

**A critical analysis of implications of inclusive education provisions for
initial teacher education (ITE) programme content and its possible
effects on inclusive primary school teaching in the context of Aotearoa
New Zealand**

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Abstract

This research study is centred around the ways inclusive education policies frame inclusive education content within initial teacher education (ITE) programmes for inclusive primary teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. The study also examines the extent to which policy is evident beyond itself as a document in the community.

The concept of inclusive education is preceded by special needs education, a concept that focuses on individual students and their deficits rather than recognising all learners as part of the same learning community. The development of inclusive education as a concept has its roots in human rights movements and legislative changes worldwide. These movements and international policies influence the New Zealand inclusive education policy environment. Aotearoa New Zealand has been responsive to the implementation of inclusive education at policy level; however, discrepancies are found between policy intention and policy implementation. The study was framed by social constructionism and structuration theory as conceptual frameworks. The conceptual frameworks enabled the examination of structure-agency relationship between policy, ITE providers, and teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. The study used critical content analysis as a method for the policy analysis and found that both the *special needs education* and *inclusive education* concepts are still circulating in policy documents today, often interchangeably.

The critical content analysis revealed that language use affects the extent inclusion is evident in ITE programme content and teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. The often interchangeable nature of referring to *inclusive education* as *special needs education* creates confusion and contributes to policy intention not aligning with policy implementation at ITE provider and school levels. Policies released by the New Zealand government were found to align more with the historical *special needs education* initiatives, whereas Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand policies and their ITE programme development guidelines were more in-line with international concepts of *inclusive education* in terms of language use. Both concepts were evident, often interchangeably, in paper descriptors and in evidence of inclusive education policy beyond the documents, such as in an Education Review Office (ERO) report and news media.

As *special needs education* terminology is still evident in policy documents, the concept of *inclusive education* has not been fully achieved. The term *special needs education* is used as a

replacement for the word and concept of *inclusion* and *inclusive education* despite the difference in meaning between the two terms.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best part 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 accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or institution of higher learning.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Inclusive education in Aotearoa New Zealand is guided by policy documents that encourage the development of an inclusive learning community at school (Ministry of Education, 2021c; Te Kete Ipurangi, n.d.-a). Policies represent processes outlined by structuring organisations, such as governments, to be implemented in society and at community levels through the agency and interpretations of smaller organisations that use them in their particular contexts (Ball, 1993). There is not one policy that frames ITE programme content for inclusion and inclusive teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. This research study assembled a number of inclusive education policies to see to what extent their structuring properties influence the agency ITE providers use to develop ITE programmes with inclusive education content. Agency here refers to ITE providers interpreting policy documents and implementing their intention into ITE programmes. This consequently affects inclusive teaching practices at school levels.

The official view of inclusive education encompasses learners being accepted, visible, and active members of the learning community with teachers possessing a high level of skills, knowledge, and strategies to enhance the learning of all students (Ministry of Education, 2021c; Te Kete Ipurangi, n.d.-a). Language use in policies in Aotearoa New Zealand indicates that every learner can make valuable contributions to society; therefore inclusive education is seen as an opportunity to remove barriers, and support a respectful and belonging learning environment at school (Ministry of Education, 2021c; Te Kete Ipurangi, n.d.-b). Following the Ministry of Education, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (2022) acknowledges that ITE programmes are essential for newly qualified teachers to have sufficient skills and knowledge so that they can be successful in their first teaching role and have the ability to adapt their practice to meet challenges arising from inclusive education. There is evidence that the number of learners with diverse learning and behavioural needs is increasing; therefore teachers need to have the ability to support all learners with all abilities in the classroom (The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2022).

The term *inclusion* is interpreted differently and often used interchangeably with the term *special education*. This difference in interpretation and the interchangeable nature of the terms poses a challenge in understanding their meaning and their usage in context. This study examines how these two terms are used in and beyond policy documents to understand where the confusion lies. Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin (2019) define inclusion and special education as follows:

“Inclusion refers to recognising all students as learners and places a responsibility on all teachers to learn with and from their students and their families/whānau. Students are recognised as present, participating, and belonging in their local schools. Teachers have a responsibility to recognise the variety of ways that students learn and demonstrate knowledge” (p. 205).

“Special education may be interpreted as having a focus on the individual student ... with identified learning needs according to the criteria set by a governing body such as the Ministry of Education. These criteria are usually recognised as a checklist for accessing funding, but they may also determine education opportunities for specific groups of students” (p. 205).

