting on cultural components, I found the teaching as inquiry model (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008; Timperley, 2011) most appropriate. This model is based on inquiries that work together in finding out effective ways of teaching and learning. These inquiries include focusing inquiry, teaching inquiry and learning inquiry (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008). The focusing inquiry asks what is important for learners, and what is relevant to their prior knowledge and experience. The teaching inquiry seeks strategies most appropriate for the learner groups. The learning inquiry extends beyond the classroom boundaries by asking what happens as a result of teaching and how the learners may apply the learning in their lives. All three inquiries support each other and guide the process of teaching and learning. This model relates to ako (Pere, 1994), both teaching as learning, and learning as teaching.

Teachers traditionally must strive for the academic success of the students. Teachers now must also understand the learners and their complex cultures to interact with them in ways that are ethical and socially just (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2011). I realised that this increasingly complex process finds the classroom a place where many “I”s work together to learn and grow as “we”.

### *1.6 The pupils: ‘I’ becoming ‘We’*

At the tertiary level, many of the learners are recent school-leavers who completed secondary schooling, but there also are more mature second-chance learners too who left school earlier in life and decided to come back to study or get qualifications as workplace training (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2017b). Therefore, tertiary learners can be people of all ages, however the majority are 18-24 years old (Education Counts, 2017).

The ethnic background of students is diverse, consisting of people born and raised in New Zealand (Māori, Pākehā, Pasifika and other ethnic ancestry) and people from overseas (international students and first generation immigrants). Some of the students are employed full-time or part-time. Some students depend on study-link allowances or on family members to support them. Sambell, Gibson and Miller (2010) have identified two types of tertiary learners for early childhood education: one group who have prior experiences working with children or studying in early childhood programmes, and another group who have no prior experience of working with children. Another characteristic of tertiary early childhood education classrooms is, as I have experienced, that the majority of the students and lecturers are female.



Tertiary learners in New Zealand have options to study at five categories of TEOs: 8 universities, 3 wānanga, 20 polytechnics and institutes of technology, 40 Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) and over 700 Private Training Establishments (PTEs) (Ministry of Education & Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2014). Only 33 of these TEOs are identified as having Education Council accredited early childhood teacher education programmes (Ministry of Education, 2014; 2017b). However, early childhood teacher education programmes may also include foundation level certificates varying from level 2-6 qualifications under the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2017a). For this study, teacher education programmes will refer to the Education Council accredited early childhood education qualifications between levels 5 to 7; which are, the first, second and third years of the teacher education degree programmes.

The lecturers in this study will be the teachers working in early childhood teacher education programmes. A gendered representation of mostly females, in my experience, is quite common for this group. In terms of age, ethnicity, or other cultural factors, they are probably diverse. These lecturers, depending on their experience, and qualifications, are employed in different types of TEOs such as universities, polytechnics or PTEs.

Both the student teachers and the lecturers have dynamic roles in the classroom. Many articles have been written to guide student teachers in their practice (Gursimsek, 2014; Machado & Meyer-Botnarescue, 2001; Perry, 1997; Sambell et al., 2010); but only a few (de Lautour, 2009) to help the lecturers educating their student teachers.

Research at tertiary level is conducted to find more theoretical contents. It is suggested that the lecturer's position primarily is as historian or psychologist or anthropologist, and that may influence the approaches toward childhood studies (Sambell et al., 2010). Many resources are available for tertiary lecturers on how to have an inclusive higher education classroom (Afrin, 2009; Hockings, 2010; Tomalin, 2007) and how to acknowledge cultural variety (Bennett, 2004; Fry et al., 2009; Sanchez & Thorp, 2008). Research related to culture and diversity emphasises useful strategies, but does not confirm the stories that are shared in the classroom. Further investigation has yet to be done to explore cultural components of the classrooms arising from diversity of people and contexts.

There are many common windows in early childhood teacher education programmes that, if open, can bring opportunities for people to share and learn together. Early childhood education programmes combine arts and crafts from many cultures. For example,

weaving ‘ie toga (fine mat in Samoan language) is still a widely practiced art form for Samoan women in village communities (Va’ai, Taule’alo, Collins, Solomona, Latai & Polu, 2012). Not only in Samoa, but in many Pacific Islands, this art form is practiced. Weaving whāriki is also traditional for New Zealand Māori. This is an example of art that may get practiced in New Zealand early childhood teacher education classrooms. People from all cultures can come together through these practices. The study here will explore some turns and knots that the student teachers and lecturers weave together to develop the whāriki of early childhood teacher education, where many ‘I’s become ‘we’.

### *1.7 My journey of negotiations in the turns and knots of whāriki:*

Teaching and becoming a teacher was the first step I took on this research journey. I decided on a purpose related to teaching scenarios. The goal of this research was to find out how the lecturers and learners add content and context from culture in an early childhood teacher education classroom in Aotearoa New Zealand. I explored the impact of the cultural components of learners in terms of learning, and on lecturers in terms of teaching and reflecting. Important aspects of this research were the people; the early childhood teacher education lecturers, and the learners.

Considering that the qualitative data would not necessarily generalise results as the quantitative method could do, I investigated mixed-method research (Creswell, 2003; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). I considered surveys but could foresee its complications around dissemination, and the probability of insignificant responses (Yates, 2004). I thought about observations and could sense the probable deception that may act as a barrier (discussed in more details in section 3.6). Finally, I did not include any quantitative options. I thought those were more likely to produce a small amount of data that could not be relied upon.

Finally, in this journey I thought of my findings and I tried to think of ways to make my findings useful. I thought of teachers who are constantly engaged with changes within the classroom influenced by the changes within society. I realised that in this shifting world, where both tertiary and early childhood teaching is imbued with uncertainty, unpredictability, and even anxiety, it is worth getting to know the context better and deeper (Hansen, 1997). Knowing that many aspects of socio-cultural perspectives are invisible and intangible, critical reflection is needed for this exploration (Sanchez & Thorp, 2008). I found a reflective model, known as ‘teaching as inquiry’ (Timperley, 2011), which I used to weave a whāriki with the findings.

## *1.8 Research approach and key findings*

I chose a qualitative research approach, which was in line with the philosophical foundation of this study, the culture, and the people. I went to three TEOs to collect data in the form of interviews and focused group discussions (FGDs). I interviewed twelve lecturers and conducted FGDs with three student groups. Gathered data were manually analysed with thematic coding.

The analysis of the data produced the findings for this research. The first research question: (What are the components of culture?) identified nine broad areas. The key findings of these areas are summarised below:

- Biculturalism was found to be a prominent and meaningful cultural component that is appreciated by the lecturers and all groups of students, including the international students.
- Multiculturalism or ethnic diversity was common in student groups, but not quite as common in lecturer groups. Students would like to learn more about this component to feel competent as educators in the early childhood centres.
- Individual identities were explained in terms of professional or academic affiliation, alongside the information on families and other social involvements. Exchange of stories of social involvements in class were acknowledged to establish their professional identity as teachers and lecturers.
- Cross cultural interactions between ethnicities were found to be limited. Lecturers have differing opinions on whether they should interrupt the pattern of a classroom's usual seating or not, in order to promote cross cultural interactions.
- Comfort zone is important for sharing discussions with each other. A comfort zone can be created by having trustworthy relationships. Space orientation and the ability to move around in a classroom or other settings was also found to be useful.
- The gender gap and a majority of females were identified both in lecturer and student groups. Missing male approaches were noted by the participants.
- Spirituality was a component that was embedded in teaching-learning. Spirituality is viewed as an individual realisation rather than religious beliefs. Discussion on religion is usually carefully avoided. However, student groups showed interest in learning about religions.
- Socio-economic struggles were also identified as a component that comes into classroom discussion. All student groups and some lecturers showed a sympathetic attitude towards it.
- Technology and its increasing use was discussed. This component not only brought new tools, but raised new questions around classroom rules.

From the second research question: (What are the impacts of these components on learning?) the findings showed that empowerment and perception building of student teachers occurred, as a result of cultural components being incorporated in class.

The third research question: (What are the impacts of these components on teaching?) reveals emotional and professional growth of lecturers.

The findings of this study draw an overall picture of the components of culture in the early childhood teacher education classrooms of Aotearoa New Zealand. Lecturers, student teachers, beginning and experienced early childhood educators will find this study useful to reflect on their professional identity. The study may also be significant for curriculum developers to design curriculum for adult learners. Researchers who attempt to investigate tertiary teaching or culture, can get ideas for further research from the findings included in this thesis.

### *1.9 The structure of the thesis chapters*

There are six chapters in this thesis. Each chapter is important and significant in its own way.

Chapter one introduced myself, and identified the research questions and goals. Analyses of the context of the early childhood teacher education classrooms was provided as an overview of this thesis.

Chapter two summarises the review of the existing literature. Contexts, debates and definitions useful for this study are discussed in this chapter. A number of research projects are found to discuss cultural significance in early childhood education. This study attempts to do the same in the early childhood teacher education context, involving tertiary education providers. Chapter two, thus has a discussion around different tertiary education providers who deliver early childhood teacher education programmes.

Chapter three details the methodology both in theory and how it was enacted in practice. In this chapter, the research tools, such as interviews and focussed group discussions are presented. Ethical issues considered for this study are also reported.

Chapter four is the analysis of data. This chapter discusses nine broad areas of cultural components and their impact on teaching-learning.

Chapter five is the discussion where the research findings were utilised to develop a reflective framework. The framework is flexible and can be refined by individual lecturers.

Chapter six is the conclusion. In this chapter I came to a realisation about how important it is to think, rethink, reveal, and debate cultural components reflected in the early childhood teacher education classroom. The contribution of the findings is presented as the strengths and limitations of this study.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### 2.1 Overview

The study here evolves around questions such as: What are the cultural components of early childhood teacher education programmes and: What impact these components have on the process of ako? This search begins from the reflection of my experience as a lecturer. Working in the field of early childhood teacher education for nine years enabled me to think about the cultural components in the classroom although it was not on my list of priorities as a beginner teacher educator.

For me, it was a journey to come out of the typical teacher-dominated pattern of teaching. I can refer to my previous style as monologic discourse (Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur & Prendergast, 1997). Monologic discourse in a classroom is explained as a paradigm in which teachers have a significantly bigger role in conversations and discussions that take place in the classroom. This limited discourse of teaching allows the students only to display knowledge rather than to use knowledge. Monologic discourse does not promote collaborative learning. This approach does not value the cultural components students can bring into the classroom. With this previous style of teaching, I positioned myself as the source of knowledge and gave little opportunities for students to initiate topics.

The gradual making of myself as an educator lead me to reflective practice. I changed my ways of teaching in the classroom. Once I could start providing the opportunities to the students with whom I was working, they amazed me with the experiences they brought into the classroom. Following this altered approach, I now initiate topics with possible connections from my students' lives, and give examples that could be directly linked to their family or work or other cultural settings familiar to them. I ask questions of them both individually and as a group. I came to know that the lecturer can help the students to grow; similarly, students' experiences once shared in the classroom helps the lecturers grow also. The diverse experiences shared by my students enable me to think of the cultural components they bring and also the components I bring from my culture.

The dominant belief of this research project is that the individuals and their cultures play an important role in how lecturers experience the world of teaching. In Aotearoa New Zealand, diversity may include people from different ethnic groups, age, gender, language, religion, and socio-economic status. In this chapter, the following concepts are developed around diverse students and lecturers of early childhood: Aotearoa

New Zealand context of early childhood teacher education, definition of culture, theoretical framework for cultural studies, bicultural and multicultural early childhood teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand, lecturers' role and reflective models for identifying and incorporating cultural components. I would like to discover supporting data for the idea that the cultural factors have a subtle but immense influence on the development of early childhood educators and the professional growth of their lecturers. The argument for this thesis will be developed from the ideas gained in this chapter. Firstly, the structural, historical, and political context of Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood teacher education programme is explained, which reveals the cultural complexity of the people, and for the people. This complexity is again analysed with the concepts such as culture, biculturalism and multiculturalism. Lastly, the discussion leads to the demand for reflection for the early childhood teacher educators to see, understand, and utilise the complex components of culture that enrich their classrooms.

## ***2.2 Aotearoa New Zealand context of early childhood teaching***

Early childhood is the early stages of childhood that particularly refers to the overlapping periods of infancy (0 to 2 years), toddlerhood (1 and half years to 3 years) and young childhood (2 and half years to 5 years or the school entry age) (Ministry of Education, 1996). There are several types of childcare options for the parents or guardians of these children where they can get plenty of learning opportunities guided by caring adults (Education Review Office, 2007).

The early childhood education services are licensed as home-based, hospital-based, centre-based, ngā kōhunga reo and play groups (Ministry of Education, 2018). There are a vast range of teacher-led and parent-led or whanau-led services available under the centre-based services (Education Review Office, 2007). Parent-led or whanau-led services include playcentres, playgroups, te kōhanga reo, ngā puna kōhungahunga and Pacific Islands early childhood groups. Teacher-led services include kindergarten, Montessori, Steiner preschools, mainstream day-care, community childcare, aoga amata (Samoan early childhood education centres) and other Pasifika pre-schools. Community and religion based centres, such as Islamic centre and Chinese centre, may also be included (New Zealand Herald, 2007; Wilson, 2014). The caring adults in these services also may vary from qualified early childhood educators to early childhood student teachers and non-qualified staff.

Qualified early childhood educators refer to people with either a Bachelor or Diploma of Early Childhood Education teaching qualifications that are acknowledged by the Education Council (the organisation that approves teacher registration). Early childhood student teachers include those who have been studying for the Bachelor or Diploma course, or doing foundation courses of level 3 to level 6 under the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

The importance of qualified teachers has been strongly emphasised by experts in the field (Carr & Mitchell, 2012; Meade et al., 2012). However, the New Zealand Government in 2012 made changes to the mandatory 100% qualified early childhood educators required in childcare centres. The budget cut for early childhood education made the requirements to have only 80 % qualified teachers for the care of children over 2 years old and 50% for the care of under 2 years old. This decision has been debated by educators, but had to be accepted and implemented by the services as it is co-related to the funding approval (Ministry of Education, 2016a). This type of political change also has a dual impact on teacher education courses. This is because there are courses for early childhood education that produce people with qualifications that are recognised by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA, 2017b). However, these courses are not recognised by the Education Council. NZQA course graduates are classed as ‘unqualified’ teachers. If the centres recruit 100% qualified teachers, the certificates and diplomas these ‘unqualified’ students have achieved will not lead them to any kind of employment pathways. On the other hand, experts do argue for 100% qualified teachers as it is an important component to ensure quality of early childhood education (Carr & Mitchell, 2012). These political changes possibly have influences on teacher education programmes too.

ECE teacher education in New Zealand is quite a complex field for identifying cultural components as it is a dynamic field. Early childhood teacher education varies a lot within programmes. There are some certificate and diploma programmes which act as foundation courses for many school leavers or second-chance learners. There are graduate and post-graduate level diplomas and degrees for students who achieve teacher registration on completion of their course. A discussion on cultural components of these courses is thus intertwined with the three levels of culture identified by Brannen (2003): individual level, organisational level and national level.

Culture at the individual level is multi-layered with explicit or overt signs and implicit components (Terreni & McCullum, 2001). Overt signs of culture manifest themselves in symbols or phenomena that are concrete and explicit e.g. language, festivals, food, and dress. It is often these overt signs that are more easily identifiable and easily shared with others. However, the implicit and subconscious assumptions individuals hold about existence determine the beliefs, norms, and attitudes of a culture. In an EC teacher education programme, where adult learners and lecturers share their thoughts on a given topic, both explicit and implicit layers of culture can be identified if effort is given and observations are made. This has added responsibilities to the educators to find nuanced ways to understand patterns that govern the complex classroom of ECE.

Lecturers can role-model and encourage student teachers to understand cultural complexity. These ECE student teachers will be responsible for actively looking for ways to interact with the families of the children (Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007). This is an established responsibility for them not only when the children are under their care, but also when the children are transitioning to school (Toole, Hayes, & Mhathuna, 2014). Being part of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand compels the adult learners and their lecturers to be part of a society where the differences in ethnicities and cultures are increasing (Terreni & McCullum, 2001). Not only in Aotearoa New Zealand, but this is true for many parts of the world (Bowers-Brown, 2006; Gilliard & Moore, 2006; Tomalin, 2007). Therefore, cultural awareness is one of the crucial pieces of social competence for young children of today's world (Han & Thomas, 2010). It should be the same for their educators (ECE student teachers) and similarly for ECE lecturers. In the context of NZ, the annual ECE census summary report (Ministry of Education, 2015) shows the percentage of diverse ethnic groups both for children and teachers are increasing. The percentage of children from the Pasifika, Asian and other ethnic groups is 20% (increased from 12% in 2004). These diverse ethnic groups compile 20% of the total number of ECE teachers (increased from 13% in 2004) (Education Counts, 2014). Therefore, being culturally inclusive is of heightened relevance in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Many of the diverse groups of children, ECE educators and ECE lecturers are born outside Aotearoa New Zealand. Some could be New Zealand born Pasifika, Asian and other ethnic groups, who will probably have an indelible connection to their country of origin. Therefore, a frequently used term in ECE, 'holistic development' (Gilligan, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2017a; Mitchell et al., 2015) now not only refers to tamariki (children), but is also applicable to their kaiako (ECE teachers) and their kaiwhakangungu



or kaiwhakāko (ECE instructors or lecturers). They also need to be considered as a ‘whole person’. Similarly, to children, these adults are inseparable from their culture. Teachers are people who bring their culture from their home and lives. Being a teacher, I believe that teaching also allows people to value the stories told by their students and to go beyond knowledge-sharing to people-sharing. This is supportive of what Han (2014) described as the ‘whole teacher’. It has been a common expectations now that these teachers look for and add cultural contents relevant to their students (Brennan & Cotter, 2008). Overall, the need for active cultural exploration is relevant to the children, ECE educators, and ECE lecturers of Aotearoa New Zealand.

### *2.3 Definition of culture*

ECE educators and lecturers may initiate cultural exploration at any stage of their career, but discussing and understanding culture or exploring its components is not easy. It is hard to define culture. Complexity of the concept of culture has always been acknowledged; in the past and in recent times (Jenks, 2005). Some definitions of culture represent the root of the word derived from Latin ‘*cultura*’ which literally means cultivation (Harper, 2001). This refers to a process where culture is defined as learning transmitted to one person from another where they have significantly different experiences of learning. The anthropological view defines culture as a complex term; combining “set of values, norms or benchmarks that guide and shape the behaviour of individuals and communities” (OECD, 2005, p. 27). The Ministry of Education (2016b) supports the collective nature of culture by defining it as shared understanding, practice and norms by a group of people. This view further expands the concept of culture as “a set of fundamental ideas, practices and experiences of a group of people that are symbolically transmitted from generation to generation through a learning process” (Chen & Starosta, 2000, p. 25). Culture may as well refer to the beliefs, norms, and attitudes that are used to guide our behaviours and solve problems (Masemann, 2013). More practically, culture is explained as a set of values, expectations and customs that affect our ways of working (Frow & Morris, 2000). From all the definitions discussed above, I understand culture as a set of behaviour patterns that includes the individuals’ way of life. In an EC teacher education classroom, the individuals are the adult learners who have stories to share on the ways they live in their cultural settings, such as their homes and workplaces.

The classroom is an important cultural setting, too. Biculturalism and multiculturalism are the two terms associated with culture that should be part of early childhood teacher education classrooms (C. Jenkin, 2017). The contract and coexistence of biculturalism and multiculturalism are not only discussed, but also debated in many shapes and at many levels (Hayward, 2012). According to Hayward's article in *Te Ara* (the online encyclopaedia), biculturalism in New Zealand is both criticised for being "not enough bicultural" ignoring the Treaty of Waitangi, or "too bicultural" ignoring the diverse population from many cultures. However, in the field of early childhood, educators acknowledge *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, and the significance of biculturalism at all times. This is because biculturalism is an integral part of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996; 2017a).

## 2.4 *Biculturalism*

The early childhood education curriculum in New Zealand focuses on social competencies and cultural acceptances, emphasising the bicultural foundation of education in Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1996). According to the Ministry of Education, *Te Whāriki* is "the first bicultural curriculum statement developed in New Zealand. It contains curriculum specifically for Māori immersion services in early childhood education and establishes, throughout the document as a whole, the bicultural nature of curriculum for all early childhood services" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 7).

In the foreword of the recent version, the Minister of Education Hekia Parata adds:

Unique in its bicultural framing, *Te Whāriki* expresses our vision that all children grow up in New Zealand as competent and confident learners, strong in their identity, language and culture. It emphasises our bicultural foundation, our multicultural present and the shared future we are creating. (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 2)

These statements not only explain *Te Whāriki*, but also add the significance of biculturalism. *Te Whāriki* is based on Māori pedagogy and philosophy (Williams, Broadley, & Te-Aho, 2012) and is a living example of biculturalism. The term bicultural refers to the coexistence of the indigenous group of people, Māori, and the later arrived settlers, Pākehā. Biculturalism and practices around it emphasises incorporation of Māori ways of knowing and doing alongside the dominant Pākehā ways. The early childhood curriculum encourages teachers to do so for all children growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand irrespective of their parental race, ethnicity, languages, country of origins or any other cultural orientation.