When teachers focus on individual students with their individual deficits, they may struggle to support students within the New Zealand Curriculum and look for alternate ways of teaching students with diverse needs (Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin, 2019). Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin (2019) acknowledge this is an important consideration in policy and teaching practices to recognise the difference between not only the terminology used but also teachers’ attitudes to teaching and learning. This research study extends on this view by examining not only the terminology and the policy documents but also the effect of inclusion policies in the wider community. The experiences of families in new media articles indicate the challenges learners and families face when navigating the difference between inclusive and special education and the resources available to support them.

This research study focuses on examining inclusive educational policy documents framing ITE programme content and inclusive primary teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. The critical policy analysis, incorporating critical content analysis, examines the extent inclusion is evident in policy documents, and it looks at the relationship between policy and ITE programme development guidelines, ITE programme offerings, and paper descriptors. The evidence of inclusion and the policy relationship to ITE programme development and content are extended by findings on inclusive teaching practices in primary schools through an Education Review Office (ERO) report, Ministry of Education and Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) websites, and news media articles. The purpose of the study is to examine the language of inclusive education policy documents released by the New Zealand government and the way they frame subsequent policies at Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand and ITE provider levels. The study also

extends beyond the policy documents themselves and examines inclusive education evidence in the wider community.

Rationale for the Study

All mainstream educators in Aotearoa New Zealand are required to work in inclusive learning environments and rely on their initial teacher education to prepare them for the everyday skills, knowledge, and practices they may need at the beginning of their teaching career, and later on. International research indicates teachers may feel incapable, unskilled, and lacking in knowledge working in inclusive learning environments (Avissar et al., 2016; Bentley-Williams et al., 2017; Gavish, 2017; Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin, 2019; Shani & Hebel, 2016; Zagona et al., 2017) even though they are considered to be key in facilitating inclusive learning environments (McGrath et al., 2019; Robinson, 2019; Tirri & Laine, 2019, van Tartwijk et al., 2019). In New Zealand, Benade (2019), Carrington et al. (2012), and Kecskemeti and Hamilton (2019) indicate that inclusion can only be successful if teachers are educated appropriately to work with students with diverse needs in their learning environments without students having to suffer low quality pedagogical practices that fail to meet their learning and developmental needs. This research study aims to understand how the interpretation and implementation of inclusive education policy contributes to inclusive teaching practices in inclusive learning environments.

As inclusive education enables students with diverse needs to learn in mainstream learning environments alongside other children, there is a need for teachers to possess an advanced level of knowledge and teaching practices relevant to inclusive learning environments (Carrington et al., 2012; Zagona et al., 2017). Advanced knowledge and practice of inclusion are achievable by providing high-quality initial teacher education programmes with a specific focus on inclusive teaching practices (Carrington et al., 2012; Zagona et al., 2017). Unfortunately, globally, research is minimal, in fact, almost entirely lacking, in the area of how inclusive education policy frame ITE programme content and how ITE programmes shape inclusive teaching practices (Husu & Clandinin, 2019; McGrath et al., 2019; Tirri & Laine, 2019; Zagona et al., 2017). Therefore, this study examines the relationship of inclusive education policy and its implementation in practice at ITE provider level to understand the extent inclusive education content is evident in ITE programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand.

What international research has found is that teachers need to develop essential competencies required to work in inclusive settings with placing emphasis on high-quality teacher education

programmes (Husu & Clandinin, 2019; McGrath et al., 2019; Tirri & Laine, 2019; Zagona et al., 2017). Zagona et al. (2017) refer to research studies that focused on teachers' competence and self-efficacy working in inclusive learning environments and noted that Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez's (2009) and Lohrmann and Bambara's (2006) study concluded that teachers who had a masters level of special education background through their initial teacher education felt more comfortable and knowledgeable in inclusive learning environments compared to the ones who only gained initial teacher education knowledge and skills without an inclusive or special education focus in the programme. Montgomery and Mirenda's (2014) study supported these findings; teacher education programmes with an inclusive education focus resulted in higher self-efficacy, collaboration amongst teachers and students, and preparedness to ensure higher student outcomes (as cited in Zagona et al., 2017). Zagona et al. (2017) concluded that there is a need to analyse teacher education programmes in future research to understand the characteristics they need to include for effective preparation for teachers working in inclusive settings. The ITE offerings and paper descriptors examined in this research study provide a small yet appropriate sample for the scope of this study from Aotearoa New Zealand to show inclusive education content offered nationwide.