The rudiments of biculturalism are explained as a contractual process based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) between Māori and Pākehā (Taniwha, 2014). The treaty document has two versions, one in Māori and one in English. There are arguments that these two versions do not provide accurate translations of each other (Moon, 2013; Orange, 2013). The Māori version was signed by 530 Māori tribal leaders whereas only 32 of them signed the English version (Ritchie, 2003). There are three articles in the treaty which represent partnership (article 1), protection (article 2) and participation (article 3) between Māori and Pākehā (Ministry of Justice, 1988). Conflicts around treaty commitments and breaches of treaty are still a focus of debate, which is acknowledged by successive Governments of Aotearoa New Zealand. A rise of tino rangatiratanga (Māori self-determination by Māori) is thus now called for to challenge and replace “the low status of te reo Māori, the history of poor Māori achievement in education and the other negative statistics throughout the past 163 years” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 84). From one Māori perspective, biculturalism is an adjustment between two sets of separate philosophies of indigenous conservative nature and invading capitalist nature (Taniwha, 2014).

The ECE curriculum, *Te Whāriki* has an important role in bringing changes in philosophy and establishing treaty commitments (C. Jenkin, 2017). This curriculum framework is also an internationally acknowledged document for its strong focus on children and their learning journeys in early childhood (Drummond, 2000). *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996; 2017) encourages bicultural practices in early childhood. It states that every child growing up in New Zealand should be given opportunities to know the cultural heritage of the nation. Thus, biculturalism also is often either a basis for, or a significant part of, the lectures given to the early childhood student teachers. Early childhood educators in New Zealand show a commitment towards Te Tiriti (The Treaty) and hence actively put efforts to include biculturalism in their practice. Early childhood educators’ practice is meant to be evidence of treaty commitments (Jenkin, 2010).

ECE lecturers ensure that the learners in the classroom are encouraged to practice biculturalism (Jenkin, 2017; Jenkin, 2016; Ritchie, 2003). This practice is embedded in the curriculum, which is supported by the Education Council, the professional organisation for teachers. Previously, in the Graduating Teachers Standards, there were seven standards identified under three major sections, such as Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Values and Relationships (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007a). These standards were also very much underlined by the bicultural

context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Standard Three (b) under the Professional Knowledge section stated that graduating teachers must demonstrate knowledge of te reo Māori and work effectively to understand tikanga Māori. Standard four (e) under the Professional Practice section stated te reo as a language to be used in the practice of teachers. Standard six (e) under Professional Values and Relationships also identified developing respect towards tikanga-a-iwi as an important factor. These obligations are also in the recent document (Education Council, 2017). The council re-established the significance of Te Tiriti with the Code of Professional Responsibility (Education Council, 2017). This code summarises the previous documents: 1) The Graduating Teachers Standards, 2) The Practising Teachers Criteria, and 3) Code of Ethics for Practising Teachers (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007b). The Education Council (2017), in their latest changes, adopted four Māori concepts underpinning the teaching profession. These are Whakamana (empowerment), Manākitanga (welcoming environment), Pono (integrity) and Whānaungatanga (relationships). They are explained in the examples under the commitments to the profession (1.4) and to the learners (2.4). These opportunities cannot be achieved only through tokenistic use of te reo and tikanga, rather teachers need to be thoughtful, reflective and proactive in their practice. Research shows that to implement biculturalism more successfully, teachers in Aotearoa must take ownership (Jenkin, 2010). In the sector of early childhood, the curriculum and other guiding documents already exist with a significant emphasis on biculturalism. Thus, early childhood teachers, student teachers and lecturers are well-situated to implement biculturalism. They must have the courage to negotiate factors that may arise in practice (Jenkin, 2010).

Interestingly, one of these negotiations can be the use of the term biculturalism itself (Jenkin, 2017). The term biculturalism has emphasis on practicing Māori tikanga and acquiring te reo competence as moral or ethical obligations in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, the use of this term often loses its political significance. Therefore, the term Tiriti-based is suggested to be of use in the field of education as opposed to 'bicultural'. Early childhood educators and the early childhood lecturers can negotiate this and lead their own stance to embrace Te Tiriti deeply in their belief systems.

## ***2.5 Multiculturalism***

Whilst biculturalism is an integral part of ECE curriculum, multiculturalism is a key component to be incorporated into teaching, due to the increased ethnic diversity within the population. The rationale behind this is that the individuals with diverse origins must

have opportunities for developing self-respect to become appreciative of the cultural heritage of the nation. Māori scholars Arohia Durie and Rose Pere acknowledge this in a teaching context (Durie, 2003; Pere, 1994). They say teachers must appreciate and reflect on values of their day to day lives before trying to implement Māori values in their practice. Multiculturalism has debated definitions. In an early childhood teacher education context, I think it can be acknowledging the rich diversity of ethnic groups, age, and language amongst the student teachers and lecturers. I believe that in a classroom as such, cultural intelligence is increasingly important. Cultural intelligence is defined as the ability to use human senses to interact respectfully and sensitively towards people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Bennett, 2015).

A number of documents show how valuing diversity is important in the context of today's globalised world (Ball, 2012; Han & Thomas, 2010; Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017a; Nguyen, Terlouw, & Pilot, 2006; Sanchez & Thorp, 2008). In terms of language, multiculturalism is associated with bilingual and monolingual populations. Learners as well as teachers in bilingual and monolingual groups may face different challenges. In the North Shore region in Auckland, ECE teachers, both from monolingual and bilingual groups acknowledge the importance of the home language being supported in the early learning centres (Ball, 2012). *Te Whāriki* also has home languages as an aim in the Communication strand, "The languages and symbols of [the children's] own and other cultures are promoted and protected" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 72), similarly, in the revised version that children should gain "confidence that their first language is valued" (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 42).

Another aspect of multiculturalism is the required competencies. Early childhood education teachers in New Zealand are found to face challenges in developing their own cultural lens that would be effective to work with the diverse needs of the children and their families (Grey, 2013). Social competence is considered an important developmental aspect in the early years of children (Kantor, Elgas & Fernie, 1993). However, social competence may vary significantly as the competencies are relative to cultural exposure (McLearn, Hall, & Fox, 2009). It is important for early childhood teachers to have more than one viewpoint of social competencies to implement culturally competent practice (Han & Thomas, 2010). In addition, globalisation pressures the teachers and lecturers to equip the students with abilities to cope with rapid societal changes (Nguyen et al., 2006). The importance of multiculturalism is thus increasingly evident in different dynamics of

education including ECE. Early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand, therefore, should have respectful practice, which is inclusive of all cultures.

While it is now beyond question whether or not to incorporate culturally diverse ways of thinking and exploring, multiculturalism is neither easy-to-define nor easy-to-adopt. In a multi-cultural classroom, tension between cultural appropriateness and cultural competency has been discussed in terms of responsibility (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2011), assessments (Afrin, 2009), social knowledge (Rata, 2012; Young, 2010) and professional development (PD) (McLearn, Hall, & Fox, 2009). These articles debate whether tertiary classrooms should be more culturally aligned with the learners' comfort zone, or should lead the learners to consider cultural knowledge useful for their possible future work placements. Adding learners' contexts to the academic concepts, thoughts and discussion can assist more meaningful learning, but at the same time focus on learners' own context is debated, as this can lead to limited learning less useful for workplaces (Rata, 2012; Young, 2010). Thus, the concept of multiculturalism adds responsibilities for ECE lecturers to think and to find ways to present cultural issues to ECE student teachers.

## ***2.6 Lecturer's role:***

Lecturers in early childhood education have several roles. The obvious role they play is teaching. Teaching is a profession requiring the sharing of one's own experience with others. "You teach who you are" (Palmer, 1990, p. 11) is shaped and reshaped in many ways in today's world of global movement. Teachers not only have to strive for the academic success of students, but also have a responsibility to introduce the students to the many cultures they are surrounded by (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2011). Experiences as a lecturer made me realise that the classroom is a place where many "I" s work together to learn and grow as "we". As teachers, and their learners are from many cultures, cultural integration and segregation happens in a classroom through curriculum content, context, and cross-cultural interactions.

A lecturer of adults thus must ensure opportunities to all learners to feel equally important in terms of who they are (Hockings, 2010). Adult learners want to express their culture through their stories and it is the lecturer who could enable them to do so. Lecturers can utilise the power relations in the classroom and can invite the students to enter into the classroom as who they are. Not only lecturers and the course contents, but students, their culture, and their life also can become an integral part of classroom practice (Grey, 2013).

Lecturers of adults are also often expected to provide counselling roles for their students in the education system (Goldberg, 1980). Counselling, even quite informal, requires knowledge and thoughts around individuals' family, work, or other cultural peripheries. Lecturers thus can grow from having many cultural understandings from the discussions their students provide. This growth becomes an essential part of their teaching, when the lecturers understand the importance of valuing the cultural identities of their learners.

### *2.6.1 Lecturers' role to reflect: Why, what and how to?*

To have progress in their roles the lecturers of adult learners need reflection. I believe that reflection on teaching should purposefully include cultural issues. Culture and its impact can be so subtle, that it may often go unnoticed without reflection. Here reflection refers to the thoughts and actions during the lectures or sessions and also after they have been conducted, often with the purpose of doing better or differently in the future. It should be a repeated process as Dewey (1934) said, "If the artist does not perfect a new vision in his process of doing, he acts mechanically and repeats some old model fixed like a blueprint in his mind" (p. 50). A fixed blueprint in the lecturer's mind cannot lead to successful teaching. Diverse adult learners need to contribute in teaching-learning activities in the classroom (Afrin, 2009). Reflective thoughts with active, persistent and careful considerations are required to ensure successful teaching and its development (Dewey, 1933). Reflection may arise from an idea of testing hypothetical ways of continuing an action (Mead, 1972). In a rapidly changing society, it is important to look at practices and re-think over actions in the classroom (Aitken & Sinnema, 2012). Reflection is, thereby, seen as a structured process of thinking (Hatton & Smith, 1995) that may help people in solving problems (Collier, 2010; Loughran, 2002). Reflection involves a good amount of thinking, but it starts and ends with practice (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). Reflection helps teachers to grow and to be resilient, more positive, focussing on solutions rather than problems, and emphasising professional criticism rather than environmental criticism (Leroux & Thèorêt, 2014).

Reflection is a complex process and it can highlight dilemmas for teachers (Golubich, 1997). Lecturers need to continue with reflection to ask questions, such as, in what ways their practice can be culturally sensitive and also fair to the concept of teaching, learning and assessing. Reflection leads lecturers towards intellectual scepticism resulting in real changes in their practice (Thomas, 2008). An example of such in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand is the recent debate on whether or not the education system considers

culture at the cost of quality (Education Workforce Advisory Group, 2010). Lecturers need to find the balanced standpoint where they promote an equitable environment for learning, and assess fairly. Thus, reflection could relate to education reforms and professionalism (Golubich, 1997). With all the variations and vicissitudes in class, teachers often question themselves. My understanding of reflection is that it often takes the teachers to the battlefield of right and wrong only to ensure that there is a continuous search for what is right. For example, reflection of cultural awareness helps educators to develop alternative perspectives of situations (O'Connor & Diggins, 2002). When lecturers are able to think beyond what is usual, they can avoid a deficit models of interpreting events, therefore, understanding that the same topic can be received and comprehended differently by the individual students because of their own cultural perspectives.

What to reflect on is the next question for the lecturers, considering that the cultural components are vast and there are a few guidelines for ECE teacher training classrooms. Graduating Teachers Standards and Practising Teachers Criteria from the New Zealand Teachers Council (2007a;2007b), recently revised as Code of professional responsibility and standards for the teaching profession (Education Council, 2017) are examples of such guidelines for the teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Graduating Teacher Standards 5a) advocates that teachers must engage in systematic and critical reflection to refine their practice. Teachers need to systematically collect evidence of their own teaching and take actions to advance. According to the Graduating Teacher Standards, teachers need to reflect on the evidence of their own practice. Teachers can collect evidence of cultural practices in the classroom to start with. Practising Teacher Criteria 12 i) adds the importance of exploring contemporary literature in addition to looking at the collected evidence of their own practice (Education Council, 2007).

The query of what to reflect on also enables us to consider the cultural competencies that are required by the lecturers. Where there are recommendations for teachers in general for cultural competencies, there is no framework which is specific to ECE. In the field of nursing, the cultural competencies are explored. The 31-item Blueprint for Integration of Cultural Competence in the Curriculum (BICCC) (Brennan & Cotter, 2008, p. 157) summarizes four themes. These identified themes could be useful for the ECE lecturers' reflection too. These themes are:

- 1) Previous exposure to cultural concepts
- 2) Redundancy or concerns related to cultural disparities



- 3) Didactic teaching methods
- 4) Recommendations for improvement

In addition to these four themes, I suggest that comparison between contextual knowledge and universal knowledge is an important reflection query for the ECE lecturers. Research shows limiting cultural concepts only between the individual's experiences, limits young people to the localised world of experience rather than taking them beyond experience (Rata, 2012; Young, 2010).

Universality versus contextualisation of the programme were noted for teachers too (McLearn et al., 2009). Universality here refers to incorporating aspects from cultures all around the globe, whereas contextualisation is referred to bringing components from the culture that is important to the land and to the local people, and community. It is recommended (McLearn et al., 2009) that there should be a mix of both approaches in teaching and in professional development of teachers. Contextualisation is often more effective in terms of the contents of PD courses for the teachers. However, this study also suggests that 50% of the strategies should be based on universality as it opens up new ideas. This pattern of distribution can also be applied to the ECE teachers and lecturers in Aotearoa New Zealand. ECE lecturers need to reflect and find out the balance between how much to value and incorporate the learner's own culture and other cultures represented in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The third question on reflection for the ECE lecturers is how to reflect. The answer leads to the exploration of available reflection models and to choose the appropriate ones that suits them and their learners. There are two models that seemed to fit best in terms of cultural knowing, which are discussed below.

The first one is ALACT (Action-Look-Awareness-Creation-Trial). The ALACT reflective model (Korthagen, 2004; Korthagen, 2010; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2010) is relevant to the teacher education context. This model was developed from more than 20 years of empirical research. The model has five phases that cycle. It starts from 'A' with Action, then continues with 'L': Looking back at the action, 'A': Awareness of the situation, 'C': Creation of alternatives and 'T': Trial of solutions in practice. This goes back to the first 'A' of Action. For reflecting on cultural components, the first 'A' refers to the teaching of a day, 'L' can mean looking at the teaching and finding out if there were any components of culture involved in teaching or not, 'A' can be the thoughts on identified or missing components of culture in teaching, 'C' offers the alternatives where

either the importance of existing cultural components in teaching is emphasised or missing elements are incorporated, 'T' refers to the new approach to teaching in practice.

The reflection of ALACT has two levels: external, or elements from the environment, and internal, or elements from within the individual. Reflection should also incorporate the three core levels of the inner level (firstly, behaviours and attitudes, secondly, competences and thirdly, values and beliefs). The teacher's professional identity and mission lies within the depths of these core levels. These levels are not arranged by hierarchy, but are balanced out coherently through the process of reflection (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005).

The other reflective model is teaching as inquiry (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008). This relates to the Māori word *ako*, both teaching as learning, and learning as teaching (Pere, 1994). The model has three main steps to include for reflection. These are the learning queries, the focus queries, and the teaching queries. Learning queries lead the teachers to know their learners and to acknowledge their previous learning, understanding, or experience. Focus queries help the lecturers understand what part of the topic interests the learners or will be useful for the learners in real-life situations. Teaching queries gradually reveal ways to build up efficient teaching strategies that acknowledge learning queries and focus queries. This model is relevant to the context of ECE teacher education as learning from each other is often appreciated in the field of ECE.

Finally, choosing a model is not enough for lecturers. They need to advance, rectify and/or change their chosen model to incorporate the learning they receive from their students. Here, I would like to reference Reid (2004) who said, "Educators are understood as people who learn from teaching rather than as people who have finished learning how to teach" (p. 2). If ECE lecturers want to continue learning from their teaching, they need to continue valuing the diversity that is brought into the classroom by their learners, the ECE student teachers.

## ***2.7 Theoretical framework***

To explore the queries that I have around the cultural components of early childhood teacher education programmes, I have utilised a socio-cultural theoretical framework (Blanton, Westbrook, & Carter, 2005; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005; Vygotsky, 1986) as a foundation of my study. A socio-cultural theoretical framework supports my argument of valuing ECE student teachers' culture, thinking on their own and others culture, and

having a critical and open mind-set to reflect and refine teaching practice. Socio-cultural theories with the expansion of the ecological aspects (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) best explain how cultural components are an integral part of any social system, including a classroom of early childhood student teachers.

The socio-cultural framework helps lecturers realise how their teaching develops alongside the learning of their students. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1986) explains this process in terms of a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Lecturers learn about many different ways of life from their student teachers. The adult learners are the more knowledgeable others of their own lives, and, therefore, share stories in the classroom that explain the topic more deeply, both for themselves and for the lecturers. As these shared stories touch upon various sides of life, they bring in elements from people's immediate and distant life settings. Thus ecology of human development and individual make-up (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005) gets intertwined with these stories shared in the classroom.

Even though ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Johnson, 2010) is used in the child development context, I would like to explain the systems in the theory in relation to adult learners. Micro-systems are the settings where people spend most of their time, such as home, school (and workplace for the adults). Meso-systems are the relationships that occur between two or more micro-systems. I think for adult learners, these relationships may not be as crucial as they are for children, but acknowledging one micro system in another is important for learners of all age groups. Exo-systems are the factors from adult learners' social and community lives. Lastly, macro-systems are the factors from broader settings, such as nation and culture. For example, the earlier discussion on biculturalism and multiculturalism can be the consequents of macro-systems within Aotearoa New Zealand. Bronfenbrenner also discussed chrono system which can be the influences of events in an individual's life-time. For adult learners, the timing of events such as relationships, birth and death in the family, employment opportunities can influence their pattern of interaction in class. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological theory later is extended as bio-ecological theory of human development. This extension of the theory considers individuals' biology, for example, genetics, as part of the microsystem (Johnson, 2010). This means the way a child or a person interacts with his or her own microsystem may vary due to biological reasons as well as environmental reasons. This inclusion of biology makes the Person factors even more complicated and diverse for the ECE lecturers.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) in his theory of ecological development also discusses the impact of time and events, both at personal and socio-historic levels. In the early childhood teacher education classrooms, this notion brings in discussion around historic events, current news, festivals, and accidents, for example. Early childhood teacher education lecturers thus experience the *Person-Process-Context-Time* (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Toole et al., 2014) in practice. *Person* factors such as age, ability, and language are diverse in the early childhood teacher education classroom. *Process* factors are occasional for the adult learners, for example, bringing family members into school functions. *Context* factors are the expectations of tertiary education providers, mostly governed by the rules and regulations of the institute and the government. *Time* factors are often the challenges of meeting the balance between studies and other obligations of adult learners. The theoretical framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Toole et al., 2014) used in this study thus comes from the socio-cultural and bio-ecological assertions, which involves people and their contexts.

A theoretical framework either explains or describes the main phenomena to be studied, and the fundamental factors that are involved, along with the relationships among these factors (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Using a particular framework made me see the factors involved from a more in-depth perspective and helped me to develop the arguments for my research. It is not enough to be sensitive to the diversity of people, but also necessary to incorporate their contexts in teaching-learning practices. The thesis investigates the components from the contexts of the people and summarises the impact of these components on the teaching-learning process. The importance of people and their culture in education that I looked into can be reflective of this old Bangla author's saying commonly used to refer to the teaching-learning process, "Shobar upore manush shotto, tahar upore nai" (Chondidash, n.d.), which means people are the ultimate truth, nothing can obscure it. This, at the same time reminded me of Māori whakatauki, "Ui mai ki ahau, he aha te mea nui o te Ao? Māku e kī atu, he tangata, he tangata, he tangata." The whakatauki states, "If you ask me, what's the most important in the world? I would reply, it is the people, it is the people, it is the people" (Royal, 2007).

## 2.8 Summary:

In this chapter I discussed how the research queries have evolved based on the existing literature in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand in a globalised world. It was identified what is meant in the study when using the term 'culture', what is the current situation of early childhood teacher education in New Zealand and why and how lecturers could reflect on their practice in terms of

cultural knowing. The chapter also let the readers know my viewpoints and rationale around the cultural components of early childhood teacher education. It emphasised the current inclination in early childhood and teaching regarding the bicultural contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand while pointing out the significance of diversity in the classroom. The review of literature here also included the possible role lecturers in teacher education programmes have in terms of cultural components. These components could be prevalent or missing in the classroom. The chapter lastly emphasised the socio-cultural theoretical framework that would be used to know what components are being incorporated in the lectures of early childhood teacher education and what impact they might have in teaching and learning. The importance of people is crucial within the dynamics of the socio-cultural theoretical framework. In the next chapter, it will be revealed how the people in this study got involved gradually and became part of the research queries discussed above. The next chapter will also discuss the methods and procedures I followed to initiate, continue, and complete the study.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 *Overview of methodology:*

Methods and methodology are discussed together in this chapter. Methodology is defined as a way of thinking about and studying the phenomena of research approaches whereas methods are the techniques and procedures for gathering and analysing data (Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

The methodology was considered under socio-cultural theoretical framework with the notion that an individual's cognition originates in social interactions (Harré & Grant, 1994). Thus, while the project aimed to produce findings to help individual lecturers, it emphasised a methodology that focused interactions between the researcher and the participants (the researcher and individual lecturers; and the researcher and group of student teachers). Also the research tools encouraged partial interactions between the participants (student teachers).

Research methods used in this study not only helped the researcher to gain ideas from others, but also contributed into the participants' thoughts about their own practices of teaching and learning. In this chapter, there is discussion on how this reflective process took place. Stages of the research journey are discussed in chronological order. Discussion includes qualitative methods, random and snowball sampling, semi-structured interviews, FGDs, coding, and the reflective model of data analysis.