Research from New Zealand indicates that early inclusive education initiatives began with the passing of the 1877 Education Act and continued with the 1989 Education Act (Carrington et al., 2012; Hornby, 2014; Selvaraj, 2016); however, confusion still exists today on what inclusive education is in practice (Selvaraj, 2016). According to Hornby (2012) and Selvaraj (2016), New Zealand ITE providers have been struggling with the interpretation and implementation of inclusion policies into ITE programmes due to ideas arising from what is traditionally known as special needs education. In New Zealand, ITE programmes are governed and regulated by Acts and policies set by the New Zealand government and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. This research study aims to contribute to research on inclusive education provisions framing ITE programme content and development to highlight the importance of policy documents, their language use, their intention, and interpretation in inclusive education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Conceptual frameworks

The conceptual frameworks that underlie the study are social constructionism and structuration theory. Social constructionism makes sense of reality by a socially constructed understanding through shared assumptions (Slater, 2018). Social constructionism has social origins through

human actions and ideas acting as a social product that originate from historical and social situations (Slater, 2018). Structuration theory investigates the interactions between “social structures of meaning, norms, and power” (Canary, 2018, p. 2) through the “production, reproduction and transformation of structure” (Craib, 2011, p. 29) in society. Linguistic features are prominent in both social constructionism and structuration theory where language plays an important role in conveying meaning, constructing reality, and producing and reproducing social norms in society (Burr, 2015; Burr & Dick, 2017; Craib, 2011; Elliott, 2013; Giddens, 1984; Slater, 2018). This research study uses critical policy analysis as a methodological approach making use of critical content analysis in the data collection and analysis process. The rationale for this is to incorporate the importance of linguistic features in social constructionism and structuration theory. Social constructionism and structuration theory enable the examination of structure-agency relationship of how inclusive education provisions frame ITE programme development guidelines, ITE programme content, and inclusive primary teaching practices, in Aotearoa New Zealand. The conceptual frameworks also aid in understanding the experiences of learners and families in the inclusive education system. The conceptual frameworks and the methodological approach of the study are discussed further in the *Research Design* section in *Chapter Three*.

The research question

To understand the implications of inclusive education provisions for initial teacher education (ITE) programme content and its possible effects on inclusive primary school teaching in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, the following research questions were generated:

How do inclusive education and ITE policies frame initial primary teacher education programme content for inclusive teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand?

- *Which policies guide teacher education programme content for inclusive practices and how did they historically develop in Aotearoa New Zealand?*
- *How is the relationship between current provisions in policy and ITE programme content for inclusion evident in policy and programme documentation?*
- *How might the relationship between policy and ITE programmes be influencing inclusive teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand today?*

Summary of chapters

Chapter One provides the introduction, the rationale for the study, the conceptual frameworks, and the research questions.

Chapter Two is a literature review providing a background to the study in three sections. This background information links to the conceptual frameworks of the study where historical actions and understandings frame current decision making and practices: 1. What is inclusive education?, 2. Inclusive education policy environment nationwide and internationally, 3. Inclusive education policy and its known relationship to ITE programme development and inclusive teaching practices.

Chapter Three outlines the research design of the study with a focus on the methodological approach. This includes the conceptual frameworks of social constructionism, structuration theory, and critical policy analysis. The chapter also outlines the data collection and analysis aims and processes by reflecting on a pilot study conducted preceding this research, the critical content analysis applied to the research, the sampling technique used, and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four is the findings chapter outlining a detailed summary of the findings relating them to the research questions. The findings are outlined under each research sub-question. Research sub-question one focuses on the critical content analysis of four policy documents. Research sub-question two relates to ITE providers, their offerings, and the examination of three paper descriptors. Research question three goes beyond the policy documents themselves and investigates how inclusive education provisions are experienced in the wider community in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Chapter Five, the Discussion, discusses the three most important findings of the study. These are the language of policies of the New Zealand government and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, ITE providers' response to inclusive education provisions, and the effects of inclusive education provisions beyond policy.

Chapter Six is the Conclusion chapter including an overview of the research, areas for further research, and strengths and limitations of the study, and final conclusions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of a literature review is to provide a background to the topic of the research study and to establish what is currently known (McEwan, 2018) about inclusive education, its policy environment, and its known relationship to initial teacher education programme content and inclusive teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. The structure of this literature review is framed by Diem and Young's (2017) critical policy analysis framework and the conceptual frameworks of this study. The critical policy analysis and the conceptual frameworks are connected to the research sub-questions of the study, as shown in Figure 1. The roots in the critical policy analysis framework align with the historical background of the conceptual framework and contribute to the answering of research sub-question one. Re/production in Diem and Young's (2017) framework relate to the structuring aspects of the conceptual frameworks providing an explanation for research sub-question two. Reaction in critical policy analysis is connected to agency in the conceptual frameworks contributing to the answering of research sub-question three. These frameworks are given a more detailed account in the *Research Design* section in *Chapter Three*.