An initial exploration of qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method research paradigms initiated in the decision-making process of this study were discussed in chapter 1. Analysing the credibility and limitations of different approaches, I had to decide on a research paradigm I could use. Consideration of what I could achieve at the end was the leading factor in choosing a qualitative research paradigm.

Within the selected research paradigm, a number of probability and non-probability sampling were considered as appropriate. As the research was designed to involve lecturers, and also their learners, at least two different types of sampling had to be considered. Sampling was applied first at institutional level (choosing three TEOs), then at individual level (choosing participants from the TEOs).

Interviews and FGDs were decided upon as research tools. Other techniques were considered and rejected in this area of tool selection.

A discussion on validity and reliability is included to explain data analysis and findings. This is to reassure the readers of this report that the study had a robust structure, and could be useful of their own practice of ako.

Computer assisted selection and sorting was used to gather primary ideas. At a later stage, manual color-coding was found to be more suitable for this small-scale, in-depth study. Also, even after transcribing, I listened to the audio-recorded tapes several times to make insightful use of the data and extrapolate findings. Use of ‘Teaching as Inquiry’ reflective model (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008) on the findings made the study more meaningful in terms of achieving its research goals.

The journey of research began with anxiety and trepidation, which according to Rolfe and MacNaughton (2010) is common, however, it continued with excitement and curiosity. Interestingly, the later part of the journey feels never-ending. In this study I followed its path of selecting a paradigm, sampling, developing tools, considering ethics and drawing findings to respond to a set of research questions; but the curiosity that the research aroused in me continued.

### ***3.2 Socio-cultural umbrella for research queries:***

My research queries were about people. I wanted to explore individuals and groups and how their individual characteristics influence their group learning. In the context of teacher education at ECE level, socio-cultural theories could identify components of teaching. Valsiner’s Zone Theory (Blanton et al., 2005) could be applied in this situation to find out what were promoted (zone of promoted action) and what were allowed (zone of free movement). The focus was the process of internalisation of social interactions in the construct of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1986). The study was, therefore, always open to explore what the context brings in and was limited to revealing cultural nuances.

### ***3.3 Formulating research questions:***

‘What I want to know?’ was a big confusion for me. At the initial stage, I had an idea that I would like to know things that would help me to grow as a lecturer and an adult trainer. This willingness brought my inquiry close to the classroom. A researcher can find many elements in the classroom to research: assessment, peer-relationships, leadership, outcomes, and curriculum for example. However, I developed my research questions for an area that interested me as an individual, as a migrant teacher, and as a reflective practitioner. I was often amazed that by relating the topic to the learners’ life and living

could interest them in studies. I also noticed that the learners have a lot of experiences from their own life and culture to share with others. These observations lead me to formulate the research questions. Both retrospective and prospective approaches (Hayes, 2010) were used, and my future queries were directed by my past experiences of teaching and learning. This research aimed to look at the cultural perspectives in the teaching scenario. The goal of this research was to find out how the lecturers and learners add contents and contexts from culture in an EC teacher education classroom. This study also investigated the cultural components that arise from the TEO curriculum. The study explored the impact of the cultural components on learners in terms of learning and on lecturers in terms of teaching and reflecting.

### *3.4 Dilemma and decision: Quantitative, mixed-method and qualitative research designs*

Research questions guided me to choose an appropriate research design. There was definitely a need for a qualitative approach that would provide rich complex understanding of the social phenomena (Punch, 2005) that happens in an EC teacher education classroom. Even though quantitative results can easily be summarized and analysed, qualitative methods are more suitable to find thoughts to reflect upon (Moore, 2001). However, considering that the qualitative data would not necessarily generalize results as a quantitative method could do, I negotiated mixed-method research (Creswell, 2003; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). I considered surveys but could foresee complications, I contemplated observations and could sense the probable deception issue (discussed more in details in section 3.6). Finally, I did not include any quantitative parts as all the options I thought of were more likely to produce a trivial amount of data that could not be relied upon. Therefore, at the implementation stage, I chose a qualitative study to elicit meaning, and develop empirical knowledge, and to get rich complex understanding of the phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The reason to choose qualitative research paradigm is due to the fact that I not only wanted to get a set of cultural components of a classroom, but also wanted to know how they were interwoven and how they work together. It was the complex interactions that informed the context of my study.

### *3.5 Participants and sampling:*

Asking who will participate in the research focusses attention on the sampling techniques (Hayes, 2010). In the research I investigated the cultural components at the tertiary level



of ECE, so the participants of this study were the ECE teacher education lecturers and their adult learners from three TEOs.

The research was aimed at locating the cultural components of teaching across various TEOs in New Zealand who offer ECE programmes. Thirty three TEOs are listed as offering qualifications leading to teacher registration (Ministry of Education, 2014; 2017b); however, the number is higher when including TEOs who offer foundation level qualifications at level 5 and 6. There were two factors to consider while approaching the TEOs with the request of participation. The first one was that these TEOs are from the Auckland region. The second consideration was that these three TEOs were from different categories: PTEs, polytechnics, universities and wānanga. The first consideration of limiting the TEOs to the Auckland region was in line with convenience sampling (Lavrakas, 2008). There were eight TEOs (in 2014) in Auckland, including AUT, who offer ECE programmes. Except for AUT due to ethical consideration, all the other seven TEOs were sent a request to participate in this research. Initial communications (e-mails) were made to already known contact persons or the programme leaders of ECE at different TEOs, as informed by webpage searches, phone calls and supervisor's guidance. Among those seven TEOs, only three responded. At the initial stage, I was planning to work with only the first 2 TEOs who responded. However, at the end, as three TEOs replied, I expanded my research plan and included all three in my research after consultation with my supervisor. The three TEOs who became the participants in this research were from only two categories as noted above: one participating TEO was a university and two other TEOs were polytechnics.

Once the TEOs were selected, I continued my communication with the contact persons (the programme leader themselves, or the person nominated by them). An initial discussion with the contact person helped me to decide on how to approach the lecturers and the student teachers. The contact person in each TEO distributed the Participant Information Sheet to the possible sample population, by email and face to face conversation. For lecturers, the contact person helped me by providing e-mail addresses of the staff members who expressed interest. In some cases, the initial contact person participated and introduced me to three other lecturers who would be suitable (available and willing). Lecturers started to contact me directly. I scheduled interviews with four lecturers from each of the three TEOs. In some cases, when only two or three lecturers responded, I contacted the initial contact person again for help and she introduced me to

some of the lecturers by email who had similar research interests. It was much easier to get the desired number of lecturer participants.

To get the student participants, the initial contact person helped by letting all student groups know about the research and distributing the Participant Information Sheet for student teachers. In two of the participating TEOs (both polytechnics), the student groups were arranged by the initial contact person and me by using snowball sampling (Howard, 2011). This means the first student was introduced by the contact person to me and that student helped to find 6 or 7 of her/his peers. One participating TEO, however, only emailed their students to contact me directly. Only 2 student teachers contacted me, but one of them sent an apology on the day the FGD was scheduled. Finally, I got 2 small groups of student teachers from 2 TEOs and only 1 student teacher from the other TEO. These student teachers were on their second or third year of studies. All three TEOs were given equal importance and were considered as three cases in this study.

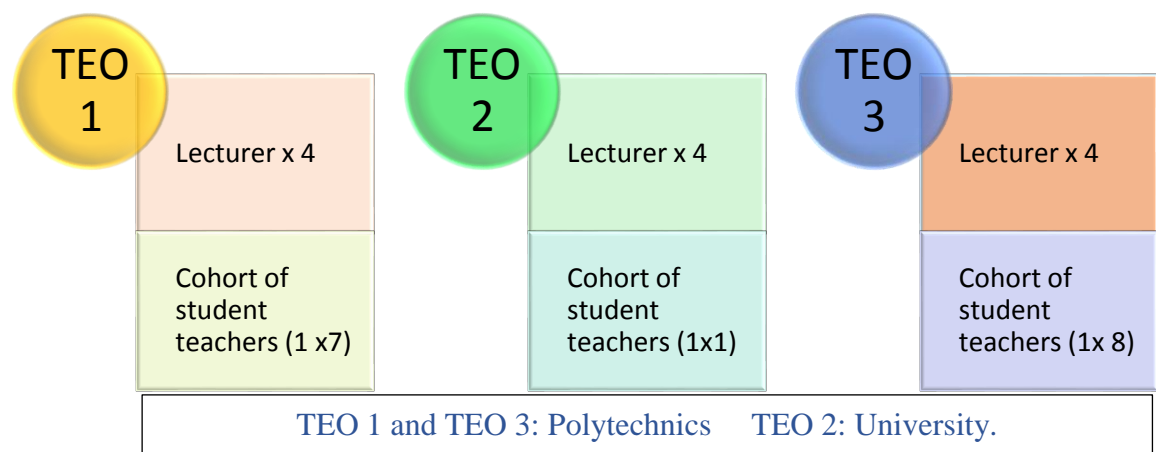


Figure 3.1 Participation of three TEOs

### 3.6 Case study:

Three cases were formed to collect data from three TEOs. However, it was not intended to find out how these three cases produce similar or different data, but the intention was more to explore these cases and combine findings for reflection for lecturers in TEOs across New Zealand. The goal of case studies (Yin, 2009) is to understand the complex social phenomenon in a real-life context where it is difficult to draw a line between the context and the phenomenon. Cultural components of early childhood teacher education programmes are intertwined in the programme in such ways. Case study can be applied

both for qualitative and quantitative research (Walliman, 2017). For this qualitative research, case study was used only to form the cases at the initial level. This was to help the data collection and data storage process, but data analyses were conducted free from the characteristics of case study as a research method.

### ***3.7 Research tools:***

Interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Opie, 1999) and FGD (Krueger, 2009; Morgan, 1997) were the research tools for this study. There were no pre-determined responses (Howard, 2011) for FGDs or interviews. The interviews were for 30-45 minutes duration each and FGD were for 45 - 50 minutes each. They took place at the unused classrooms in different TEOs as indicated by the initial contact persons of relevant TEOs. In the data collection, both interviews and FGDs were found to be appropriate.

#### ***3.7.1 Interview as a research tool:***

Interviews can be used in quantitative research too, but are more appropriate in qualitative data collection (Walliman, 2017). An interview is a research tool where the participants answer questions of the researcher in one to one sessions. Data gathered by interviews are usually direct quotations that express people's opinions, feelings and knowledge about their experiences (Patton, 2015). Interviews are such a common tool, used not only by the researchers, but also by social media so today's society is referred to as 'the interview society' (Fontanna & Frey, 2005 cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). However, research interviews are more particular as they have a specific structure and purpose (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Interviews are necessary because we cannot observe people's feelings, and their interpretation of the world around them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). On the other hand, the researcher requires preparation or prior knowledge of the setting, and in some cases, of the participants, to conduct successful interviews (Walliman, 2017). Interviews are not viable if the researcher has no prior knowledge of the context (Roulston, 2010) because without any experience of the context, it would be difficult for the researcher to connect to, engage and make sense of what research participants have expressed. For this study I applied a semi-structured interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015) which is defined as interviews with guided questions where there is not a pre-determined order for certain questions, and the flow of the conversation determines the order of the questions. I found semi-structured interviews to be very successful for the lecturer participants. Once the time and locations were mutually agreed on, the lecturers from the selected TEOs were invited to volunteer their time for a 30-45minute

semi-structured interview. They were interviewed in one to one sessions where power relations were considered (Opie, 1999). In these interviews, I could be seen as more powerful due to my prior knowledge of the research questions that involved the context of the participants' workplace. To mitigate this concern, the semi-structured interviews were organised in face to face sessions, and the lecturers were given time to look at the interview questions before the interview started. Also, the time and the place of interviews were mutually agreed upon. All interviews were held at the participants' own campus, except for one where the participant preferred a café. There was no need to use a research room arranged by the AUT research committee, although this provision was available and offered. No interviews were held in the researcher's own workplace. The interview schedules were flexible and allowed for individual variation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

### *3.7.2 FGD as a research tool:*

FGD is defined as semi-structured interviews with a group of people as participants and the researcher as the moderator (Walliman, 2017), where a particular theme or topic is discussed more in detail. As an element of interaction between the participants is required in FGD (Krueger, 2009), the size of the group should consist of 2 to 10 participants. A series of questions are designed to elicit participants' perspectives on a given topic (Morgan, 1997). Similarly, FGD is stated as a technique that brings people together to discuss experiences in a group situation (Mutch, 2005; Waldegrave, 1999). Focused group can create an environment (Krueger, 2009) where in the presence of other participants, individuals can open up more comfortably to the unknown researcher. While interviewing in groups can produce dynamic data in a short period of time (Roulston, 2010), it is also criticised as having limitations such as not producing data at a more personal level and causing concerns in the group due to discussions on sensitive data. Focused groups need strong guidance to ensure that all participants are equally empowered to contribute.

I used FGDs for the student teacher participants. A cohort of students (1 group of student teachers from each participating TEO) were interviewed in FGD. Snowball sampling (Howard, 2011) was found useful to form groups. Students who participated varied in stages from year 2 to year 3 of their degree programme in ECE. The student groups were from the same class, and demonstrated trustful interaction between each other. For one TEO, where the number of participants was only one, I could not apply FGD, but had to use an interview with both semi-structured questions and un-structured conversation.

### ***3.8 Data collection:***

Data collection was done by personally visiting the TEOs. The interviews and FGDs were recorded with the permission of the participants using a voice recorder. The researcher also took notes. Real names were used in the transcripts, and replaced later by pseudonyms randomly assigned by the researcher. The first transcript was sent to the participants to get their feedback regarding any changes. No feedback was received in relation to the changes of the transcript. The second transcript was corrected for grammatical errors and other types of mispronunciations (for example, umm, and arr) were removed. Quotations from the second transcript were used in data analysis.

### ***3.9 Data management:***

Data were kept both as hard copies in folders and as soft copies in folders and files with the use of MS Office and dropbox. Three folders were created for keeping the audio files received from three TEOs. Each audio file was named after the individual participants or participant groups. Similar sorting was conducted for the transcripts and they were kept together with the audio files. All hard copies of the signed consent forms were kept together in a folder. A table was created to list the original participants, the date and time of interview/FGD, and the email addresses of the participants. Relevant files were kept secured by using a strong password.

### ***3.10 Data analysis:***

It is not straight-forward to analyse qualitative data, rather it is quite complex (Edwards, 2010) to get the first idea of where to start. Critical themes emerged from the repeated data (Patton, 2015). I listened to the audio-tapes again and again to confirm a theme. A presentation at the AUT post-graduate seminar required me to organise the data in a way that I could present and make sense to an audience. This is when I gained an overall idea of how the themes that emerged from my research are connected together. I used the four steps of data collection, data reduction, data organisation, and data interpretation as suggested by Davidson and Tolich (2003). The first step data collection is already discussed. Here I will briefly discuss the other three steps. Data reduction was the stage where I decided not to investigate topics that were irrelevant to my research topic, but were more personal information provided by individual participants. The data that were identified as non-relevant was information such as, reference to books or own research, knowledge contents related to home-based and centre-based early childhood settings, their experiences of other jobs or comparisons between TEOs. Even though I was aware

that this information was necessary and valuable to link to the context of the interview/FGD, I disregarded them as useful data for explaining the early childhood teacher education programmes. While data reduction was going on, I was simultaneously organizing the data. I started to keep the quotes together that could explain a particular theme more accurately. In the data organization step, I also swapped around the quotes under different themes if they were linked, for example biculturalism and multiculturalism were often contrasted and I organised the quotes in ways that could represent this contrast either as part of the theme biculturalism or under the theme multiculturalism. Data interpretation was the last step where I found out patterns and regularities with the expected and unexpected findings. At the data interpretation step, I formed arguments using the similar and contrasting data under each theme.

### *3.11 Validity and reliability:*

It was ensured that the reliability and validity of data was maintained from the beginning to the end of the project. Reliability of data refers to the possibility of consistent results when applied at a different time, in a different place or when used by other than the original researcher (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). The reliability of data in this research was evident through similar data arising from the three different TEOs. In addition, verbatim reporting was used so that the readers can know the first-hand thoughts of the participants and, therefore, data was transparent. Participants' voices rather than researcher's ideas were used to formulate findings to the research questions. Use of two different sources, lecturers and student participants, also contributed to get more reliable data (Walliman, 2017).

Validity refers to the strength of data analysis, and trustworthiness of the data (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Validity of data was maintained by involving those in the study who were knowledgeable about the research topic. Also using the transcripts of the audio (Brennan, Everiss, & Mara, 2010) to analyse the data ensured validity of the process of identifying themes.

### *3.12 Reflective lens towards findings:*

Once the data collection and initial analyses were complete, it was helpful to scrutinise the data further using the reflective model 'Teaching as Inquiry' (Aitken, & Sinnema, 2008). At this stage, the transcripts of interviews and FGDs, which were already identified under a theme, were now linked to different sections of the reflective model. The model

helped to open up thoughts for lecturers to find out the focusing inquiry (what cultural components are appropriate for their learners), the teaching inquiry (how cultural components coincide with the topic), and the learning inquiry (the impact of using diverse cultural components). I applied the findings of the study to ask certain questions that a reflective lecturer would ask. This process helped me to create a reusable framework for the lecturers for asking questions on cultural components.

### ***3.13 Ethical considerations:***

Doing this research acquaints me with the Nuremberg Code (Annas & Gordin, 2008). It was distressing to know how research had been conducted in Nazi concentration camps that caused disability or even death to some of the participants. I realised that social research, unlike medical research, may not cause physical harm, but the mental and social wellbeing of the participants is also equally important to consider. Not only did my research adhered to the policy stated in the Nuremberg Code, but was also approved by the AUT Ethics Committee (see Appendix A). It was crucial therefore to ensure voluntary consent for every person involved. All participants were given a Participant Information Sheet that clearly stated the title, purpose, research tools, the required time and duration, place and location of the study, and the right to withdraw from the research. There was a Participant Information Sheet for the lecturers (see appendix B) and a different one for the student teachers (see appendix C). A different consent form for lecturers was provided (see appendix D) and for student teachers (see appendix E). A Consent Form was given to each participant before implementing the research. The Consent Form contained assertive sentences that re-confirmed that the participant knew exactly what they would do in this project and what consequences they would have (for example, their opinions may be published anonymously). The Consent Form also had a declaration to be signed by each of the participants that stated that they agreed to participate in the study entirely voluntarily. This process acknowledged the fact that all people have rights of autonomy. They have the right to decide what is in their best interest (Coady, 2010).

It was ensured that no harm was caused or was intended to be caused to anyone involved in the research projects. Ethical approval was required as the project involved individuals participating and sharing their own experiences. The AUT Ethics Committee approved the study as the proposal of the research showed strong consideration of privacy and informed rights of the participants. Participants were well-informed about their responsibilities, contributions and conditions for being involved in this project. They were

also assured that their opinions/comments would be published anonymously and for academic purposes only. They were informed that they would have the right to withdraw from the project until the analysis began. No one withdrew from this project.

Ethical consideration was made to ensure that the researcher did not pressure the participants to take part in the research. Koha and kai were awarded only as a means of expressing gratitude for their support in the study. Koha (\$20 or equivalent voucher for interviews \$10 or equivalent voucher for FGD) and kai (\$10 for each interview and \$30 for each FGD) were arranged for the participants in each session. However, participants were not informed about koha or kai beforehand. Therefore, it can be said that the only reason the lecturers and student teachers participated is due to their passion for early childhood and research.

One of the other research ethics considerations was to focus on data for social good in contrast to emphasising data for research good (Rymer, 1994). Fortunately, for this research, there was no conflict of interests between the funding body and the researcher and the supporting institutions.

The following chart briefly represent the ethical considerations that were taken in this research.



Table 3.1: Expression of ethical principles in case studies (Source: Jenkin, 2010)

Ethical Principle	Interviews	FGDs
Do no harm	The interview schedule was checked by colleagues and was assured of no likely harm. Respondents were able to choose not to answer if they felt threatened by any question.	Participants were emotionally supported by the researcher before starting the FGD by giving them the opportunity to ask questions.
Voluntary participation and informed consent	Participants signed the Participant Information Sheet and consent form and agreed to participate in the study.	Participation Information Sheet was provided to each participant and time was given to read it. Consent forms were signed by the participants before starting the FGD.
Anonymity	The details of participants were kept anonymous from people other than the researcher.	Offer of initials or pseudonyms were made to the participants if they wanted to replace their real names in the second transcript.
Confidentiality	Individual identifiers were not mentioned and thus confidentiality was maintained.	No participant was pointed out distinctively with identifying comments.
Avoid deceit	PIS was given to each of the participants where details of the study were outlined.	PIS were explained before starting the FGDs.
Data analysed and reported faithfully	Verbatim reporting and peer checking of own transcripts took place.	Transcripts for the group were distributed to each of the participants to check.

### 3.14 Limitations:

The study, as a qualitative study, has its limitations of producing data indicative of real situations that cannot be statistically generalised. The TEOs who participated are also not representative of three different groups. It would probably be different if, for example, one of the wānanga had agreed to participate in this research. I had to include only the TEOs who willingly participated. The judgements of usefulness of the data and credibility of findings depend upon me and the readers of this thesis (Eisner, 1991).