The figure below demonstrates the framework of the literature review:

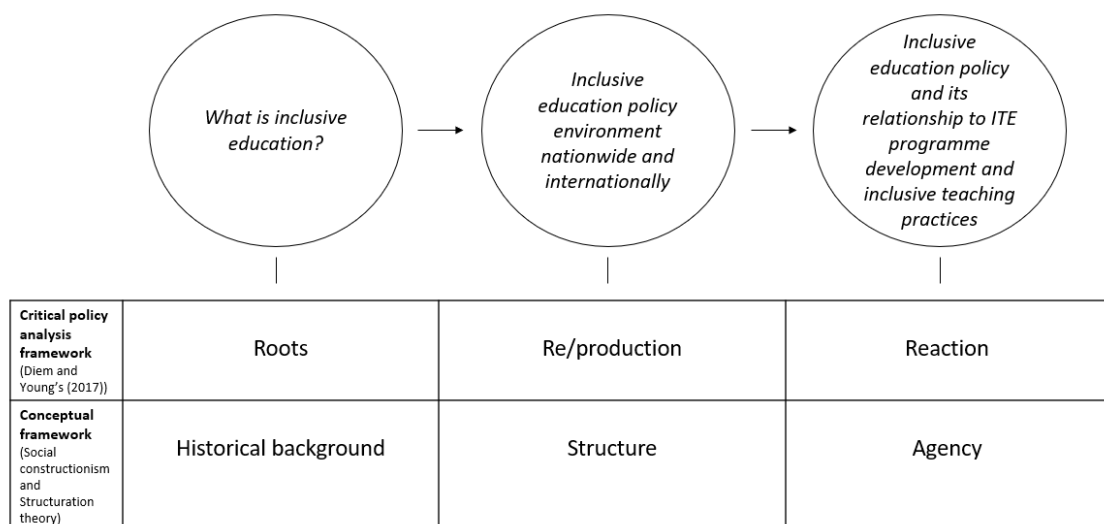


Figure 1: Conceptual and methodological framework of the study

Critical policy researchers need to provide a historical background to the examination of policy documents to investigate the roots of an issue (Diem & Young, 2017). The first section of the

literature review, *What is inclusive education?*, focuses on examining where inclusive education originates from by providing a historical account of movements and legislations contributing to the development of inclusion as a concept.

The second section of the literature review focuses on the *Inclusive education policy environment nationwide and internationally*. Policies arise from complex environments based on historical perspectives evolving over time (Diem & Young, 2017). Therefore, a relationship is evident between the origins of inclusion and the extent policies are produced and reproduced within these environments. The conceptual framework of the study relates to the relevance of social reproduction through human actions over time (Slater, 2018).

The last section of the literature review investigates reaction to policy and its processes (Diem & Young, 2017) with a focus on *Inclusive education policy and its known relationship to ITE programme development and inclusive teaching practices*. This section is relevant to the structure-agency relationship evident in both social constructionism and structuration theory that contribute to social change and practices over time (Burr, 2015; Canary, 2018; Carrington et al., 2012; Craib, 2011). This social change and practices over time contribute to the understanding of findings of the study in *Chapter Four*, and frame the discussion of the findings in *Chapters Five*.

What is inclusive education?

Inclusive education has its roots in international movements and human rights organisations advocating for legislative changes to accept and support human diversity (Ballard, 1996; Blanton et al., 2018; Hellblom-Thibblin, 2018; Imray & Colley, 2017; Selvaraj, 2016; Slee, 2018). Inclusive education and initial teacher education programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand have been greatly influenced by ideas arising from these human rights movements and legislations (Ballard, 1996; Blanton et al., 2018; Hellblom-Thibblin, 2018; Imray & Colley, 2017; Selvaraj, 2016; Slee, 2018) by trying to create a separation between segregated special education initiatives and more inclusive approaches in the education systems (Tomlinson, 2019).

The international movements influencing the development of inclusive education date back to the early 1900s (Ballard, 1996; Blanton et al., 2018; Hellblom-Thibblin, 2018; Imray & Colley, 2017; Selvaraj, 2016; Slee, 2018; Tomlinson, 2019) when a medical approach was developed to diagnose, treat, and educate children with diverse needs in the education system (Blanton et

al., 2018; Hellblom-Thibblin, 2018; Selvaraj, 2016). These diverse needs were mostly met by segregated exclusionary services offered to students and their families where students with diverse needs were removed from mainstream learning environments into special schools or medical institutions (Selvaraj, 2016). Eugenics movements were responsible for the classification of what they termed as the genetically unfit resulting in exclusionary practices in education (Imray & Colley, 2017; Slee, 2018). The medical model and segregated education services contributed to the non-existence of inclusionary practices in education at that time.