### 3.15 Conclusion / *Shesh hoiao hoilo na shesh*:

*Shesh hoiao hoilo na shesh* is a quote from a famous Bangla (language of Bangladesh) work of literature, written by Rabindranath Tagore. This quote claims, “It is finished, yet continued”. Completion of the research project has the same sort of notion for me. I have analysed the data and the findings emerged, yet I feel there is much more to capture; to ask, and to reveal.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### 4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the findings that were derived from the qualitative data gathered for this study. As mentioned in the previous chapter, data were gathered from three TEOs in Auckland who offer early childhood teacher education programmes. Four lecturers from each TEO were interviewed. Students were involved in a focus group discussion from each TEO. These two sources of data then were transcribed and scrutinised for repeated themes. These themes were then categorised as findings of the study.

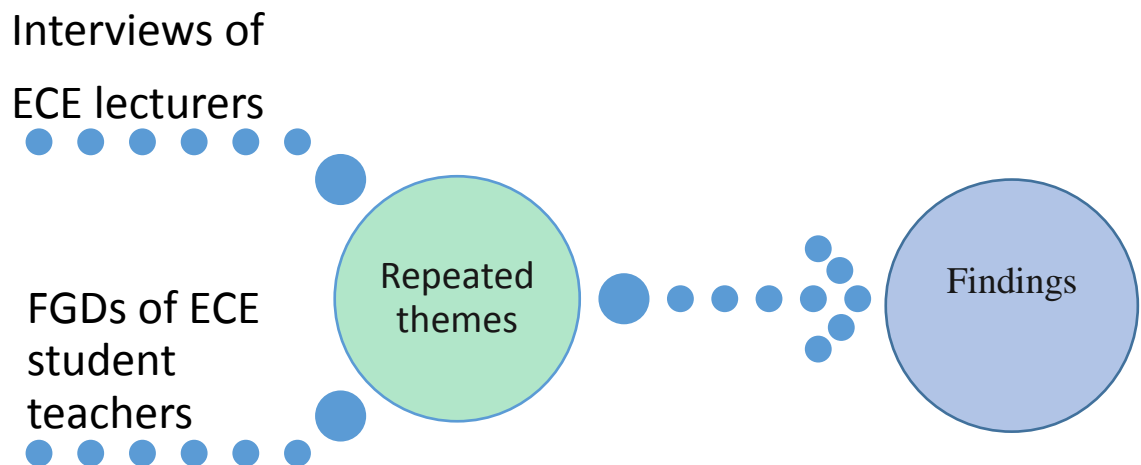


Figure 4.1 Thematic coding

The participants in this study were the lecturers and the student teachers. In total, 12 lecturers were interviewed with guided questions (see Appendix F) and 16 student teachers participated in focussed group discussions (see Appendix G). The invitation was open to all, but interestingly most of the participants are from a specific ethnic background. Eleven out of twelve lecturers and twelve out of sixteen student teachers are either full or part European ethnic New Zealanders. This not so diverse participation made me think about the reason. I cannot come up with a definitive statement without evidence, but only can deduce a few assumptions. The first one is that the Pākehā New Zealanders

are more involved with early childhood education teaching and learning and little diversity exists in this field. The second assumption is that the Pākehā are more enthusiastic about research, and can spare time to participate in research. The third is that the Pākehā are more comfortable in having their say or expressing their opinions in the research and education field. The fourth assumption is that the Pākehā participants are more flexible to add extra time to be put in research participation with the influences of factors such as, transport, and childcare options. I believe that there is a higher probability of the second and consequent assumptions to be true. I could not ask any participant regarding this because I only noticed this incoherent representation of ethnic diversity once the analysis was completed.

The participating TEOs are all located in Auckland. Early childhood teacher education is one of the programmes for these TEOs. To ensure that the TEOs remain anonymous, I have used three Bangla words to name them in my study. The words I have used to name them do not have any significance. They may have metaphoric meanings linked to education, but that depends on personal interpretation. The words have meanings such as window, microscope and mirror. The choices for these names for each TEO was random.

Table 4.1. Names chosen for three TEOs

TEO1	TEO2	TEO3
<i>Janala</i>	<i>Durbeen</i>	<i>Ayna</i>
Polytechnic	University	Polytechnic

Participating TEOs are two polytechnics and one university. All of them are situated at different locations in Auckland. Numbered coding was used at the initial stage of data collection to indicate different TEOs, the lecturers, and the student teachers. Later, and in this thesis, the TEOs are referred to by the metaphoric names assigned to them. TEO 1 is called the *Janala* Institute, TEO 2 *Durbeen* Institute and TEO 3 as *Ayna* Institute. The numbers after the TEOs represent the order in which they responded to my first email.

*Janala* Institute is quite a big polytechnic with the ECE department being one of them. The approval for data collection in this TEO was quick. A volunteer lecturer supported the data collection throughout the study and all interviews and FGD were complete within a timeframe of two weeks only. All participating lecturers were NZ European. Six out of

seven students were also NZ European and the remaining one student was of Chinese origin. All participants, lecturers and student teachers were females except for one male student teacher. Most of the student teachers were between 17 to 24 years old, except for the male in his thirties.

*Durbeen* Institute was a university with several faculties and schools. The early childhood programme is one of the teaching qualifications offered at this university. The approval from the appropriate authority was quick from this institute. However, data collection was quite lengthy and took a month and a half to complete. I had to approach several times to get interest both from the lecturer and student teacher participants. All participants were female here. Three out of four lecturer participants were NZ European and one of them had dual heritage, being part Samoan. The only student teacher that finally came for the FGD was a young NZ Pākehā.

*Ayna* institute was one of the other polytechnics that participated in this study. The approval for the data collection from this institute was quite lengthy and had four systematic steps to go through. Firstly, I had to have approval from the ECE Programme Leader. The second step was to get approval from the administrative manager for the institute. Thirdly, my proposal had to pass through their research committee and get the research manager's approval. The fourth step was to get it approved from their ethics committee. Receiving all these approvals took almost four months. Data collection from this institute also took several months as I was on maternity leave in between. The participating lecturers were all NZ European while one of them had dual Māori heritage. The student teachers at this institute were mostly Māori (7 out of 8 identified themselves as Māori). Three of these Māori students also had some Pasifika and Asian heritage. One of the student teachers was NZ European. All of them were between 18 and 24, except for one in her forties.

The participants from these three TEOs shared valuable information. I started the interview and FGD with the question 'How do you define who you are?'. All participants were very thoughtful in answering this question and explained themselves in detail. The following two tables will briefly introduce the participants from the three TEOs. The first table summarises the attributes of the lecturers and the second one portrays the student groups.

Table 4.2 Participants' information (lecturers of TEOs)

TEO (replaced name)	Participants (pseudonyms)	Ethnic groups	Other information
Janala	1 Hannah	NZ European	Started ECE in playcentre with own daughters
Janala	2 Rianne	NZ European (Australia born)	Overseas experience
Janala	3 Melissa	NZ European	Home-schooled own children
Janala	4 Paula	NZ European	Has research interest in cultural responsiveness in early childhood
Durbeen	5 Jessica	NZ European	Raised in multi-cultural environment
Durbeen	6 Julia	NZ European	Was raised in Mt Maunganui
Durbeen	7 Jane	NZ European	Over 20 years' experience in early childhood
Durbeen	8 Merienne	NZ European and Samoan	Felt an academic lack while working as ECE teacher, and moved to tertiary
Ayna	9 Anna	NZ European	Experience in home-based, centre-based and refugee early childhood centre
Ayna	10. Sharon	Thai, Chinese and Malay	More than 10 years' experience
Ayna	11 Aimee	NZ European	38 years' experience in ECE
Ayna	12 Alice	NZ European and Māori	Home-schooling experience of 10 children

The lecturers from these three TEOs who participated in the study were all experienced. They were all female and shared both their personal and professional experiences. Some of them were involved in research related to culture and its impact. Even though they were mostly New Zealand Europeans, they acknowledged their exposure to Māori and other cultures either through their upbringing or through the profession or both.

The student teachers commonly used ethnicity and age as part of their identity. The following table shows the information on participants for FGDs.

Table 4.3 Participants' information (Student teachers)

TEOs (Number of participants)	Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Other information
Janala (7)	NZ European: 6  Chinese:1	17-24:6  Above 25: 1	Female: 6  Male: 1	Mix of international and domestic students; some have part-time jobs
Durbeen (1)	NZ European: 1  Other: 0	17-24:1  Above 25:0	Female:1  Male: 0	Have studied graduate level arts prior to ECE; grown up in European dominant environment
Ayna (8)	Māori: 2  Māori & European: 2  Māori & Pasifika: 2  Māori & Asian:1  NZ European:1	17-24:7  Above 25:1	Female:8  Male: 0	Studied certificate/diploma of ECE prior to Bachelor; lives locally; has no international student in class

The student teachers from the three TEOs who participated in this study were also mostly females. In total, sixteen student teachers participated, and only one of them was male. They were a mix of New Zealand European, Chinese, and Māori and Pacific Islanders. The age group varied a little, but they were mostly between 17-24 years old. Many of them had prior qualifications of ECE (level 3, 4 or 5, which are ECE qualifications but not recognised teaching qualifications). They were studying towards the Bachelor of ECE qualification.

## 4.2 Findings

The goal of the study was to find the cultural components of the early childhood teacher education classroom and to analyse the effects of these components on teaching and learning, if any. The themes that emerged from the data included nine areas of cultural components. These areas are bicultural contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand, multiculturalism, individual identities, comfort zone, cross-cultural interactions, female dominance, spirituality, socio-economic status and tech culture. Details of these findings are included here.

## 4.2.1 Components of culture

### 4.2.1.1 Bicultural contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand

All participants, lecturers and student teachers, appreciated biculturalism as a dominant cultural component of an early childhood teacher education classroom.

*It (biculturalism) is very much there. And we know why. We know and respect the values of the Treaty. It is not surprising to us how in all papers we do have to refer to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. (Janala Institute, FGD, 1/07/2015).*

The dominance of biculturalism is, as noted by the participants, justified because of the influence of the curriculum document in ECE. The early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* incorporates practices related to tikanga (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

The lecturers mentioned how they are aware of the bicultural foundation of education and how they put in an extra effort to incorporate treaty principles.

*Even though the course itself is pretty much westernised, I always try to add Māori and Pasifika components in my sessions (Merienne, Int, 29/06/2015).*

Participants specifically noted practices around biculturalism included Māori greetings (kia ora), karakia, mihi, te reo Maori phrases (whakarongo mai), tikanga, waiata, whanau, ngāti, iwi, marae visit or noho marae, pōwhiri, and kaupapa. Even though early childhood lecturers talked about incorporating Māori concepts in their teaching sessions, literature shows that there are still tokenistic use of Māori tikanga in practice (Jenkin, 2017; Ritchie, 2003; Williams et al., 2012). The teacher education programmes can be investigated to find ways to change this in ECE practice (Jenkin, 2016)

Also, even though there was an overall appreciation of biculturalism, a major misunderstanding was identified among one of the learner groups. They believed that biculturalism is required to be practised only if a Māori child attends the early childhood centre. These students agreed that as early childhood educators, they need to be aware of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, but they struggle to see the purpose or relevance of biculturalism for children from other ethnic groups rather than Māori.

*We have one paper every year on manākitanga. We have Māori curriculum areas. Also, we have some Tiriti papers. ... but in practice I hardly came across any Māori child in the centre ... One thing I would like to mention here; that we have not touched upon other cultures that much. Obviously New Zealand has a bicultural foundation and Māori*

*is a big part of it, but the society is quite multicultural. (Janala Institute, FGD, 1/07/2015)*

This idea of practicing biculturalism only for Māori children and their whānau is contrary to the true essence of biculturalism. The emphasis on reciprocal and responsive relationships in ECE can be an example of biculturalism in practice (Ritchie, 2003) that helps having effective interaction not only with Māori children, but the Māori community.

Other than the above-mentioned misconception related to practice, all student teachers were aware of the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and all lecturer participants were highly motivated to embrace more and more of tikanga Māori in their practice. No participant in this study was found to be resistant of bicultural content in the curriculum. The findings here are supported by the realisation that there is no finishing line to become bicultural (Lang, 2011). The participants themselves were very much aware and accepting of the Māori components. However, they did mention how sometimes in class resistance around biculturalism is noticed.

*I believe very strongly in the treaty. However, sometimes I face challenges to make my students to believe in it.... No, interestingly, it is mostly from students from New Zealand, Pākehā students, rather than the international students. (Sharon, Int, 27/08/2015)*

As this information was not quite expected, and was surprising, queries around this became a part of all interviews and FGDs. All participants, with only one exception (FGD in Ayna Institute) repeated similar information as noted by Sharon. The reason behind the resistance from Pākehā students and the accepting attitudes of international students was attempted to be explained. There were different opinions gained from the lecturers and student teachers.

International students were found to be more willing to learn and participate in Māori related contents compared to some domestic students, in particular, some Pākehā students. Some of these student teachers were resistant about biculturalism at the beginning of the course, due to the imposed tokenistic nature of practising biculturalism in their previous years of schooling, as discussed by one student group. The possible rationale why the international students show a greater interest in learning about biculturalism included them having similar experiences of cultural differences as Māori learners did.



The lecturers said the reason why some Pākehā students were not very accepting of bicultural components at the beginning might be because of the underlying history of conflicts between the two ethnic groups. However, student participants said that this might be related to the school experiences of biculturalism where it felt as if Māori tikanga was forced on them and they had no idea why.

*At primary and secondary school, we are taught about the Treaty of Waitangi. You know you get to do Māori songs, make poi and do all these year after year in school where you have no idea why you are doing this. You are not Māori. You have no Māori classmates to know about them, but you keep doing Māori stuff. This experience of school might have created a pre-set wall in some of us against biculturalism. Even I was not sure of it when I came to this course, but then being taught by a Māori opened my eyes. (Durbeen Institute, FGD, 17/08/2015)*

The reason why international students do not show any resistance against it was also explained. The participants assumed that these students arrive with an accepting attitude overall that helps them to embrace the concepts that arise from Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

*Often the immigrant students have more determination to succeed and biculturalism is a major determinant to be successful in this course. (Hannah, Int, 9/11/2015)*

Other reasons were noted.

*It is new. It is exciting for them. Also, many of them, for example students from Asia, have similar culture to Māori, have similar historical perspectives of being invaded by others. So they are naturally sympathetic and accepting of Māori rights in this land. (Paula, Int, 18/06/2015)*

The finding of this study supported the idea that everyone, including immigrants, should start to take responsibility for practising biculturalism- not just Māori or Pākehā. Biculturalism was a common component that came up again and again, equally emphasised by both lecturer and student participants. Acceptance and appreciation of biculturalism was noted by the participants as obligatory for an ECE teacher. Apart from some misconceptions around practice, all participants showed awareness and willingness to embed their practice with the essence of biculturalism regardless of their age, gender, and ethnic orientation.

#### 4.2.1.2 Multiculturalism

There were some differences of the notion of multiculturalism. The lecturers referred to multiculturalism within the classroom, working with the diverse learner population they have in class. The student teacher groups acknowledged this too, but put more emphasis on the external factors such as staffing (diversity in their lecturer groups) and work placement exposure to diversity (the children and families in early childhood centres, where they are placed as students, volunteers or relievers). While some lecturers said that they take extra efforts ensuring the classroom experiences are acknowledging diversity, some said being respectful and approachable to individuals allowed all learners to feel included. They emphasised individuals and their learning rather than a collective approach toward cultural sensitivity. When asked if she considers students' culture in planning, Melissa replied:

*I think I try. Rather than looking into specific cultures, which is too difficult I find, especially with some of the students who are from regions like Burma, Vietnam. I don't know anything about those cultures. So I just try to make sure that we have a variety of student learning strategies and find out what works for individuals. ... I don't think I gear up from cultural perspectives, but it is more to look at individuals and finding ways to get through them. (Melissa, Int., 2015)*

Even if the lecturer has an individualistic approach, it is probably important to think of ways to incorporate the culture of individuals in the classroom. Intercultural competence, advocates steps such as ongoing curiosity and learning, attitudes of respect and openness, and critical thinking (Grey, 2013).

In contrast, some of the lecturer participants agreed on the importance of going the extra mile and searching for more culturally inclusive materials.

*I never thought of this before. Now that you are asking, I think yes. I could try to get articles that cover other cultures. At the end, it might be hard as they should be in English surely. (Julia, Int, 18/06/2015)*

In the interviews and FGDs, queries were made around how the reading materials compile the components of global culture. Some of the lecturer participants stated that they prefer to keep the materials content-oriented, rather than culture-based.

*I do not think I consider. ... The reading materials are academic and we use what is related to the content, and obviously more of New Zealand literature. (Aimee, Int., 8/09/2015)*

Some participants noted they put in an extra effort to be inclusive in terms of cultural-based literature for any content they teach. However, the challenges of availability of literature from many sources was repeatedly noted by the participants.

*I try. I add the Māori perspectives. Recently, literature from Pasifika people, I mean Pasifika writers and researchers are available. There are articles from Chinese ethnic groups. I add whenever possible, but not a lot is available that covers other cultures. The academic world is pretty much dominated by White European or American writings and there is little that we can do even if we want to. (Rianne, Int., 29/05/2015)*

Lecturer participants, overall, agreed that the curriculum, course materials and readings are highly influenced by dominant European culture and they could take extra measures to include information, articles, names and photos from other cultures.

The student teachers said they feel valued in the classroom for who they are. They feel everyone is free to speak in class. However, they thought increased diversity in staffing among lecturers could influence their learning in a different way.

*New Zealand seems to be dominated by NZ European, but within that there is diversity [in staffing], more of what people choose to associate with. A lot of our lecturers, are quite big on introducing themselves with the affiliation of different cultures, like everyone is bicultural, but that probably is more to do with what is required to be the educators, ...it was eye opening for me and was a huge difference when I was taught by a person who was Māori ... we only had one Chinese lecturer with whom we had to read a lot of her writing, which is about being Chinese, it was surely different. (Durbeen Institute, FGD, 17/08/2015)*

A study conducted in secondary schools in the US points at the divide between the diverse student groups and predominantly white teacher groups (Gay & Howard, 2000), with a focus on preparing the teacher groups with effective strategies to deal with the student groups. The participating student teacher and lecturer groups in this study show similar demographic representation, student teachers being diverse and lecturers being mono-cultural. In all TEOs, the lecturers and the students acknowledged the diversity of students in terms of ethnicity. All participants noted how students are from many different cultural backgrounds.

*We have many Asian. When I am saying Asian, it is not only the Chinese. I am talking about Indian, Sri Lankan and students from all over the places. We have students from Pasifika backgrounds where I am talking Tongan and Samoan. We have few Māori students. (Hannah, Int, 9/11/2015)*

The other ethnicities and places of origin stated by the participants are South America, and European. The students' countries of origin (apart from New Zealand) included China, Korea, Japan, England, Germany, Spain, Italy, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Burma, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Nepal and Sri Lanka. However, in these TEOs diversity of lecturers was found to be rare. Lecturers are mostly homogeneous in terms of ethnic background, compared to that of the student groups.

*There is like one Pasifika and one Māori and that's it. There is barely anyone from other cultures. All our lecturers are predominantly white, female. (Janala Institute, FGD, 1/07/2015)*

The Ayna institute students thought the lecturers had a varied ethnic mix. However, particularly in this focus group, they had no international students in the class.

Where the participating student teacher groups were very much appreciative of the support they got from their lecturers, they noted that the increasing diversity in terms of ethnicities and gender could bring difference.

*We did have a bigger variety before, really it is this year because of budget cuts at [Janala Institute], all our goodies [diverse teaching staff] are gone. ...Talking about diversity, we also got [names of two male lecturers]. ... Well, boys are smart cookies, but I find them more chilled, I will say low maintenance is the key word [said by the male student teacher in FGD]. ...I mean I don't need to impress him with all the extra stuff that I have to do for other lecturers. We love him [said by the female student teacher in FGD]. (Janala Institute, FGD, 1/07/2015)*

This could very well be the individual traits of these two male lecturers, but it was interesting to see that the participants noted the different teaching-learning style.

The student teacher groups also emphasised that they often did not feel equipped with the required practical knowledge on diversity. They said that the curriculum covers only a small paper on diversity, which is mostly theory based. They suggested including papers that could not only improve their knowledge regarding the importance of respectful practice, but could also enable them to show active participation with children from diverse families. The importance of doing things in real life is highly encouraged by the ecological theory of development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Gay & Howard, 2000; Toole et al., 2014) too. Participation in socio-cultural activity results in transformational learning (Rogoff, 2003). The suggestions made by student teacher groups show the necessity of incorporating practice-oriented multiculturalism that may help the student teachers to become transformational early childhood educators in the future.

*It is a big mix. We have teachers from England, South Africa, Māori ...Not from any other countries.... Lecturers are from New Zealand, [and are] Pākehā (Ayna Institute, FGD, 7/03/2016)*

Pākehā dominance in lecturer groups was distinguished in all TEOs, but was analysed differently by the student groups depending on the mix of culture they had within the group. The student groups of TEOs that were more multicultural in terms of ethnicity (Janala and Durbeen) were the ones who pointed out less diversity in their lecturers.

According to the student teacher participants, in the course the concept of multiculturalism was included, but more from a theoretical perspective. The student teachers mentioned how multi-culturalism is included in the class in a way that is not enough for them to get familiar with the diverse workplaces they are going to join.