Aotearoa New Zealand has been influenced by international movements and ideas arising from legislations. Nationwide, the early 1900s saw Inspector-General of Schools, George Hogben, mandating the recognition of children with special needs to be included in the education system and given the same rights to education as any other child (Selvaraj, 2016). This was a time in New Zealand when students with special needs were still excluded to special schools, classes, and medical clinics rather than being included in inclusive mainstream learning environments (Selvaraj, 2016). Towards the end of the second world war, New Zealand, similarly to international attempts, began to professionalise special needs education to ensure teachers were well equipped for the demands of working in inclusive education (Hellblom-Thibblin, 2018; Selvaraj, 2016). Large organisations such as the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have framed the definition and concept of inclusive education through advocating for segregated special education to be distinguished from inclusive education (Slee, 2018). Inclusion as a concept refers to children with diverse needs having the right to attend mainstream classrooms in the education system (Ministry of Education, 2021c; Te Kete Ipurangi, n.d.). New Zealand's inclusive education is underpinned by the philosophy that *all* children must be provided with opportunities to fully participate and achieve to the best of their abilities through being present and engaged in all activities (Ministry of Education, 2021c; Te Kete Ipurangi, n.d.-a). This is in line with the recommendations of UNESCO, OECD, and UNICEF (Slee, 2018). Aotearoa New Zealand's response to the developing concept of inclusion shows responsiveness from the country to support diversity.

While a commitment to inclusive education has been made in New Zealand since the 1990s, what inclusive education means in practice still provides confusion within the profession today (Carrington et al., 2012; Selvaraj, 2016). Hornby (as cited in Imray & Colley, 2017) indicates that full inclusion in mainstream classrooms is a challenge to achieve in reality due to the level of needs and support individual students may require based on their conditions varying between

mild to profound disabilities. As the practice of inclusion varies between educational systems and providers, it also affects the definition and interpretation of the term (Imray & Colley, 2017). As Booth et al. note (as cited in Imray & Colley, 2017) “...inclusive education is a process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from the culture, community, and curricula of mainstream schools” (p. 47). This is in line with Hochstrasser Fickel and Guerin’s (2019) definition of inclusive education noted in *Chapter One*. The confusion around inclusive education in Aotearoa New Zealand can be contributed to the language use in inclusive education and the difference between inclusive and special education. This is further examined in the *Findings* and *Discussion* chapters, in *Chapter Four* and *Chapter Five*. The next section examines the national and international inclusive education policy landscape.

Inclusive education policy environment nationwide and internationally

Aotearoa New Zealand

As seen in the previous section, Aotearoa New Zealand has been proactive and responsive to changing paradigms in the move from exclusionary to inclusive policies in education. The *1877 Education Act* policy document, was revolutionary in making education compulsory for *all* children nationwide (Selvaraj, 2016). Before the *1877 Education Act*, schools and communities established by settlers provided exclusionary educational services in the form of orphanages, industrial, and native schools to cater to the diverse needs of the population (Selvaraj, 2016). The *1877 Education Act* changed the field of education in Aotearoa New Zealand by using scientific reasoning from developmental psychology to inform early special education initiatives (Selvaraj, 2016). The education policy landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand has experienced many amendments since then, and between the 1980 and the early 21st century, a major shift in the development and implementation of inclusionary policies has been evident (Carrington et al., 2012; Tearney, 2016). The emphasis became *all learners* succeeding through *what* and *how* they are taught, and by meeting everyone’s diverse needs within the same education setting (Carrington et al., 2012; Tearney, 2016). Aotearoa New Zealand’s responsive nature to incorporating inclusion as a concept in policy documents contributes to including all learners into the same education setting.

The *1877 Education Act* was followed by many amendments. The *1914 Education Act* was influenced by George Hogben’s mandate on recognising and including all children in the education system (Selvaraj, 2016). Later, an amendment between 1978 and 1981 allowed