*You know when we go out there, we must be responsible for so many children and they are from so many different cultures. We have Chinese kids, Indian kids, and kids from all over the places. And we do not have any clue about their culture. ...All we learn is to respect them and to include them, but we are never taught how. (Janala institute, FGD, 1/07/2015)*

Again, demands were made to understand the practical side of multiculturalism in action. The insistence was often related to workplace experiences. In summary, ethnicity oriented multiculturalism was found to be a sensitive issue. Lack of balance between the diversity of student teachers and lecturers was pointed out. It was also found that efforts could be taken to expand the reading materials to include diverse cultural aspects. The relevance of multiculturalism was also discussed in terms of the presence of diverse ethnicities in the workplaces such as in the ECE services.

#### **4.2.1.3 Individual identities:**

Many of the participants noted their professional identities as lecturers and student teachers while acknowledging identities in relation to birth place, family and ancestors. These ideas reasonably match with the modern definition of identity. Identity in modern terms is no longer limited to social categories, but also refers to the sources that add self-respect or dignity for the individuals (Fearon, 1999). The fact that the participants of this study are the student teachers or lecturers for ECE seemed to add to their self-respect. Similarly, birth-place, family and ancestors seemed to be an important source of self-respect for these participants, which may link to the Māori concept pepeha. Pepeha, which is practised in the field of early childhood, is a form of introduction that establishes

relationships between individuals, their birthplace and their ancestral heritage (Moore & Moore, 2016).

Many of the lecturers emphasised their identity as teachers. Sharon said how her profession was embedded in her passion from a very early age.

*I cannot imagine my identity separated from teaching. I have a passion for teaching since when I was a young child, teaching my dog and cat. When I moved to New Zealand, I started to work with [a different] institute and after few years I joined the [Janala Institute], and I have been here for the last ten years. (Sharon, Int., 27/08/2015)*

It was an interesting finding of the study that many of the lecturer participants and student teachers introduced professional identities as part of their discussion around who they are. Jessica described how, with time, she has changed and transformed, specifically around cultural awareness.

*When I started teaching, it was in the South Island. Because of the mono-cultural dominance there, I never thought of culture or its components. Although I am or even then I was keen on individuals. I could connect with people. I never felt disconnected from others. (Jessica, Int, 27/07/2015)*

The identities shared by the lecturers are their ethnic orientation, their bicultural way of life, their childhood and upbringing; their family; motherhood; and iwi or marae involvement. The way the individuals' identities get included in the classroom is through their personal stories. All participants agreed that they do bring stories from their lives in class to explain, and to understand concepts relevant to teaching.

*Whenever I am teaching a Māori concept to my learners, I ask them to go back and find similar concepts in their own culture, in their day to day life, because I think that's the only way they could connect to this concept I would teach. (Alice, Int., 31/07/2015)*

Not all lecturers were found to be emphasising this trend of bringing students' own knowledge or background, but rather knowing and practising their own culture. Jane suggested that knowing about other cultures comes from professional development.

*I did not see classrooms any differently. For me it would be mostly Māori from the professional development courses I have been. For example, eyeballing the Māori students. I would be aware of that while talking to them. I would use Māori phrases, whakarongo mai ...Outside of the Māori and Pasifika groups, I am sad to say I did not bring anything especially for any other student groups. ...Except for the reference materials from Janet Gozalez-Mina in the infant-toddler*

*material. Her work was from a very multicultural perspective. (Jane, Int, 14/08/2015)*

A discussion arose on how much the student teachers open up when they share. It was argued whether sharing needed extra support. Some lecturers suggested that not all students are ready to discuss their own perspectives in a classroom situation.

*For the quieter ones, I break the class in small groups and go to the table, and then they open up. For some of them it is hard, maybe culturally they are not encouraged to speak up, but things get easier if you can build a good relationship. (Anna, Int., 30/07/2015)*

The participating student teachers indicated that they have open relationships in the classroom. Lecturers often discuss examples from their lives, and so do they.

*Our lecturers share their stories from their life, which helps to build relationship with us, and it is not only about teaching...we can see their vulnerable side, their family face, and all sides in them. ...and we do too. People love to share their life stories in class. We are very emotional and we love to share these emotions in class. (Janala Institute, FGD, 01/07/2015)*

The sharing of experiences in class often revolves around individuals. However, the group dynamics of individuals are also taken into consideration. The way the lecturers contemplate students' culture sometimes is linked to creating equitable opportunities for success.

*The Pasifika students often must cross an extra bridge to get into the content. I think of that extra bridge when I plan my lesson. (Merienne, Int, 29/06/2015)*

Individual students and their success was also discussed among student groups. Many of the participating student teachers have had prior education in early childhood, for example, certificates and diplomas in early childhood at various levels. Often these experiences were acknowledged by the student groups.

*Previous studies helped me to shape my current qualifications. I can connect more to the concepts as I have prior knowledge on the topic. (Durbeen Institute, FGD, 17/08/2016)*

Individual identities, as discussed by the participants, often revolved around the ideas and notions of professional or academic identities. The participants reflected upon their childhood, families and journeys, but in discussion on their growth and success as teachers and as students.

#### **4.2.1.4 Cross-cultural interactions**

Cross-cultural interactions were described infrequently in early childhood teacher education classrooms in spite of a large number of different ethnicities. There are patterns of students of similar ethnic backgrounds who share the same language, sitting together. However, this pattern is shown to be linked to individual comforts as opposed to racism or racist behaviour. This pattern matches the definition of race and ethnicity as described by Mason Durie (2005). He says race is biological variation and genetic determinism, but ethnicity has social and cultural connotations, lifestyle and societal interaction. People prefer to interact with people of the same ethnicity because of the possibility of comfort in sharing. Some lecturers believe in manipulating this pattern as they think it will prepare the learners better for the diverse workplaces where they will have to interact with people, not by choice, but by the setup of their place of employment. In contrast some lecturers believed in not interrupting this pattern as they thought it might be disrespectful to the choice of adult learners.

The adult learners, who participated in this study though, said they enjoy and benefit from the mixing and mingling organised by their lecturers as this helps them to know their classmates better. By these experiences, the identity, time and space of the classroom can be explored in different ways, as it can be transcultural learning (Axtman, 2002). Transcultural learning refers to participants from many cultures sharing and spending time together to perform in events, where they learn about each other's cultures. The participants of this study also agreed with the values of team-work or event participation, but simultaneously preferred to contribute to the makeup of the group if assessment is involved.

The cross-cultural interaction was thought to be an important component and features around it were noticed and acknowledged by the participants of this study. They agreed that the interactions between people of different ethnic groups, age, and religion opens a wide gate to bring in the components of tolerance and respect. Two streams of opinions were discovered as to whether to negotiate or not to negotiate within the classroom setting. Some of the lecturer participants were reluctant to intermingle the adult learners.

*There are still lots of work to be done. We need to break the barriers. Sometimes individuals are not accepting other students' ideas is an issue. But sometimes what we see as racism can be just 'this is my seat and I didn't go to talk to you because I feel safe in my seat and I talk to the people around my seat.' So it might be a matter of safety rather than*



*racism why certain people don't interact with one another. (Hannah, Int, 9/11/015)*

These lecturers believed that if they make the students move from their usual seating in class, it interferes with their comfort in class. They thought interacting between different cultures should be encouraged, but not enforced.

*Disrupting people's comfort is not always the answer. I think it is more about valuing who we are and respecting people around us. (Joanna, Int., 27/07/2015)*

However, larger numbers (nine out of the twelve lecturers) thought that different instructions were needed to break the usual trend of people from the same ethnic groups clustering together. The rationale includes the workplace requirement of interacting with diverse ethnic groups and the benefit of mixing and mingling.

*I do [mediate pupils' usual seating arrangements]. I believe we have more similarities than differences. They [student teachers] should figure that out by interacting with each other. They cannot have the choice of people in the workplace. Classrooms should be a place for that training. (Alice, Int., 31/07/2015)*

The student groups seem to enjoy moving around. All student teacher participants said they liked to have occasional mingling that was directed by lecturers.

*We sit at the table where we are more comfortable; where we have people from our own culture. But we also like it when we move around. We can do things together with people whom I do not know much about. This way, we know everyone in the class very well. Without teachers telling us to move, we could not get this harmony (Janala Institute, FGD, 07/03/2016)*

However, this finding may be misrepresentative of overall student groups based on the assumption that the students who would willingly participate in a research FGD are probably the ones who like to socialise.

Celebrations are found to be a way to have smoother cross-cultural interactions. Food was identified as a very strong component that helped people to get together quite easily.

*Sometimes they [student teachers] will have shared kai at various times of celebrations. That's a fabulous way to come together, to learn about different ethnicities and their food. (Hannah, Int., 9/11/2105)*

While interactions among ethnic groups were found to be less likely if not arranged, interactions among different age-groups were much more spontaneous. I asked the participants if they noticed any preference of individuals based on age, but none of them

did. Many of the student teachers are in their 20s, but overall diversity in age is common as well. There was no barrier between the students of younger age-groups (17-24) and the mature student groups (25 and above). The interaction between the younger students and more mature students was found to be usual in all participating TEOs.

*We [a younger student speaking] are all good, aye? We learn from each other. The oldies have more experiences to share that have values. ... We [a more mature student speaking] get help from them [the young ones] with all those computers and blogs ...and party. (Ayna Institute, FGD, 07/03/2016)*

The interactions between young and mature students were also noticed and appreciated by the lecturers. They discussed the contributions of the mature students as more value-laden and experience-based. They also appreciated the dynamic pattern of the young ones and their bringing the youth culture into the classroom.

*They had to come up with songs using Māori phrases and the young bunch in my class came up with this hip-hoppy one; which is nice you know. Usually the stuff we get are early childhood-ish rhymish. (Alice, Int, 31/07/2015)*

Cross-cultural interaction was discussed both by the lecturers and student teachers as an important factor for learning by sharing. Clustering of students based on similarities in ethnicity or language was commonly noticed. Some participants thought no action should be taken to break the cluster, while more participants thought initiatives should be taken for people to mix and mingle. In terms of age, diversity was appreciated and spontaneous mingling was observed.

#### **4.2.1.5 Comfort zone:**

Comfort zone and growth zones are common terms used in the social science literature (Brown, 2008; Grey, 2013; Kasworm, 2005). In social science, comfort zone refers to the convenient path that has been followed previously, whereas growth zone is the stressful situation that makes individuals learn due to the lack of comfort and stretching themselves beyond usual boundaries (Brown, 2008). However, in this study the concept comfort zone is used with a different connotation, as the environmental and structural setups that allow people from different personalities and preferences to be able to express their voices. It was said by the participants that the group-work based classroom interactions allowed individual learning traits to emerge and created opportunities for all cultural groups to share their opinions and stories.

*In the tutorials, it is quite a small group and we are able to have class discussions. Not always as a big class, but in our little groups, it is nice to hear everyone's diverse perspectives. Those discussions are very valuable in our learning. (Durbeen Institute, FGD, 17/08/2015)*

Group work and discussion between group mates enabled students to see what they have already learnt and what they are yet to learn (Ambrose et al., 2010). In order to get all pupils in the class to participate, it is important to break the traditional layout of the lecture theatre that results in passive recipient learners (Spiller, 2011). Participants in this study confirmed that many student teachers would feel comfortable to open up and bring components from their own culture only when they are in small groups rather than a larger classroom situation. Palmer (1999) noted orientation of factors for meaningful learning, which are aligned with the findings of this study. These factors are narrowed down in the following six principles:

1. The space should be 'bounded and open'.
2. The space should be hospitable and 'charged'.
3. The space should invite the voice of the individual and the voice of the group.
4. The space should honour the 'little' stories of the students and the 'big' stories of the disciplines and tradition.
5. The space should support solitude and surround it with the resources of the community.
6. The space should welcome both silence and speech (Intrator, 2002, p. 296)

The creation and maintenance of a comfort zone for all learners can be created when the lecturers have reflective thoughts on the principles mentioned above.

Comfort zone was repeatedly stated by the participants that influenced students to share their stories. The formation of a comfort zone may come with conversations, actions, or physical settings.

*It [sharing from student teachers] always comes after I discussed something from my life. For example, only when I share how my parents raised me up, do they talk about what they do to discipline their children, or how their parents raised them up. They feel that they can tell, they make jokes and that is when they also open up - only when they know that it is okay [to tell their stories in class]. (Sharon, Int, 27/08/2015)*

Thus, creating a comfort zone is a mandatory step of teaching-learning that empowers the student. When students feel the human side of the lecturers, they can be reassured of their own capabilities as they see lecturers as role models.

The influential factors of developing a comfortable environment is class size, classroom settings, and seating arrangements. The structure of classroom setting is found to be limiting how people interact with each other from different cultures.

*Even to speak up, and ask questions, it is a struggle for lot of people in a lecture theatre. If you are not comfortable, how are you supposed to speak, say the things you want to say? (Durbeen Institute, FGD, 17/08/2015)*

Open areas outside the classroom and smaller class size are cited by the participants as helpful factors for cross-cultural interaction in the class. Both the student-teacher and lecturer participants said that the excursions inside and outside the campuses help people to interact with others in the larger group. Places and seating that allow movement were appreciated. These places were believed to have power in building connections between people.

*While we were in the marae, I saw conversation happening between people that usually doesn't happen. In the classroom, you usually have a seat that you sit from the beginning of the first term till the end of the course. So, people sitting in front don't interact with people at the back. But in the marae, people were moving around. (Hannah, Int, 9/11/2015)*

Thus, the comfort zone is found to be very much related to the physical settings and opportunities. Small classes, group work, interactive seating rather than conventional theatre arrangement, and outings were found to be helpful in creating a comfort zone for the student teachers to share ideas.

#### **4.2.1.6 Female majority:**

Mostly, lecturers and student teachers in early childhood teacher education programmes are female. The participants of this study were aware of this and thought that male perspectives were being missed. Research has been done involving male early childhood educators with emphasis on having both male and female role models for children in early childhood education when they are developing their personality (Friedman, 2010). The participants of this study also noted that the few males that come to the ECE centre (even the fathers at drop off) get significant attention from children.

In all participating TEOs, early childhood education courses are dominated by female students. All TEOs had male lecturers for ECE teacher education classes, not many but at least a few. Every year these TEOs will get only one or two males studying toward early childhood qualifications.

Participants said because there are few men in the sector, male perspectives and voices are rare. The male voices were appreciated in terms of learner benefit.

*Things are very much coming from female perspectives. The men who have chosen to come to an environment where females would be dominant, we need to make sure that their voices are heard. ...In our institute, we have two lecturers who are males and it is beneficial for the students as they can hear both male and female perspectives. (Hannah, Int, 9/11/2015)*

The number of male student teachers is very low in every cohort of students. While male students' participation was recognised as important, cautions were raised of being 'more aware' of the gender of the students.

*Males and females share stories from different perspectives, but in my class I do not emphasise gender. I don't see the gender being a factor. All I want to have good thinkers, irrespective of their gender. If I circle the gender, I am already categorising my expectations. (Merienne, Int, 29/06/2015)*

However, the gender imbalance was noted by the participants and expectations of changes were made. High numbers of females and low numbers of males were discussed in terms of diversity and the culture of the classroom

*Any type of diversity brings richness to the classroom and it will be wonderful if we had more gender balance. (Durbeen Institute, FGD, 17/08/2015)*

The participants in all TEOs noted that the number of male student teachers and lecturers was very low. They thought this results in ECE having limited perspectives in class that represent female voices only. While encouragement for male teachers was noted, care ought to be taken so that the male student teachers do not get singled out by their gender and they do not feel pressured to perform differently due to their gendered identity.

#### **4.2.1.7 Spirituality:**

Spirituality was found to be a more common concept as opposed to religion in the early childhood teacher education classrooms. Spirituality in teaching is seen as knowing yourself and applying that knowledge in teaching so that it provides the right passion for the profession (Kung, 2011; Palmer, 1999). This passion is defined as *call to teach* when the teachers hear the inner call of the soul and put their heart into teaching. As described by one of the research participants in Kung's work (2011) that she did not choose the journey, but the journey of teaching chose her. The lecturer groups who participated in

this research also referred to this aspect of spirituality as a motivational force for them to inspire their students. However, they showed little interest in discussing religion or religious beliefs as it can be very sensitive or can be contradictory to authentic professionalism, if they themselves are not religious.

*I refer to spirituality. There are discussions on being respectful, and what a family means in the religious eyes, but I am not religious. And as part of me as an authentic early childhood educator, I prefer to hold myself back. (Julia, Int, 18/06/2015)*

The student groups noted that there were a number of junctures where they felt spirituality is embedded in teaching practice. However, unlike the lecturer groups, they showed a great deal of interest in knowing about different religions. They thought it would be helpful for them to know about the religious rituals and festivals when they go out for practicum or work placements. It is agreed that many individuals often interpret events, resolve dilemmas, make decisions and view themselves from their religious beliefs (Gilligan, 2009). In the field of social work, to know about the religion of clients is found to be helpful to communicate effectively with them (Hodge, Baughman, & Cummings, 2006). In the context of early childhood this might also be a helpful source for the student teachers. However, lecturers have to be responsible for ensuring that no judgements or stereotypes are being acknowledged in class.

Spirituality in early childhood is often taught free of religious reference. Identifying cultural components based on religion was, therefore, not very spontaneous. The only occasion where the religious components were discussed were when considerations were needed due to religious customs.

*I had one student who used to wear a head-scarf and in her practicum, she would like to put it on, as there could be men coming and dropping off their children. Afterwards she would take it off. The associate teacher was completely okay with that. (Jessica, Int, 14/08/2015)*

Other incidents were also stated where celebrating one religion may clash with the values of another religious group. Hannah shared how things get discussed before celebrations, especially for the religious ones.

*There was this incident recently where we were discussing whether to celebrate Easter, but then we had to acknowledge that for some of us - we have some Muslim students - for these students it will not be a celebration at all. (Hannah, Int, 9/11/2015)*

Thus, religion can be a very sensitive issue. Often discussion around it is avoided in places like tertiary education organisations. The student teachers pointed out that religion is not that much discussed in any of the papers they study, however, they thought it would be beneficial for their learning, especially in the early childhood settings.

*I think it would be really useful to know about all religion, Islam, Hinduism, Hare Krishna and many others. We will have children from these families, so knowing these will be helpful. We have to learn from each other or by self-study really. (Janala Institute, FGD, 01/07/2015)*

Discussion around spirituality is evidenced in all participating TEOs, while specific information on religions was not researched, noted or discoursed. While lecturer participants only focussed on the considerations to have for students following different religions, the student teachers wanted to have knowledge about different religions, as they thought it would be helpful in their practice.

#### **4.2.1.8 Socio-economic struggles:**

Struggles as a student and balancing between study, work, and in some cases family, has been identified as one other important component of early childhood teacher education classroom discussion. The student teachers agreed that without family support for accommodation and rent, it is hard to concentrate fully in studies. The participating students said they were blessed to have that support and they can see how some of their classmate's struggle. A recent newspaper article in the New Zealand Herald sited a survey that shows one in six tertiary students are going without food (Collins, 2017). The article also includes information such as the students asking for donations of food and linen from the staff of the tertiary institute. The lecturer group who participated in this study also noted how the student teachers struggle financially to continue with their course especially when they go on practicum. During practicum, they often have to take leave or forgo their part-time jobs. One of the lecturers admitted that she prints assignments for the students because she herself had a hard life as a single mother and a tertiary student. Two of the participating lecturers though questioned the poverty level of students and thought some of them used poverty as an excuse. They thought it is contradictory when the students cannot come to school or cannot print assignments because they did not have money, but are able to bear other expenses that can be seen as luxuries, such as smoking.

The components related to socio-economic status that came into discussion repeatedly were struggles for tertiary students. The lecturer participants discussed this component more from a perspective of how it affects the institute's rules and policies.

*I cannot comment on their [student teachers'] socio-economic status, but overall surely, they can afford tertiary studies. Still some of them seem to struggle with little expenditures such as printing. (Melissa, Int, 11/05/2015)*

The financial struggles of students were repeatedly cited by the lecturers and the students. While some lecturers were questioning the validity of their situation, some were found to be sympathetic with the students.

*I am naughty in this regard and even though the rule is you should not, but I print for them sometime, because I remember when I was a student, I struggled so much with everything. I know even if I don't print for them, they will find ways to print. But saving this little cost might help them a little. (Alice, Int., 31/07/2015)*

The student teachers analysed the struggles as a factor in achievements and explained the factor more from personal and whānau perspectives. They thought they survived because of the support they get from parents or partners.

*There are lot of people [in class] who work for four days a week as they have to have their rent paid, and childcare to be sorted. For me it is easier as I am blessed with a partner who earns enough. I have gone from a C student to an A student as I have the time to sit down and plan my study. (Janala Institute, FGD, 01/07/2015)*

Socio-economic status was found to be a controversial component in terms of expectations and reality. This factor was discussed mainly from the notion of financial struggles. Lecturer participants had two different ideas on this issue. While some were sympathetic toward students' financial situations, some were unsure if it were the reality or an excuse used in the educational settings. Student teachers mentioned parents' support and partners' income in this regard.

#### **4.2.1.9 Tech culture:**

Even though explicitly discussed by only two of the participants, the changing use of technology is prevalent in all areas of the early childhood teacher education programmes that were discussed in this study. Technology as assessment practices and workplace requirements were commonly mentioned. Technology in ECE is already in the centres and the use of technology will keep on increasing (McMurtry & Burkett, 2010). Students at every level have become increasingly tech-savvy (Lavin, Korte, & Davies, 2011) and lecturers need to incorporate technology into practice to support the student teachers proficiency in digital competencies (McMurtry & Burkett, 2010). One participant of this study acknowledged that not only the increasing use of technology in day to day life is



important to notice, but also the moral challenges it places against the traditional view of the usual classroom disciplines can be an issue in the changing world. For example, use of phones, notebooks, and laptops in class is now more frequent and it opens up the question of if, when and how these tools are to be allowed or restricted in the classroom. Sharing of information in social media and privacy issues related to this was also discussed by this participant. Use of social media has become an important part of the identity of teenagers and adolescents of today's world where they negotiate complications, struggles and success and sense a high or poor level of self-esteem (Boyd, 2014). Many of these adolescents are in the early childhood teacher education classrooms as student teachers and so lecturers need to be aware of and thoughtful about this.

One of the participants pointed out that in today's world, technology has become a part of culture.

*Are we being in an age where culture is being dominated by technology across the ethnicities, and religion? For example, we have to give them advice on how to use social media like Facebook. There can be serious consequences of using or misusing social media in terms of employment. So we have to have quite strong discussions around using technology among them. And it is actually more embedded, like, they [student teachers] are the generations who necessarily do not think using cell phone in the class is disrespectful, and maybe it is not, anymore, who knows? (Aimee, Int, 8/9/2015)*

This notion not only adds a new component in the list, but also suggests the changing nature of the concept of culture and confirms the research queries herein. The search of cultural components in the classroom can lead researchers to find new searches. When I was more interested to know what components enter into the classroom because of the people involved (their families, traditions and lifestyles), there might be more if we look at what components come along with the increasing use of technology and the fast-changing world it presents.

#### *4.2.2 Impact on learning for the student teachers*

The impacts on the learning of student teachers were seen from a personal and group perspectives. The personal impacts stated are the development of a sense of belonging and growth of confidence. One of the major impacts on learners in terms of cultural identities is the ability of lecturers to empower learners.

*Not all the topics are that way that you can bring yourselves in, but where you can it empowers them [the student teachers]. (Jessica, Int, 27/07/2015)*

The student teacher participants agreed with this and emphasised how this empowerment helps them to realise their own identities. They appreciated the way it is now, when they can freely talk about things from their lives.

*We can be open to each other, get feedback and, you know, ask for advice....The ability to speak in between ourselves, and going off track the topic is surely has its own value. This helps us in perspective building. These stories are the chances to build on who we are and are built on who we are. If we were not given the chance to speak what we want to speak, we would still be squashed. (Janala Institute, FGD, 01/07/2015)*

The cultural components were found to be empowering in the classroom when there was freedom for it to occur. Both lecturers and student teachers appreciated these components and acknowledged their values. While some participants suggested how these components lead the class towards meaningful teaching-learning, some participants emphasised more than that. They said these components are important to remind people who they are and make them feel valued in the context of teaching and learning.

#### *4.2.3 Impact on teaching of lecturers:*

The lecturers appreciated the reciprocal ways of learning from their students, from whom they have learnt a lot.

*As much as they learn from me, I learn from them the same. (Hannah, Int, 9/11/2015)*

The components of culture that are brought into the classroom by the student teachers not only increases the span of their wisdom, but also allows them opportunities to be dynamic in their teaching. The lecturers also acknowledged that these components often open the gate of reflection for them.

*These stories that we share in class makes me reflect. I now look at my power-point slides and look for other perspectives. I look for images that is representative of diversity rather prioritising one culture over the others. (Julia, Int, 18/06/2015)*

Lecturer participants declared these components more from a celebration point of view. They stated how these components also impacted on their emotional growth alongside their cognitive growth.

*Not only in the classroom, but we love to see those components [from students' culture] when we celebrate. You should come and see how our Pasifika students celebrate with the families. They bring lei, they perform haka. Everything around this changes the whole atmosphere. I can say I am grown emotionally as a teacher by coming close to these celebrations. We learn to celebrate the fine details. (Sharon, Int, 27/08/2015)*

The cultural components and their impact on lecturers in their teaching was seen from many different viewpoints. They are identified as a source of knowledge, an opportunity for reflection and, above all, a platform for cultural growth within the profession.

### ***4.3 Summary of findings***

Although the study aimed to cover a whole picture, unfortunately limited time could be spent to discuss each component at a deeper level. Therefore, the study, looked at these components from a surface level, which means each of these components could be investigated and analysed more in detail. The participants in this study made valuable comments that are summarised under thematic headings in this chapter. These themes include components of early childhood teacher education programmes, such as, biculturalism, multiculturalism, gendered majority, socio-economic status, individual identities, cross-cultural communication, comfort zone, tech culture, and spirituality. Biculturalism and multiculturalism were the most repeated components. The importance of biculturalism in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand was acknowledged. On the other hand, multiculturalism was criticised for not being covered enough in class. Respect toward diversity was taught briefly, however, the practical side of this was not covered. Spirituality, a component referred to as opposed to religious diversity, was another area where practical knowledge was missing. Comfort zone was found to be mandatory to start any kind of sharing between people. The discussion around cultural components generated a theme of co-operation, sharing, and reciprocal learning, when they were encouraged in early childhood teacher education classes. Even though classrooms were quite diverse in terms of ethnic groups, cross-cultural interactions among these groups were often arranged, and infrequently spontaneous. Interactions,

however were found to be unprompted for different age-groups. Youth culture was appreciated as that brings new dynamics into class. In terms of gender, the diversity was found to be very little. Females were in the majority both for students and lecturers and the absence of male perspectives was noted.

Increasing use of technology among students was recognised as well. Financial struggles of these students were sympathised with, but also questioned. Some participants thought people who could afford tertiary education should not be short of little costs such as printing, whereas other lecturers were more sympathetic. Individual identities in terms of personal and professional growth was revealed.

All these components were appreciated for their inner values. All participants agreed that the components of culture can empower people to share and to practice respect. These components assist the process of ako by creating opportunities to rationalise, to internalise, and to celebrate learning. The findings of this study reflect the Māori proverb ‘Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi’ which means ‘*With your basket and my basket the people will live*’. People have their own baskets of knowledge filled with the components from their own culture. Sharing these baskets make the teaching-learning more respectful, meaningful and dynamic for both student teachers and their lecturers in the early childhood teacher education programme. In the next chapter, the findings of this study will be used to develop a reflection model for the lecturers.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Overview

This chapter will explore the ideas gained from this study in the light of reviewed literature and the participants' views. The findings will also be discussed with a view to discovering a reflective model. The study set to find out commonly discussed cultural components of lecturers and learners that accompany the early childhood teacher education curriculum. Lecturers and learners from three different TEOs in Auckland expressed their opinions through interviews and FGDs. From the gathered data, several components were identified and discussed.

In the previous chapter, the components of culture revealed a distribution of individualistic, professional and contextual aspects. These components are biculturalism, multiculturalism, spirituality, gendered majority, individual identities and socio-economic concerns.

The study included interviews and FGDs of lecturers and student teachers where they discussed the classroom experiences from their own point of view. These views were probably developed by participants over time with experiences of interaction with many people in different social settings. Rosaldo (1993) explained this as the cultural force of emotions. This means the position of an individual in any setting can influence the way he/she experiences the surroundings and its happenings. In an early childhood teacher education context, it would imply that the positioning of the student learners and the lecturers in various cultural settings that they are exposed to, could influence the way they experience the teaching-learning process in the classroom.

Thus, the data gathered in this study are subjective and limited, but simultaneously eclectic. I constructed the knowledge based on the sharing of the participants. The participants explained things the way they perceived the experiences. The findings in this study can be explained as a postmodern nuance of research (Fry et al., 2009; Ratner, 2002). There is no single truth, but multiple truths co-exists among a group of people. The study here presents some of these multiple truths in the early childhood teacher education classroom. The discussions made in interviews and

FGDs were helpful to formulate general queries for the lecturers. Queries such as how the cultural components influence teaching and exploration around this from the diverse student groups can help the lecturers to reflect. A deeper understanding of ‘who I am’, ‘what I teach’ and ‘what I learn’ can be linked to the components of culture revealed in the classroom through the process of reflection.

Knowing that perspectives of culture and its components are invisible and intangible, critical reflection is important in this exploration (Sanchez & Thorp, 2008). As discussed in chapter two, lecturers can consider a number of models that analyse their actions in the classroom and suggest ways for future improvement. The reflective model that I chose to develop as a framework is the *Teaching as Inquiry* model (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008). This model appreciates perspectives of learners as well as lecturers. It includes three main categories of questions that may guide the reflection process, namely focusing queries, teaching queries and learning queries. Focusing queries ask where the learners stand in terms of wanting to learn and what is important to them. The purpose of teaching queries is to discover suitable strategies that are effective in achieving intended goals of learning. The learning queries investigate the outcome of learning in terms of the use of the acquired knowledge in work and wider social contexts. In this chapter, I used the *Teaching as Inquiry* model and formulated queries based on the findings.

## 5.2 *Findings to discuss*

Before applied to the Teaching as Inquiry model, discussion on findings will follow similar patterns as in previous chapter. Firstly, I will discuss the components of culture I could identify, following a discussion on impacts on learning and teaching (ako).

### 5.2.1 *The components in te kete mātauranga:*

As noted in chapter four, I could identify nine broad areas of cultural components in early childhood teacher education programmes from the interviews and FGDs. Some of these components were related to the socio-economic context of Aotearoa and some were related to the classroom context of teaching-learning. Biculturalism, multiculturalism, comfort zone, individual identities, cross-cultural interactions, gendered majority, socioeconomic status, spirituality, and tech culture are the major areas of cultural components, as identified in the study. In each area, there were achievements, debates, and concerns. An overview of these components reminds me of the Māori concept of te kete mātauranga (Aranui, 2007). Te kete mātauranga (the baskets of wisdom) consists of

three different baskets, namely Te kete Tuauri, Te kete Aronui and Te kete Tuatea. Te kete Tuauri is the basket that holds our whakapapa and our sense of belonging. Te kete Aronui holds the emotional aspects surrounded by the wisdom. Te Kete Tuatea gives us the survival skills while applying the wisdom in practice. Each of the identified nine areas had aspects from all three baskets from the perspectives of participating individuals.

### *5.2.2 The impacts on ako*

The components of culture were found to have positive impacts on the process of acquiring ako (Pere, 1994). The participants were also asked if the cultural components shared in the classroom have any impact on the teaching-learning process and if so what impacts. Both lecturer and student teacher participants thought these components have their own value. The impacts on student teachers were that these components empowered them to be appreciative of who they are, to become respectful and accepting, and help them to build perceptions. In the research context, it is found that less structure and control by the researcher helped participants to open up and empowered them to tell their stories (Kung, 2011). In the classroom context, similarly, student teachers feel empowered in a less structured environment where they have scope to bring themselves. The cultural components in the classroom also influenced the lecturers. The participating lecturers said that these cultural components impacted on their emotional growth alongside the cognitive growth, and provided opportunities for reciprocal learning and reflection. This central theme of reflection for educators could give focus for guiding future practice (Howard, 2003). Reflection, thus is an active and deliberate thinking process (Dewey, 1933).

## *5.3 Findings on teaching as inquiry model*

In the next section of this chapter, I will use the above-mentioned findings to formulate a logical framework of reflection model for the lecturers of early childhood teacher education. The framework will include the three types of queries under Teaching as Inquiry (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008).

### *5.3.1 Focus queries: The willing learners*

Focusing query asks who the learners are and what is important to them (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008, 2012). The concept of multiculturalism is significant in formulating focusing query. As it was defined in chapter two, multiculturalism refers to the acceptance and allowance of individuals' practices derived from their values (Durie, 2003) and/or

the demonstration and use of cultural intelligence while interacting with people (Bennett, 2015). In an early childhood teacher education classroom, there are students from all around the world, with diversity of age, experience and living. These learners have a lot to share and demonstrate what has been important to them and why. From the findings discussed in chapter four, the participants indicated that what is important to the learners are their family, their culture and their surroundings. The findings of this research encouraged the lecturers to take a deeper look into this and see if and how the early childhood teacher education contents are made relevant to these learners. The connection between the contents and the prior knowledge, experience and values of individuals is important to locate, especially in a multicultural classroom with a bicultural focus (Jenkin, 2016).

#### ***5.3.1.1 Multicultural learners and biculturalism***

An example of a very common content of early childhood teacher education in Aotearoa is the bicultural foundation of the nation. Often discussions around biculturalism and multiculturalism go hand by hand (Ball, 2012; Jenkin, 2017, 2016; Lang, 2011). An early childhood teacher Cyrus in his reflective blog (Taraporvala, 2017) described biculturalism as the first floor and multiculturalism as the second floor for the nation. He gave an example of good practice as mihimihi and questioned the way immigrant children could express their identity. He asked if these children should be driven to formulate a mihimihi blindly following the Māori way, or if they should be encouraged to express their own identity in a way that is more meaningful to them. This dilemma could be applicable to the early childhood teacher education classroom too. Lecturers can create focusing queries around this topic and see how their Māori and non-Māori learners perceive the importance of bicultural practices. Previously set out in The Practising Teacher Criteria (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007b), and recently revised in the Code of Professional Responsibility (Education Council, 2017), state that all teachers must demonstrate respect for the heritage and language of both partners of Te Tiriti, and demonstrate commitment to tangata whenua and Te Tiriti partnership in the learning environment. This is not an easy process to be achieved in a classroom where learners are from many different backgrounds, including both domestic and international students. It is helpful for the lecturers to find out what would link the learners' experience to the knowledge of the treaty (Orange, 2013; Williams et al., 2012). One lecturer participant in the study said how working in a bicultural environment where all people were appreciative of it, challenged her usual view towards the treaty.



*We kind of took it [biculturalism] for granted. As a Pākehā New Zealander I never thought of it deeply as it never affected us. The big turning point for me when I was lecturing in an institution that really fore fronted the Treaty of Waitangi, te reo Māori and tikanga Māori. ... What was fascinating to see that the students who most readily embraced that and took to that, really enjoyed it and learnt it were (...well the Māori students obviously loved it, but rather than that), often were the immigrant students who came from overseas, students who brought own language and culture with them were very responsive and really valued the opportunities to learn about the Māori worldview. ... It made me realise that those people themselves are probably in a strange situation with an unfamiliar language are being empathetic to Māori. I suppose unless you are brought into a situation where you are not entirely comfortable, you don't know what it feels like. Anyway, I learnt a lot there and now I value using te reo Māori, tikanga Māori at a different level. (Jessica, Int., 27/07/2015)*

This example shows that there is always scope for realisation for the lecturers regardless of their ethnic affiliation. Differences in perceptions towards Te Tiriti between Māori and Pākehā was reported in a research project compiled by Ako Aotearoa, Open Polytechnic and Te Tari Puna o Aotearoa (Williams et al., 2012). The report states that while Māori perceive Te Tiriti as a document that binds the Māori and Pākehā together in the land, many Pākehā sees it as “a document for Māori” (p.4).

Biculturalism and efforts of bringing the Māori pedagogy and beliefs in the world of ECE acted as the foundation for the curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (Te One, 2013). It was developed to give opportunities to every educator to connect to Ako (Pere, 1994) in her or his own way. If lecturers consider themselves as learners too, they have to realise what biculturalism means to them. An analysis of ourselves and how Te Tiriti relates can help to understand what is important to bring in and share. Biculturalism can be a process of internalising for the lecturers.

*I take inspiration from other cultures, including Māori culture. I do find that having a hybrid personal identity (European and Samoan) helps me to be curious about other cultures. That's how I truly am interested in biculturalism. (Merienne, Int, 29/06/2015)*

It is important to have awareness for the lecturers themselves in regards to how they relate to the treaty. This will help them to find ways to empower student teachers to develop links to biculturalism (Hayward, 2012; Jenkin, 2016) regardless of their ethnic orientation. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is prevalent in the early childhood teacher education curriculum. In other words, practising biculturalism has been significant

because of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Without Te Tiriti in place, there would hardly be any emphasis of te reo Māori or Māori tikanga in mainstream education (Jenkin & Broadley, 2013). Te Tiriti o Waitangi creates a distinct place for all domestic and international students studying early childhood teacher education. In class, the pupils vary from adults growing up with either a meaningful, or a tokenistic, approach towards the values of te ao Māori to adults who never heard of Māori and the Treaty previously. The focusing query for lecturers can be: to what extent the learner groups are familiar with Te Tiriti o Waitangi and how much can this familiarity vary.

### **5.3.1.2 Missing perspectives in the curriculum**

Focusing query also considers the missing elements in the curriculum, for example, the absence of male perspectives. Lecturers may need to question if absences as such mean anything to their female and male learners. One of the finding of this study was that the gendered majority are females, which is a common feature of an early childhood teacher education class. There are several pieces of research considering the place of males in ECE (Farquhar, Cablk, Butler, & Ballantyne, 2006; Friedman, 2010; Sumison, 2000). All these researchers stated that inclusion of males in the ECE centre can have a positive impact on children's learning. The participants in this study had no or little experiences of males in their classes.

*The only time I had males in class was my previous course of studies [a certificate programme on ECE]. It was quite interesting to hear their views. Also at our work placement, even when the dads come, the children look up to them. They recognise the male voices and they like it. Here [in the current class] we don't have any males. We would like to have though. I think they could bring different perspective that we are missing out. (Ayna institute, FGD, 07/03/2016)*

Lecturers of ECE, who again are mostly females, can think of this limited world absent of male perspectives and put in extra effort to include it. This could happen by inviting male lecturers or male educators as guest speakers. This is an area that student teachers, both males and females, would be interested in knowing more. Focus queries thus will lead the lecturers to discover areas not being covered by the current curriculum.

Another area participants noticed required attention was the lack of multicultural (multi-ethnic to be particular) perspectives in the handouts and reading materials. Schools in New Zealand are very much westernised, and to some scholars, very much

Eurocentric (Penn, 2010). The ECE sector is quite diverse in practice (Ball, 2012) where centres often use a child's home language in many different ways. However, the early childhood teacher education programmes, as observed by a number of participants in this study, are still very much westernised. Many of the lecturers echoed similar reflection to Julia as noted below.

*I do, for the most part, try to find resources and readings relevant to New Zealand context, because that's where we are educating them to work. Having said that a lot of the literature is European based because that's the most easily accessible stuff. The body of research from other cultures only just recently begun to emerge. (Julia, Int, 18/06/20015)*

The lecturer participants said that it is difficult to get course materials incorporating many cultures when looking for a specific concept or content. While getting a collection of multi-cultural resources may be hard, the focus queries help lecturers to be aware of this and to take proactive measures. Becoming a culturally responsive teacher is now beyond celebrating diversity, but now includes reflecting on diversity in terms of social justice and equity (Chen, Nimmo, & Fraser, 2009). This practice was not reflected by a few (two out of twelve) lecturer participants who said that they never thought of multicultural resources before. Their idea and efforts around inclusiveness were only for all people to be able to express and share. Respecting all is not sufficient even in ECE as pointed out by several researchers (Boutte, 2008; Chen et al., 2009). Teacher education programmes are surely the first source of having educators with broader ideas of inclusiveness. Few lecturer participants thought contents should be covered for achieving learning outcomes, and the multicultural representation of resources is necessary only when teaching diversity. Focus queries can be developed to see if lecturers can include information that is important to their learners. For example, while teaching partnership a deeper search will lead to find articles on partnership between Asian parents and parent-teacher relationships involving them (Guo, 2005). All groups of student participants thought the teaching around multiculturalism is limited and not sufficient to work with children and families from various ethnic groups. As teacher education is a practice-based programme (Brennan et al., 2010), it is important to equip student teachers with knowledge to a level that enables them to feel competent. At present, many educators are not proactive with diversity and an expectation of addressing sociocultural issues from an early age (children at the early childhood centres) is identified (Boutte, 2008).

### 5.3.1.3 *Struggles as students, struggles as teachers*

Even though lecturers plan their teaching based on the classroom, focus queries will lead the lecturers beyond the classroom. For example, the socio-economic status of learners and the economic trends and changes of society can limit what is important for students to learn. In early childhood teacher education, as portrayed in this study, many students have financial struggles. This might be true for every discipline of tertiary teaching as the adults spend time studying rather than working and earning money. Research from the UK shows that increasingly students in tertiary education come from families with low socio-economic status (Bowers-Brown, 2006). In New Zealand, participation in tertiary education from all ethnic groups has shown a decreasing trend from 2005 to 2015 (Education Counts, 2017). The Tertiary Education Commission has been responsible for managing equity funding to promote participation for disadvantaged ethnic and cultural groups, such as Māori, Pasifika and learners with disabilities (Tertiary Education Commission, 2017). In this context, linking topics to economy, income and workplace might be relevant in an early childhood teacher education classroom.

Culture in today's globalised world is seen as changing the way of life for many with more production at a lower cost of manpower (Frow & Morris, 2000). It means changing behaviours at workplaces or work practices. The New Zealand ECE sector also went through similar changes due to political decisions made in 2010 to reduce the requirement of qualified staff. Based on the government's change of policy, adjustments have been made to funding criteria with an expected reduction of costs for hiring qualified staff (Meade et al., 2012). Even though qualified staff can play a vital role in young children's learning and education, the changed policy requires early childhood services to have only 50% of the staff members to be qualified (Carr & Mitchell, 2012). However, this change of policy is in line with the research-based prediction that early childhood centres would struggle to meet the requirement of 100% qualified staff (88% participating services thought so in 2006, whereas 19% of the participating services thought so in 2009) (Mitchell, Meagher-Lundberg, Mara, Cubey, & Whitford, 2009). Whatever the rationale was behind this policy change, it has been criticised by educators and researchers (Carr & Mitchell, 2012; Meade et al., 2012), and by associations (New Zealand Kindergarten Inc., 2011) in spite of a budget increase of \$550 million for early childhood education in 2011. An additional increase of 386 million for operating and 35.5 million for supporting children at risk were included in the 2017 budget (Kaye, 2017). Whether these budget

increases will only support the increasing participation in early childhood education sector (Ministry of Education, 2017b), or whether they serve more, that could be discussed in early childhood teacher education classrooms.