students with disabilities to attend mainstream schools, and in 1987 Special Education was thoroughly reviewed with the *1989 Education Act* giving rights to *all* children to be included in mainstream classrooms (Carrington et al., 2012; Selvaraj, 2016). The *1989 Education Act* was ground-breaking in not only mandating that *all* children are entitled to receive the same education (Carrington et al., 2012) but also in beginning to develop more professional standards for teachers and teacher education programmes (Tearney, 2016). The *1993 Human Rights Act* and the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* influence policy decision-making for inclusion along with the principles of the *Treaty of Waitangi* being incorporated into the *Code of Professional Responsibility* outlined by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (Carrington et al., 2012; Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin, 2019). The code expects all teachers to uphold the human rights principles of all learners and to promote, protect, respect, and support diverse learners in inclusive learning environments (Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin, 2019). In 1996 *Special Education 2000 (SE2000)* was developed to support students with special education needs and the policy was implemented over a three-year period (Creech, 1997). Along with *SE2000* came professional development and training opportunities for boards of trustees, principals, teachers, and parents with accountability, monitoring, and evaluation requirements conducted by the Education Review Office (ERO) (Creech, 1997). The implementation of *SE2000* made schools equally accountable to the government for implementing the policy and supporting students with special education needs (Wills, 2006). This policy approach involved the shifting of funding allocated for the support of students with special education needs to the schools and their boards of trustees to enable all schools to support all students regardless of their abilities (Wills, 2006). Despite parents advocating for the need to maintain special education provisions, *SE2000* contributed to schools having the ability to close special education units in favour of inclusive teaching and learning practices (Wills, 2006). However, by the end of 2004, due to parent voices, the Ministry of Education decided schools could maintain specialist units to accommodate students with special needs (Wills, 2006). *SE2000* was referred to as a provision that goes beyond policy transforming special education into inclusive education supporting students with special needs (Greaves, 2003). The many policy amendments are not only due to responses to international movements and legislations but also to the voices of the wider community nationwide.

The critical content analysis in the *Findings* and *Discussion* chapters of this dissertation examine changes in language in the policy documents studied by referring to primary school-aged individuals as *children*, *students*, and *learners*. However, even in this literature review, a discursive shift is evident between referring to these individuals as *children* up to the 1980s, *students* throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, and *learners* in current policy documents such

as the *Code of Professional Responsibility*. Similarly, *SE2000* is New Zealand's first policy specifically developed for achieving an exceptional inclusive education system (Carrington et al., 2012; McMenamin, 2018). The *Findings* and *Discussion* sections in *Chapter Four* examine *SE2000* and the linguistic features used in inclusive education historically and today.

In 2010, the *Review of Special Education 2010* was published where the New Zealand public nationwide contributed to the recommendations of improved teacher education and fair and consistent policies to support students with diverse needs (Tearney, 2016). This saw the publication of *Success for All – Every School, Every Child* in 2010 designed to “achieve a fully inclusive education system” (Carrington et al., 2012; Tearney, 2016, p. 35). The Education Review Office (ERO) published a report called *Inclusive practices for students with special needs in schools* in 2015 assessing the extent students with special needs were included and supported in New Zealand schools (Education Review Office, 2015). This report evaluates the intentions and implementation of *SE2000* and the extent inclusive education had been achieved. The *Findings* and *Discussion* chapters, *Four* and *Five*, examine this policy document in more depth. More recently, the *Ministry of Education Statement of Intent 2014-2018*, and *2021-2026* raise strategic intentions to improve teaching quality in line with inclusive teaching practices (Ministry of Education, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2021a). These policies have a direct relationship with the governance of ITE programmes because they highlight the importance of effective inclusive provisions for ITE programme development and inclusive pedagogies in order to achieve a fully inclusive education system. The latest *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements* were published in 2019 to respond to changes in education and to support teachers in increasingly diverse teaching and learning environments (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, n.d.). The *Education and Training Act 2020* incorporates and replaces the Education Acts of 1964 and 1989 in a simpler and less prescriptive manner (Ministry of Education, 2021b). While current educational policies are designed to “create circumstances in which a range of options available in deciding what to do ...”, rather than tell teachers what to do exactly (Avissar et al., 2016, p. 974), this creates challenges for teachers as the interpretation of the policy will vary depending on ITE provider and teaching practices adopted by individuals (Bourke & O'Neill, 2012; Avissar et al., 2016). The *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements* and the *Education and Training Act 2020* are examined further in *Chapters Four and Five*.

Unfortunately, misconceptions about the historical *special education* initiatives are still prevalent in policy documents and *inclusive* approaches to teaching practices today (Avissar et al., 2016; Ballard, 2012). This will be discussed further in the *Findings* and *Discussion* chapters in

relation to the assembled policies examined. These policies include *Special Education 2000*, the *Education and Training Act 2020*, *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements*, and *Advice paper: Positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?*. The *Advice paper: Positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?* is mentioned in the next section of this literature review. All these policies have been influenced by the historical development of both *special needs* and *inclusive* education. Despite the early inclusive education initiatives of the *1877 Education Act* and the *1989 Education Act* giving all children equal rights to attend the same education setting (Hornby, 2014; McMenamin, 2018; Selvaraj, 2016), inclusion policies and usage of terms such as *inclusion* do not necessarily equate to inclusive teaching practices (Tirri & Laine, 2019). Gale et al. (2017), Selvaraj (2016), and Carrington et al. (2012) found that initial teacher education fails to prepare teachers for fully inclusive teaching practices and while there is a commitment to inclusive education within policy, confusion still exists within the teaching profession as to what inclusive education actually means in practice.