For early childhood lecturers, to understand the socio-economic trends both for society and the sector, and for the individuals in the classroom might be of importance to link topics more to their practicums. The student teacher participants of this study showed high interest in work placements and also having a job on completion of their studies to reduce the financial difficulty they have had as students. These aspects of individuals are from the wider social-economic-cultural-political systems described as macro-system by Bronfenbrenner (1995). Therefore, lecturers can have focus queries to know what is important for students not only in terms of individual students, but also in terms of their expectations, predictions and practicality of being able to manage financial hardship.

Cultural components of early childhood teacher education, such as gendered majority, multiculturalism, and socio-economic struggles, can create opportunities to reflect on the learner's previous exposure to a topic, the gaps in the curriculum and the wider socio-economic-political aspects that surround the learners, the lecturers and the curriculum. Focus queries around these will assist the lecturers to understand their learners and to find the link between the topics and the learners. The ideas arising from focus queries can enable the lecturers to treasure unique learners in the classroom.

### *5.3.2 Teaching queries: The wondering lecturers*

The other aspect of Teaching as Inquiry model is teaching queries. Teaching queries are the quests for finding the appropriate strategies to adopt for the teaching-learning activities and experiences.

#### **5.3.2.1 Complex classroom**

In a complex classroom situation with a wide range of diversity in ethnicities, age and experiences, it is neither possible nor desired to look for a one-size-fits all approach. It is hard to measure cultural sensitivity.

*It is one thing to teach about cultural sensitivity and another thing is to be culturally responsive as an individual. I wouldn't know how responsive I am, I don't have a measure of it, you see. (Joanna, Int, 27/07/2015)*

The complexity of the early childhood teacher education programmes, the learners and their diverse ranges were discussed quite often by the participants of this study. Participants agreed with the concept of critical multiculturalism (Chan, 2011). Critical multiculturalism refers to the criticism of well-intended strategies for inclusiveness as how considering other cultures can sometime make the educators categorise these cultures from an essentialist view. Some universal traits were appreciated by all participants in this study. Trust, and building relationships are factors identified in this study.

*They share unimportant things at the beginning, but later they share more important things. They bring something from their own culture. They say how they are brought up, what they believe and so on. This happens only when the trust is built and it is not built overnight. It is built over time. I am not geared to look at it from a cultural perspective, but more from individual perspective. (Melissa, Int, 18/05/2017)*

The idea of valuing individuals in the classroom setting is now popular with researchers and educators from all around the world (Afrin, 2009; Brennan & Cotter, 2008; Eberly et al., 2007; Kantor, Elgas & Fernie, 1993; Thompson, McDonald, & Talakai, 2009). Teachers are now encouraged to understand their learners more from a socio-cultural perspective (Fry et al., 2009). It is noted that as the learning gets deeper, both the process and outcomes involved get increasingly complex (Biggs, 1999). It gets harder to find the best approach in this progressively complex scenario of learning in a diverse classroom. However, teaching queries can be used to discuss the human qualities and attributes that make the lecturers more approachable. Building relationships and trust can help lecturers understand and respect the complexity of the process of learning and growing together with their learners. A basic level of teaching query thus can raise questions on how to build a trusting relationship with such a diverse class of early childhood teacher educators with the unique personality of the lecturer.

#### **5.3.2.2 Critical approach to diversity**

Teaching queries will often go beyond the left-liberal approach, an approach where changes are to be made to progress quality and a collective responsibility is sought to enable the changes to occur (Kuang, 2011). The left-liberal approach sees diversity simply and suggests that the relationship-building and inclusion is the key (Hockings, 2010). This approach does not allow us to think about multiculturalism more critically and does not encourage the lecturers to be involved in situations where a

dilemma can be dealt with or even recognised. The criticism (Tomalin, 2007) of this approach states that teachers are not equipped with strategies to deal with the power imbalances and, therefore, often avoid a more critical approach. However, while this study supports the idea of having teaching queries around building trusting relationships, it also raises critical questions such as if the lecturers should take extra responsibility for ensuring cross-cultural interactions in class. Teaching queries can be made around practising diversity, and whether to or not to apply particular strategies in class.

The participants of this study showed differing ideas on group work and the makeup of groups. Some participants thought it is useless and also disrespectful to separate groups of pupils sitting together in class, whereas others thought lecturers have a responsibility to separate groups of people to ensure that there are plenty of cross-cultural interactions. This debate can be a teaching query for the lecturers of early childhood teacher education.

### **5.3.2.3 Future strategies**

Teaching queries should include a search for improvement for the future teaching-learning experiences. This query also can be very much multi-dimensional and lecturers can decide on areas for improvement for themselves. The student teachers who participated in this study thought useful knowledge for work or practicum situations is an area that their lecturers could improve on.

*...there are so many other aspects of culture that we do not know. In my practicum, I did not feel equipped with cultural knowledge. There were Asian, Indian and so many other children. We were taught to be respectful and inclusive and etc., but nothing more than that. Multiculturalism is a very small part of the course, but in the early childhood centres it is big. I think it would be nice to know about these other cultures. (Janala Institute, FGD, 1/07/2015)*

This could be part of the lecturer's query on how to equip their learners better for the field. Early childhood student teachers on practicum, or early educators in their work need to develop intercultural competence. Intercultural competence refers to an individuals' ability to grow a sense of other cultures (Grey, 2013).

Development theories identify six stages of intercultural competence (Bennett, 2015). The first three stages are denial, defence, and minimisation where people show ethnocentric attitudes and avoid cultural differences. The other three stages are

acceptance, adaptation, and integration where people achieve shifting mind-sets to appreciate and navigate cultural differences. Gaining and maintaining intercultural competence is an ongoing process. Early childhood teacher education classes can be the place for initiating this process. Teaching query will include thoughts on how to initiate the process.

Firstly, it is important for lecturers to identify their own values and beliefs because these are the elements that help them to decide what to ignore and what to act on (Chen et al., 2009). It is also important to understand the diverse learners and the struggles they might be having, struggles to open up, move around and even converse spontaneously with other people. The diverse learners from other cultures may have oppressive social attitudes to their own cultural identity compared to those in the mainstream (Derman-Sparks, LeeKeenan, & Nimmo, 2015). Teaching queries will lead the lecturers to discover these hidden struggles, and address these skirmishes in the teaching-learning practice.

#### **5.3.2.4 The transition**

In the early childhood teacher education context, one of the queries can also be on how to manage a smoother transition to an academic environment for all types of learners.

*Students who came here like many of us are second chance learners. Many of us are not the high achievers in school. (Janala Institute, FGD, 17/98/2015)*

Lecturers while reflecting for future improvements can also think of this aspect. A smoother transition for the diverse students they are working with can play a very important role in increasing retention and success rates. While success rates at higher levels may depend on many factors such as intentions, part-time employment, and changing tracks (Scott, 2009), lecturers might need to show inclusive attitudes for learners of different backgrounds. This was the response of one of the lecturer participants in this study.

*I would like to continue to listen to my students. Currently I am focussing on this idea that students from Māori and Pasifika students coming within from a specific cultural framework. I still struggle to know how they would have a smoother transition as a faculty student here. (Merienne, Int, 29/06/2015)*

Teaching queries (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008) for lecturers thus can vary from initial level queries on how to develop trusting relationships with the students, to critical



queries that may affect the comfort zone and power relationships in class. Teaching queries may also vary from the present practice to future improvements (Benade, 2015). A wide range of teaching queries are there for lecturers to wonder about. The main idea here for lecturers to reflect about the relationships, the curriculum, the teaching-learning practices, the course materials and the readings in terms of the wide range of diverse learners that they have in class. They have to be the wondering lecturers.

### *5.3.3 Learning queries: The wider outcomes*

Learning queries, are again, part of the reflection model teaching as inquiry. If used in terms of cultural components, learning queries will lead to questions such as what are the impacts of the cultural components that are shared in the classroom. Learning queries will let the lecturers know if they have given their best effort to get a continually growing outcome. The desired outcomes comprise benefits for individual learners, the expansion of recognising contextual surroundings, and the consideration of wider socio-cultural perspectives.

#### **5.3.3.1 Learners in the context**

Learning queries can empower students to share their contextual knowledge. Learning queries can result in inclusion, and can generate a shift from teacher-oriented to learner-oriented andragogy (the method and practice of teaching adult learners). Learning queries can reflect the values and beliefs of a wider population.

*There are particular ways of knowing that are associated with for other cultures, for Māori and Pasifika culture. As a white lady, I myself cannot know those ways as I am from another sect. I ask students to help me. ... Also, this practice helps me to be respectful, which is in line with The Treaty of Waitangi principle partnership. (Anna, Int, 30/07/2015)*

In the context of early childhood this practice is common where teachers proactively find out what the values, perspectives and needs of the diverse families are to cater for the children adequately (Mitchell et al., 2015). Mitchell et al. also notes that employment of staff from diverse ethnic backgrounds were found to be an influential factor for achieving this. Early childhood teacher education providers seemed to have more conservative staffing than the early childhood services, as reflected in the demographics of participants in this study. However, most lecturers in this study were willing to learn from other cultures.

*I suppose that [in my teaching] Western culture is probably dominant as that is who I am. You cannot deny who you are. But I try. I tell them [student teachers] it cannot be just English only anymore. We all come from different places. But now that you are asking, I can see how the course itself overall reflects my culture a lot. I would like to be aware of this I suppose. (Helen, Int, 9/11/2015)*

Dominance of European culture was also noted by student teachers too.

*Even though I see myself as NZ European, I do not think everything in New Zealand should be dominated by NZ European. In a perfect world, everything should be very diverse and there should be no domination, but that is just an idealistic view. (Durbeen Institute, FGD, 17/08/2015)*

Diversity and inclusion should incorporate the philosophy of teaching-learning and assessing in early childhood. An example of assessments being inclusive of Māori culture is the use of portfolio in early childhood (Mahuika, Berryman, & Bishop, 2011). These scholars argued that assessments for Māori students should be appropriate and important for the Māori learners. The paper also notes that in the early childhood sector, portfolios are the most commonly used assessment tool, which are inclusive of Māori ways of sharing individuals' knowledge. This paper supports the use of non-competitive assessments for Māori learners and learners from other minority groups. It says with competitive assessment tools, only European practices are encouraged, and Māori students are disadvantaged. Similar arguments were also made for the rationale behind increasing use of projects and dissertations in higher education (Fry et al., 2009). This type of assessment tool is in line with the complexity of society. Discovery learning approaches allow students to take responsibility for their learning and create opportunities for them to reflect on their own identity.

*Teaching is sharing, but I am always interested to know how they take the learning in their own world and use them in their own way. ... I always inspire them to be who they are. (Merienne, Int, 29/06/2015)*

Thus, the learning queries often will lead to reflection on not only teaching-learning, but also the surrounding and social contexts that might have invisible influence on the cultural components in the class.

### **5.3.3.2 Professional growth**

Learning queries can also be the outcomes linked to expertise achieved in the field by the learners and the lecturers. Lecturers have to ask themselves questions if they want to

continue to be open and receptive of others' opinions and values. Student teachers noted that lecturers may find difficulties at some point of their professional growth.

*They [lecturers] are experts in their own field and I can see how to open up to someone who doesn't know a thing about it [early childhood], can be difficult for some of them. (Durbeen Institute, FGD, 17/08/2015)*

This can be true for the experienced lecturers who are often engaged in many areas of scholarship. If there is no time allocated for reflection, it is hard to continue to be open to other's opinions. It is assumed that each lecturer has their teaching philosophy, but writing it down creates scope for reflection and allows thoughts to take place (Luppertz, Himmel, Ouehrani, & Winzker, 2016). Lecturers have to be aware that the traditional focus on teaching is now moving toward the focus on learning. This paradigm shift requires lecturers to have knowledge and reflection on the didactics of higher education as well as the exchange of expertise in teaching.

### **5.3.3.3 Outcomes for the community**

The purpose of learning queries is to find out results that are desired by not only the individuals but the communities behind the individuals within the class. Lecturers can have these queries to ensure that they create not only a sense of belonging, but also a feeling of empowerment for the diverse learners in the classroom. A search for culturally and socially mediated identity is common for learners in higher education (Kasworm, 2005). Learning queries for lecturers will encourage the student teachers to find out their position within the comprehensive socio-economic-political context. Lecturers must be aware of the outcomes the student teachers will gain from the class and use in the community. These outcomes, resulting from the open sharing between people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, are the wider outcomes.

The queries that are stated here can be extended to an infinite number. The more I tried to ask these queries, the more I could feel the depth of the upcoming quest, for me and for all conscious lecturers. At this stage, I am having the same feeling as Palmer (1990) states he has about writing his books. When I am the author (of this thesis), it is easy for the readers to have the misunderstanding that I am an expert on the topic. The truth is quite the contrary. The more I write, and now heading towards the conclusion, the more I feel naïve in the field. I feel I am still struggling to know the topic. I am hoping both

writing and reading of this thesis will clarify my own ideas and thoughts in a systematic way.

#### 5.4 The model

Using the data I have gathered in this study I developed a model, which lecturers can use and edit to suit their teaching and learning.

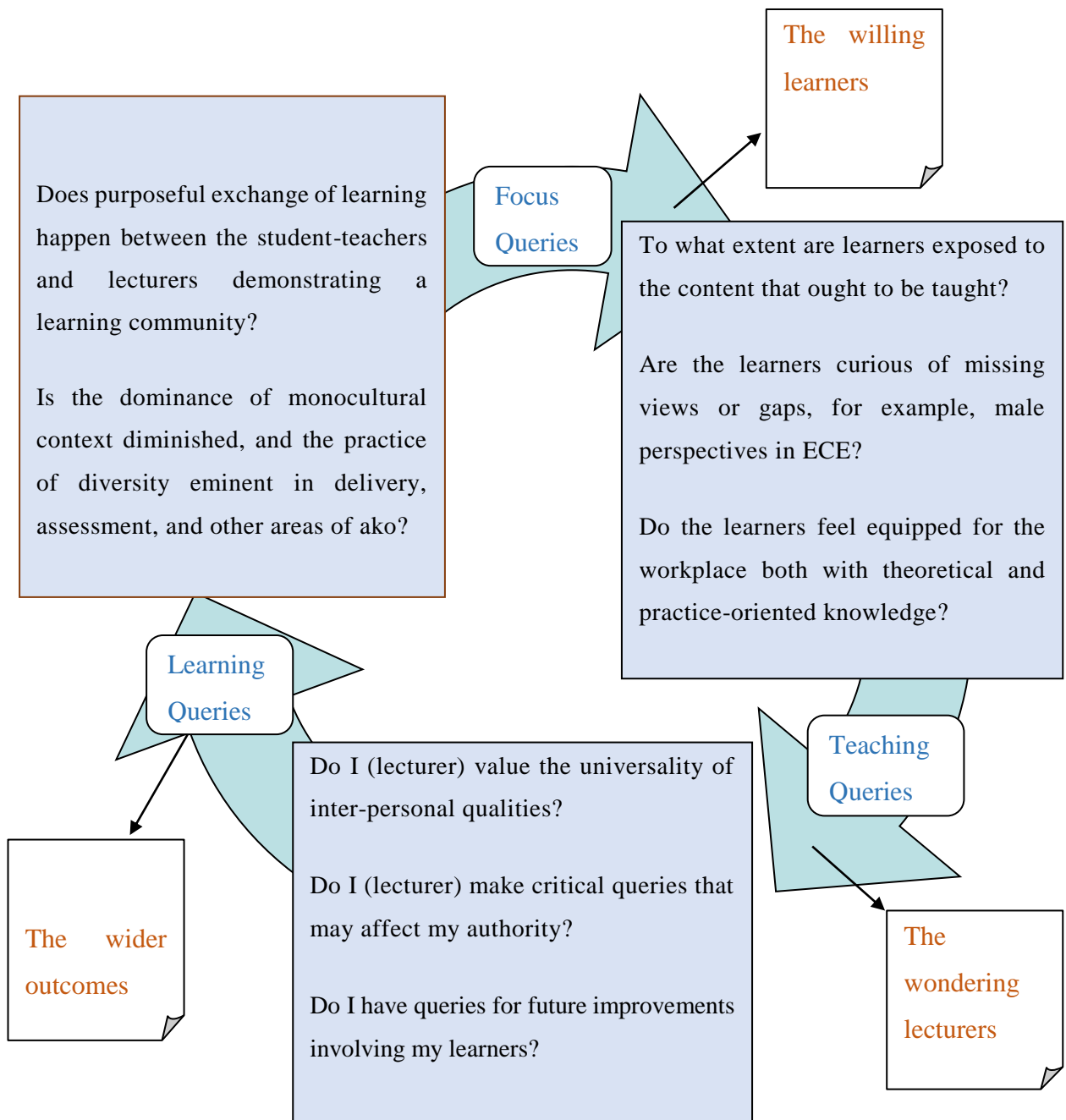


Figure 5.1. Queries of reflection

## ***5.5 Summary***

This chapter presents the data gathered in this study while incorporating relevant literature. The components of culture that were identified in previous chapters dominate the discussion. Biculturalism, multiculturalism, gendered majority, socioeconomic status, and workplace requirements were used to formulate queries. A specific model of reflection, Teaching as Inquiry (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008), was used to guide the analysis. The reflection model is useful for lecturers to think about their learners and various standpoints these learners are at. The model then encourages the lecturers to reflect on themselves and question their practice. Lastly, the developed model encourages lecturers to look for signs that show the outcomes of the teaching-learning, in the classroom and in the community. In the next chapter, I will deliberate the possibilities of the model that I have developed in here, for the lecturers, student teachers and researchers. The following chapter will present the conclusions for this study and consider future possibilities for research

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Overview:

The chapter provides an overview of the research with the research goals and questions. While discussing the whole process, I will present a conclusion from my research journey. Based on the strengths and limitations of this thesis, I will discuss possibilities of further research. Finally, I will also reflect on my realisations from the study.

### 6.2 Reviewing research goals:

This research was a result of my nine years' experience as an early childhood teacher educator. Teaching is a remarkable profession that brings a sense of satisfaction, and simultaneously, generates confusion and queries. This study, like other studies, was set to find out answers to certain queries. I wanted to know if the components of cultures that I noticed in the classroom are normally noticed, observed and celebrated by others in the sector. From this curiosity, I set three research questions based on the cultural components of early childhood teacher education programmes. These questions are:

- What are the commonly discussed cultural components in early childhood teacher education programmes?
- What impact do these components have on student teachers in terms of learning?
- What impact do these components have on lecturers in terms of reflective teaching?

To briefly answer these questions here, the components of culture in an early childhood teacher education class could be located in nine broad areas, namely: biculturalism, multiculturalism, individual identities, cross cultural interactions, comfort zone, spirituality, gendered majority, socioeconomic struggles and tech culture. These components are believed to have empowering impacts on learning, and developing impacts on teaching.

### 6.3 Revisiting research methods

The theoretical framework that guided the research was underpinned by socio-cultural theories, where interactions between people are of immense value in terms of learning and growing in a cultural context (Vygotsky, 1986) and also the wider systems around the individuals are seen as influential factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These ideas of a socio-cultural framework allowed me to decide on my research design, methodology and tools.

I decided to embark on the journey of a qualitative study that would find participating peoples' experiences of teaching and learning. Once the ethics approval for data collection was granted, I looked for a list of tertiary education organisations in Auckland, New Zealand who provide early childhood teacher education programmes. Amongst the 20 providers that I could identify (Ministry of Education, 2014), I selected the Auckland area for convenience and initially approached TEOs in Auckland, totalling seven that had no conflict of interests for me. Among the seven TEOs I contacted, only three responded back and wanted to participate in this research. Thus, the lecturers and student teachers of these three TEOs became the participants of this research. I invited them to participate in the research and 28 of them did. 12 of them were lecturers equally distributed in the three TEOs and 16 of them were the student teachers unevenly distributed in the three TEOs. I used semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions to gather detailed qualitative data from these participants.

#### ***6.4 The strategies:***

The strategy that I found most effective was to have an ongoing approach to the review of literature and formulation of the thesis. I researched many definitions of culture and reflected on them as a preparation for this research. I kept up with my readings which helped me to keep writing while waiting for the next step to take place. Also, writing and rewriting every section was exhausting, but also interesting. I could make sense only by re-organising what I had written. I also learnt that research is very much dependent on participants' availability of time. I realised that data are nothing but bits and pieces of information from the environment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) that are usually unnoticed, but has noteworthy value when put into a research context. Both retrospective and prospective approaches (Hayes, 2010) were used.

#### ***6.5 Research contribution***

The research is significant for the particular area of early childhood teacher education. There are very limited numbers of research projects carried out on early childhood teacher education programmes. A specific study in this field was on implementing a bicultural curriculum and equipping student teachers with bicultural knowledge and commitment (Jenkin, 2016). Some of the previous research focused on student's work placement experiences (Meade et al., 2012) whereas, some had a focus on male participation in early childhood education (Farquhar et al., 2006). Earlier research reflected smatterings of cultural components, but the study I have conducted is much more comprehensive and

draws a bigger picture. In addition, this thesis also contributes to the knowledge of teacher education programmes in terms of cultural experiences that take place between the lecturers and student teachers.