International

International policies play an equally important role in the decision-making the New Zealand government makes concerning inclusion, inclusive education policies, ITE programme development, and inclusive teaching practices. In the United States, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* was established in 1975 and *A Nation at Risk* document was released in 1983 resulting in reform activities, firstly, relating to standards-based teacher education, and secondly to multicultural education enabling mainstream and special educators to collaborate on “standards development, diversity as a more comprehensive concept, and school-university partnerships” (Blanton et al., 2018, p. 357).

The *1994 Salamanca Conference on Special Needs Education* (Morton et al., 2012; UNESCO, 1994) is extremely influential in the New Zealand inclusive education policy landscape, however, despite the influence, policy makers and teachers have been struggling to align policy direction with everyday inclusive teaching practices since (Avissar et al., 2016). The *Salamanca Statement* made it a high priority for schools to consider the urgent implementation of inclusive teaching practices to support a wide diversity of students (Morton et al., 2012). This led to the reauthorisation of *IDEA* in the United States in 1997 finally enabling all children to attend mainstream education with special education teachers needing to possess the same content knowledge as mainstream education teachers (Blanton et al., 2018). While the launch of the *325T programme*, the *Centre for Improving Teacher Quality (CTQ)*, and the centre for

Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) worked towards inclusion and higher quality teacher education, connections to diverse mainstream education settings were not made until 2001, hence a divide is still evident between mainstream and special education today (Blanton et al., 2018). In 2004 the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* reform mandated highly qualified teachers in special education to ensure a full academic curriculum for all students and while this represented a valuable opportunity in the partnership between schools and universities, teacher education programmes remained under-developed (Blanton et al., 2018). In 2006, *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)* emerged to reinforce the need for accommodating diverse learners in mainstream learning environments; however, efforts to connect special and mainstream initial teacher education failed to result in collaboration (Blanton et al., 2018).

Aotearoa New Zealand is a signatory to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (2007) that underpin inclusive education provisions by ensuring children with diverse needs have access to inclusive education throughout their years of schooling and beyond (Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin, 2019). The *2009 UNESCO Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* are supportive of the development of a policy environment that is effective in the implementation of inclusive education systems through teachers receiving an education and adopting a pedagogy that is in line with policy direction. *UNICEF* (2021) also advocates for inclusive teaching practices in their document *Inclusion international: Our opinion matters. Perspective of Boys, Girls and Adolescents on Discrimination and Barriers to Inclusive Education*. These policies all have a significant influence on the New Zealand inclusive education policy landscape. The *Advice paper: Positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?* policy document from the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand particularly draws on international research evidence from Finland, Norway, and Estonia (Education Council New Zealand, n.d.) to justify making ITE a postgraduate qualification. This policy document is discussed in more detail in the *Findings and Discussion* chapters.

While international policies support inclusion, inclusive teaching practices, and high-quality teacher education programmes for inclusion, Aotearoa New Zealand still struggles with effective policy interpretation and implementation in all these areas (Carrington et al., 2012; Selvaraj, 2016). Similar to nationwide, international inclusive education provisions are underpinned by policies and human rights protocols that are to be adopted by teachers in their professional practice (Carrington et al., 2012; Morton et al., 2012). The policy landscape has a direct effect on teacher education and teaching practices related to supporting diverse needs in inclusive

mainstream learning environments (Carrington et al., 2012; Morton et al., 2012). Inclusive provisions are believed to be poorly executed in Aotearoa New Zealand which directly affects what ITE providers include in the content of their programmes and consequently inclusive teaching practices of teachers (Morton et al., 2012).

This literature review indicates that teacher education is reliant on effective policies in preparing teachers for working in inclusive settings, and research in this area is important for improving teacher education programmes (Avisar et al., 2016; Pilgrim et al., 2017; Shani & Hebel, 2016; Shoham Kugelmass & Kupferberg, 2020; Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2014; Zagona et al., 2017). While the 1989 legislative changes in New Zealand emphasised the importance of students with special needs attending mainstream schools (Shoham Kugelmass & Kupferberg, 2020), Aotearoa New Zealand literature focusing specifically on policy documentation framing initial teacher education programme content for inclusive education and how inclusive teaching practices are achieved is scarce. The next section investigates the known consequences of policy in relation to ITE programme development and inclusive teaching practices.