The study is also significant in terms of current research in the context of culture and diversity. Culture and diversity is a very common research topic (Bennett, 2004; Eberly et al., 2007; Grey, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2006) and each study in this area is significant as each show the trend of transformation of the definition of culture. For example, in my study, technology was one of the cultural components, which might not be so, if I had done this study a few years earlier.

Biculturalism is an area where a number of research studies have been conducted (Mahuika et al., 2011; Durie, 2003; Hayward, 2012; Jenkin, 2017, 2016, 2010; Ritchie, 2003). This study, acknowledges the bicultural context of Aotearoa. It shows how biculturalism, emerging from Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Moon, 2013; Orange, 2013; Wilson, 2002), has an influence on curriculum and its contents. The study, thus, adds a contribution to the literature related to incorporating te reo and tikanga in practice.

In terms of literature regarding the teacher's role, reflection and professional growth (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2011; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Smith, Anderson, & Blanch, 2016; Warren, 2013), this study is significant. Beginning teachers have struggled to shape their professional identity from being a student teacher to becoming a teacher (Smith et al., 2016). That is why, it is appropriate to look into the programmes that educate the teachers and prepare them for the workforce. Teachers often ask questions about their role in terms of changes taking place around them (Warren, 2013). This study will help lecturers with this process of asking questions in relation to culture and education.

## ***6.6 Notes on findings:***

The findings that emerged in this study represent a wide range of ideas. Some of the components such as biculturalism and multiculturalism were obvious, but some were formed gradually from the conversations that took place. Individual identities and spirituality are examples of such findings.

A further reflection about my findings were how things were perceived differently by the participants. I listened to the tapes of each interview and FGD several times to transcribe the data. I found similar themes noted by participants, were sometimes from the same angle and sometimes from a totally different outlook. For example, comfort zone and



small groups were discussed by all participants. Some of the lecturers thought students may not like to have enforced sitting arrangements, but student groups said they liked to move around, and mix and mingle.

I used themes that emerged from the study to summarise the findings. The findings were quite broad. They raised issues rather than solutions. The study showed discussion around biculturalism and multiculturalism and portrayed how conflicts can be seen between the significance of one against the imperatives of the other. The findings also incorporated the teacher's dilemma on whether to enforce cross-cultural group work in the classroom or to respect of individual student's preferences.

### ***6.7 Implications of the study:***

I believe these findings will be helpful for lecturers of early childhood teacher education programmes to stimulate reflective thinking. It will also interest people working with adult learners in other fields of education. Educators, lecturers, kaiako of any field of education who would like to think more about culture, will be informed by this study. Others may be able to relate their own situations to those of the participants of this study. This study can also add to the knowledge of early childhood centre supervisors, managers and teachers. Researchers whose research interests involve culture in education, professional growth and/or reflective practices will be interested to look at the findings of this study.

### ***6.8 Strengths and limitations of the study:***

The study is very meaningful to the specific field of teacher education where adults are educated to become early childhood educators themselves. The study here reflects thoughts of 28 participants involved in this area. It achieved the purpose that it set out to. From the findings, I was able to develop a model that is a re-usable reflective framework for lecturers of early childhood teacher education. The model is designed to encourage critical reflections and debate about the key themes.

The study also has a number of limitations which are discussed in here. The study here finds out an overall depiction of nine broad areas that arise from the culture of the classroom, but none of these components were discussed in detail. For each component, many more questions came across my mind that I did not get time to ask. Also, because the study was located in Auckland, there may be limitations in terms of generalisations relating to or influenced by geographic orientation of TEOs.

The study discusses similar and different viewpoints of lecturers and student teachers. However, this discussion does not help us to understand why there are differences between these two groups of people participating in class. The study was not intended to find out different perceptions of lecturers and student teachers. If that were intended, the different viewpoints shared by the lecturers and the student teachers would be investigated more.

### ***6.9 Recommendations and future research:***

The findings of the study lead to a number of suggestions for the curriculum developers to incorporate the possibilities of emerging cultural components in class. These possibilities could be embedded in readings, lesson plans, assessments, and resources used for the programmes.

The discussion around the components of culture suggest that the lecturers should be involved in ongoing reflection processes to know where their learners stand in relation to the topic to be taught, what strategies suit these learners and what outcomes are achieved when the teaching happens in this way. The student teachers could also have reflective thoughts on what helps them in empowering their own learning. They can identify cultural factors that speed up the process of *ako* (Pere, 1994) for them.

Further research can also be done to find out the reasons for differences between the opinions of two sets of people in the classroom, the lecturers and the student teachers.

The study produced a model based on Teaching as Inquiry (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008) as a framework for the lecturers. Further research can be done to show how this model can be adopted by different lecturers of early childhood teacher education. Possible studies can find out the challenges the lecturers may face. Reflective research can critically analyse the practicality of the model. The challenges can be realistically assessed by conducting research where a number of lecturers participate and use the suggested model for the purpose of self-reflection. This will also be an area of research interest that I personally would like to pursue in future.

### ***6.10 Personal contention***

I was not content as a researcher and a writer of this thesis at the beginning. Writing the conclusion was challenging as I almost finished with this thesis, but still had feelings of not quite being there yet. One personal experience changed my mind and outlook about

my own study. At a friend's get together, I casually mentioned one of the findings from my research. A long, very active session of debate followed. The people present were all young professionals, in different fields of education and industry. I was amazed to see these people's fascination and interest in arguing and expressing their opinions on culturally related issues. This made me realise that the study might have some powerful messages at least to initiate debate. I would like to note a bangla saying here: "bishashe milai bostu, torke bohudur", which implies that you may argue and debate, but you must believe to achieve what you want. As an early childhood teacher educator, we should be active in our thinking so that we form and reform a statement of philosophy that we truly believe in. The study has helped me to believe that the stories shared in class have significant values that contribute in my learning and the learning of the students in my class. These stories represent my culture, uphold the values of Aotearoa culture, and reflect the many cultures of my learners. I feel more grounded in this belief, which I would like to challenge and explore in my future practice.

*GLOSSARY (MĀORI KUPU)*

Ako	Teaching and learning
Hapu	Subtribe
Kaiako	Teacher
Kaiwhakāko	Teacher/coach/instructor/lecturer
Kaiwhakangungu	Defender or trainer, used as instructor/lecturer
Karakia	Prayer
Kaupapa	Philosophy
Iwi	Tribe
Māori	Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand
Marae	Meeting house of Māori tribes
Mihi	Greetings
Mihimihi	Introduction
Naku te rourou nau	With your basket and my basket,
Pōwhiri	To welcome
Te rourou ka ora ai te iwi	The people will thrive
Pākehā	European settlers in Aotearoa
Tagata whenua	People of the land
Tamariki	Children
Tātaiako	Cultural competencies for teachers
Te reo	The language
Tikanga	Customs

Tiriti	Treaty
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi
Te Whāriki	The early childhood curriculum of New Zealand: means the woven mat
Ui mai ki ahau,	If you were to ask me
He aha te mea nui o te Ao?	What is the most important thing in the world?
Māku e kī atu,	I would reply.
He tangata he tangata, he tangata.	‘It is people, it is people, it is people.’
Waiata	Songs/chants
Wānanga	School
Whāriki	Woven mat

#### *GLOSSARY (BANGLA SHOBDO)*

Abbu	Father
Ammu	Mother
Ayna	Mirror (metaphoric use in this study)
Durbeen	Microscope (metaphoric use in this study)
Bangla	Language of Bangladesh
Bishashe milai bostu, torke bohudur	Debate, but believe to achieve
Janala	Window (metaphoric use in this study)
Shesh hoiao hoilo na shesh	Quotation from Tagore’s literature
Shobdo	Word

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL



10 March 2015

Chris Jenkin

Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Chris

Ethics Application: **15/48 Cultural components of early childhood teacher education programmes: Reflection for lecturers**

Thank you for submitting your application for ethical review. I am pleased to confirm that the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECSecretariat) has approved your ethics application for three years until 9 March 2018.

AUTECSecretariat would like to commend the researchers on the quality of their application.

AUTECSecretariat reminds the researchers that the advertisement will require the AUT logo and recommends that the title on the invitation for research participation be checked.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTECSecretariat:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 9 March 2018;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 9 March 2018 or on completion of the project;

It is a condition of approval that AUTECSecretariat is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTECSecretariat approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, we ask that you use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz).

All the very best with your research,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K O'Connor', written in a cursive style.

Kate O'Connor

Executive Secretary

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Tahera Afrin [tahera@icl.ac.nz](mailto:tahera@icl.ac.nz)

Date Information Sheet Produced: 20 October 2014



### **Project Title**

*Cultural components of early childhood teacher education programmes: Reflection for lecturers*

### **An Invitation**

Tēnā koe,

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, which allows me to introduce myself and provide information about the research project I am involved in. My name is Tahera Afrin. I am a student of AUT for the programme of Master of Philosophy (MPhil). I am also a lecturer and programme co-ordinator in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) department in a private training establishment.

As an ECE professional, I am interested in discovering how the cultural components are being used in the classroom and to what extent these are considered by the lecturers and students. This query inspired me to plan a qualitative study involving lecturers and student teachers of early childhood (EC) teacher education programmes. I would like to invite lecturers of the EC teacher education programmes to take part in this research who would be happy to share their classroom experiences. I believe this sharing will identify the cultural components of your teaching and will discuss the possible impacts on teaching-learning process. I also believe that the findings will help the wider ECE community to know and reflect on their practices.

As a lecturer participant, you will have a 30-45 minutes one-to-one interview session with me. Your participation will have no possible conflict of interests because the study involves no comparison between organisations or stakeholders. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection.

I ensure that I will have an open two-way approach throughout the research project so that you feel comfortable as a participant of this project.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

In this study, cultural components of early childhood teacher education classroom refers to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and biculturalism in New Zealand, along with childhood and home experiences shared by the learners (student teachers) and the lecturers. Cultural components also includes your own and other cultures; and incorporates significant people, time, events, and festivals that relate to the topic. The study will aim at exploring these components. This investigation is to help the lecturers to reflect on their teaching practice. The study has the purpose of promoting learning of the ECE learners (student teachers), and advancing inclusive teaching of the ECE lecturers.

Thus, the purpose of the research is to contribute knowledge in the field of early childhood teacher education programmes. Once complete, I would like to present the information to seminars organised locally and, if possible internationally. I would also like to write and publish at least one article. Your participation in this study will help me doing so.

### **How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

You were identified for this research through the professional networks of mine or my supervisor's. In your organisation's newsletter it was advertised by ..... (name, programme co-ordinator, ECE). I would like to recruit four lecturers from the Early Childhood Education department of your organisation. All volunteers will be notified by writing regarding their participation. I will inform if you are the selected participant or not and why.

### **What will happen in this research?**

The project is to collect data from lecturers and also from student teachers of EC teacher education programmes. The ways the lecturers will be involved in this project are kanohi ki te kanohi or face to face interviews. The questions in the interviews will focus on how components of culture get included in classroom experiences and to what extent this influences teaching and learning.

When you contact me, we will arrange for an interview at a time that suits you. The interview will take 30-45 minutes of your time. We will negotiate where you would like to have the interview. This will preferably be a pre-booked AUT research room, or a pre-booked room in your organisation or any other suitable place you suggest.

Once the data is collected and transcribed, you will be sent a copy to check the accuracy and suggest for any issues that may cause you any discomfort. I will allow you time to give me feedback. All concerns will be mutually resolved, where possible, before the data analysis begins. If you wish to receive a summary of the findings at the end of the research project, I will arrange a copy to be forwarded to you.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

It is unlikely to face any discomforts. The participants can choose not to answer a particular question if they want to.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

You will be introduced to the research project before the interview starts. Your consent will be sought prior to starting. You will be informed of your rights as a participant. You may choose not to answer a particular question. You also may request to stop the interview at any time. If required, you may also get the advice from an intermediary, such as my supervisor.

### **What are the benefits?**

The research will benefit you by creating a scope for reflective thinking on the teaching-learning process in your classroom and thereby may increase your understanding of cultural engagement with your students.

The wider community of early childhood may also get the benefit from the presentation/s and publication/s from the research as the findings will be available publicly to be used for scholarly purposes.

The research will also help me to achieve the degree Master of Philosophy (MPhil) from the Auckland University of Technology.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

You will not be anonymous to me as we will have face to face session of discussion. However, your confidentiality will be maintained if you want. In the first draft of transcript, your real name will be used. However, later a pseudonym will replace your name if you wish. I do understand that some participants may want to be known by their real names. If this is true for you, you will be able to let me know by ticking a box in the consent form. However, once you have viewed the transcript you can change your mind to use your real name or a pseudonym.

All hard copies will be kept in a locked cabinet for minimum six years and thereafter will be destroyed consistent with the AUTECH protocols. Electronic copies will be kept in password protected files.

### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The research will cost your time as indicated earlier. You will have minimal or no transport costs to reach to the mutually agreed venue.

### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

I will appreciate contacting me within 2 weeks (14 days) if you would like to accept the invitation to participate. Please provide me with your preferred contact details so that I contact you back to discuss options related to time and venue.

### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

You will sign a consent form prior to participating in interview. If you would like to get a copy sooner than that, you can let me know through e-mail.

### **Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

You will receive a summary of the findings to your preferred e-mail address once the research is complete. The thesis will be available in the AUT library and I will let you know when its availability in the library is confirmed.

### **What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr. Chris Jenkin, [chris.jenkin@aut.ac.nz](mailto:chris.jenkin@aut.ac.nz), + 64 9 921 9999 ext 7911.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), +64 9 921 9999 ext 6038.

### **Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

#### *Researcher Contact Details:*

Tahera Afrin, Student, AUT;  
Programme co-ordinator (ECE), ICL Business School, 2 Chancery St., Auckland.  
Phone +64 22631 4026, E-mail: [fqd2359@aut.ac.nz](mailto:fqd2359@aut.ac.nz)

#### *Project Supervisor Contact Details:*

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Physical Address: Room AR303, School of Education, AUT North Shore Campus  
90 Akoranga Drive, Northcote, Auckland 0627.

Postal Address: School of Education, AUT North Shore Campus

Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142.

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10 March,2015**  
**AUTEC Reference number *15/48*.**



## APPENDIX C: PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET (STUDENT TEACHERS)

Date Information Sheet Produced: 20 October 2014

**Project Title**

Cultural components of early childhood teacher education programmes: Reflection for lecturers

**An Invitation**

Tēnā koe,

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, which allows me to introduce myself and provide information about the research project in which I am involved. My name is Tahera Afrin. I am a student of AUT for the programme of Master of Philosophy (MPhil). I am also a lecturer and programme co-ordinator in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) department in a private training establishment.

As an ECE professional, I am interested in discovering how cultural components are being used in classroom and to what extent these are considered by the lecturers and by students. This query inspired me to plan a qualitative study involving lecturers and student teachers of early childhood (EC) teacher education programmes. I would like to invite you as a student teacher in an EC teacher education programmes to take part in this research if you would be happy to share your classroom experiences. I believe this sharing will identify the cultural components of your learning and will discuss the possible impacts on the teaching-learning process you experience. I also believe that the findings will help the wider ECE community to know and reflect on their practices.

Even though the sample size I will be working with is small for this study, I would like to have a cross-sectional representation of gender, experience and ethnicity.

As a student teacher participant, you will have 45-50 minutes of Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with 8-10 people in the group. The FGD will be facilitated by me. Your participation will have no possible conflict of interests because the study involves no comparison between organisations or stakeholders. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection.

I will ensure that I will have an open two-way approach throughout the research project so that you feel comfortable as a participant of this project.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

In this study, cultural components of early childhood teacher education classroom refers to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and biculturalism in New Zealand, along with childhood and home experiences shared by the learners (student teachers) and the lecturers. Cultural components also include discussion of your own and others cultures; and may incorporate significant people, time, events, and festivals that relate to the topic. The study will explore these components. This investigation is to help lecturers to reflect on their teaching practice. The study has the purpose of promoting learning of the ECE learners (student teachers), and advancing inclusive teaching of the ECE lecturers.

Thus, the purpose of the research is to contribute knowledge in the field of early childhood teacher education programmes. Once complete, I would like to present the information to seminars organised locally and, if possible internationally. I would also like to write and publish at least one article. Your participation in this study will help me doing so.

### **How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

You were identified for this research through the professional networks of mine or my supervisor's. In your organisation's newsletter it was advertised by nominated person from the institute you are studying with. I want to recruit 8-10 student teachers studying at the Early Childhood Education department. You can be at any level of your studies to participate in this research, i.e. first year, 2nd year, 3rd year or equivalent.

Should I receive interest from more than the number of participants required, I will select 8-10 to have a representative cross-sectional sample of gender, experience and ethnicity. All volunteers will be notified in writing regarding their participation. I will inform if you are the selected participant or not and why.

### **What will happen in this research?**

The project is to collect data from student teachers and also from lecturers of EC teacher education programmes. The ways the student teachers will be involved in this project are Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). The discussion points in the FGDs will focus on how components of culture get included in classroom experiences and to what extent this influence teaching and learning.

I will contact each of the willing student teacher participants to know the preferred time that suits her/him. At the end, a time will be chosen for the FGD that accommodates most people in the group. The FGD will take 45-50 minutes of your time. We will negotiate where you would like to have the interview. This will preferably be a pre-booked AUT research room, or a pre-booked room in your organisation or any other suitable place you suggest.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

It is unlikely to face any discomforts. The participants can choose not to answer a particular question if they want to.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

You will be introduced to the research project before the interview starts. Your consent will be sought prior to starting. You will be informed of your rights as a participant. You may choose not to answer a particular question. If required, you may also get the advice from an intermediary, such as my supervisor.

### **What are the benefits?**

The research could benefit you by creating a scope for lecturers' reflective thinking on the teaching-learning process in early childhood classrooms and thereby may increase more engagement of cultural aspects.

The wider community of early childhood may also get the benefit from the presentation/s and publication/s from the research as the findings will be available publicly to be used for scholarly purposes.

The research will also help me to achieve the degree 'Master of Philosophy (MPhil)' from the Auckland University of Technology.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

You will not be anonymous to me as we will have face to face session of discussion. Also, as you will be participating in a focused group discussion (FGD), you will be known by the other participants. I would ask you to keep the information confidential within the group.

All hard copies of the transcripts of FGD will be kept in a locked cabinet for minimum six years and thereafter will be destroyed following the AUTECH protocol and electronic copies will be kept in password protected files.

### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The research will cost your time as indicated earlier. You will have minimal or no transport costs to reach to the mutually agreed venue.

### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

I will appreciate contacting me within a 2 weeks (14 days) if you would like to accept the invitation to participate. Please provide me with your preferred contact details so that I contact you back to discuss options related to time and venue.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You will sign a consent form prior to participating in FGD. If you would like to get a copy sooner than that, you can let me know.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will receive a summary of the findings to your preferred e-mail address once the research is complete. The thesis will be available in the AUT library and I will let you know when its availability in the library is confirmed.

### **What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr. Chris Jenkin, [chris.jenkin@aut.ac.nz](mailto:chris.jenkin@aut.ac.nz), + 64 9 921 9999 ext 7911.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), +64 9 921 9999 ext 6038.

### **Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

#### ***Researcher Contact Details:***

Tahera Afrin, Student, AUT;

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10 March 2015, AUTECH Reference number 15/48.

## APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM (INTERVIEWS)



*Project title: Cultural components of early childhood teacher education programmes:*

**Reflection for lecturers**

*Project Supervisor: Dr Chris Jenkin*

*Researcher: Tahera Afrin*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 20 October 2014.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:..... Date: .....

Participant's name:.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate)

.....

*Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10 March 2015 AUTEK Reference number 15/48*

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM (FOCUS GROUPS)



*Project title: Cultural components of early childhood teacher education programmes:*

**Reflection for lecturers**

*Project Supervisor: Dr Chris Jenkin*

*Researcher: Tahera Afrin*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 20 October 2014.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, the relevant information about myself including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will not be used.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate) :

Date:

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10 March 2015 AUTEK Reference number 15/48***

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## APPENDIX F: - INDICATIVE QUESTIONS (INTERVIEWS)

1. How do you define yourself as who you are?
2. Who are your students as cultural group?  
(Ethnicities, language, gender, age, religion, SES)
3. While planning the lessons/session, what components of culture do you consider?  
How do you bring yourself and your students in your teaching?
4. While delivering the lessons/session, what components of the learners' culture do you experience in your classroom?
5. What are your experiences in relation to teaching Biculturalism?
6. While delivering the lesson/session, what components of your own culture do you bring in your classroom?
7. Do you use cultural artefacts in class, such as Waiata/exp./music/stories?
8. How much of cross-cultural interactions takes place in your class?
9. Do the cultural components discussed above have impact on the way your learners learn?
10. Do these components have any impact on the way you teach?
11. What more could you do to improve your teaching aligned with cultural components?
12. Would you like to add anything else?



## APPENDIX G: - INDICATIVE QUESTIONS (FGDs)

1. How do you define who you are?
2. How do you see your lecturers as a group?
3. What components of culture are brought into classroom by you and your lecturer?
4. What do you consider important cultural components in the teaching-learning activities in the classroom?
5. How or to what extent, the components of your culture gets added in the classroom?
6. How or to what extent, the components of the lecturers' culture gets added in the classroom?
7. What impact do these components have on your learning?
8. What impact do these components have on your lecturers?
9. How do you suggest these cultural components should be used to optimise your learning?