Inclusive education policy and its known relationship to ITE programme development and inclusive teaching practices

As noted in *Chapter One*, there is research evidence that teachers may feel incapable, unskilled, and lacking in knowledge working in inclusive learning environments (Avisar et al., 2016; Bentley-Williams et al., 2017; Gavish, 2017; Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin, 2019; Shani and Hebel, 2016; Zagona et al., 2017) even though they are considered to be key in facilitating inclusive learning environments (McGrath et al., 2019; Robinson, 2019; Tirri & Laine, 2019, van Tartwijk et al., 2019). An increase in student diversity has also been observed (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2022) which necessitates teachers developing inclusive pedagogy and capabilities to work in inclusive learning environments through their ITE programmes (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017). Real-life experiences through ITE programmes provide teachers with capacity building, problem-solving, and better engagement in responding to student diversity (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017). Inclusion can only be successful if teachers are educated appropriately to work with students with diverse needs in their learning environments (Benade, 2019; Tirri & Laine, 2019) without students having to suffer low-quality pedagogical practices that fail to meet their learning and developmental needs (Kecskemeti & Hamilton, 2019). Initial teacher education programmes are central to achieving inclusive teaching practices and the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2011) acknowledges that inclusion must be an essential

element of initial teacher education programmes focusing not only on skills and knowledge but also on values and attitudes towards inclusion. The European Commission also places high emphasis on teachers developing essential competencies required to work in inclusive learning environments where initial teacher education programmes need to be of the highest possible quality (McGrath et al., 2019).

Tirri and Laine (2019) identify two strands that have historically dominated initial teacher education content for inclusion. One strand focuses on knowledge and skills specifically designed for working with children with diverse needs; the other strand advocates that inclusion is not only about children with diverse needs, but rather it is about “improving learning and teaching for *all*” (Tirri & Laine, 2019, p. 4). These strands have been identified as overlapping each other and they have been extended by Florian and Rouse (2009, as cited in Tirri & Laine 2019) who claim that initial teacher education should prepare teachers to improve the learning and participation of *all* children both on an individual and collective level. The use of terminology *all* is evident in national and international research literature and policy documents relating to inclusion and inclusive teaching practices. Initial teacher education should enable teachers to adopt intentional teaching practices specifically developed for students’ diverse needs and abilities relating to positive changes in academic and social behaviour (Tirri & Laine, 2019).

Achieving equity through inclusive education means ITE programmes for inclusion need to enable student teachers to become critical of the disparities in educational outcomes currently occurring in the education system (Gale et al., 2017; Heng et al., 2019). Inclusive pedagogy needs to include close relationships with staff members, students, and their families, the ability to create learning environments where all students are well supported and prepared for life beyond the school walls, and where they can learn to contribute to society and their own communities to the best of their abilities (Gavish, 2017). Shani and Hebel (2016) acknowledge that inclusive education is a challenge worldwide and barriers to policy and its implementation are evident around the world. However, they also highlight that inclusion policies are essential and have an effect on teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards inclusion in the classroom (Shani & Hebel, 2016).

To create effective inclusive learning environments and to teach inclusively, a teacher needs to have a good overall understanding of the diverse conditions and needs students possess, teachers need to be able to adapt the mainstream learning environment to suit diverse needs, and teachers need to be able to apply intervention methods in line with inclusive provisions

guiding their practice (Gavish, 2017). Heng et al. (2019) note that ITE providers need to actively challenge processes and policies to achieve educational achievement for all learners and to educate for diversity. As there is a perception that teachers lack knowledge and skills in understanding how best to support students with diverse needs (Carrington et al., 2012; Hellblom-Thibblin, 2018), ITE programmes need to be relevant for student teachers in inclusive settings (Heng et al., 2019) to ensure appropriate opportunities are provided to *all* students to succeed (Hellblom-Thibblin, 2018). To help achieve this, van Tartwijk et al. (2019) recommend that ITE providers help student teachers develop and acquire a body of knowledge that is organised in such a way that makes the retrieval and application of them simple and straightforward through an inclusive pedagogical approach. Teachers need to acquire content and pedagogical knowledge through their ITE programme through theory and classroom practice (van Tartwijk et al., 2019). Initial teacher education is seen as the steppingstone towards quality teaching practices in inclusive learning environments (Gale et al., 2017) that builds teachers' skills, knowledge, and confidence in teaching *all* students in an inclusive learning environment (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017).

Inclusive pedagogy is designed to prevent students with diverse needs to be removed from classrooms for remedial work, and rather it focuses on a teaching approach that educators cater to *all* learning needs (Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin, 2019) highlighting what students can do rather than their deficits (Gale et al., 2017). However, some dilemmas arise from inclusive policy initiatives that indicate that inclusion is more challenging than outlined in policy (O'Neill, 2019). O'Neill (2019) refers to the *Inquiry into Students with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Autism Spectrum Disorder* by the New Zealand Parliament's Education and Science Select Committee in 2016 that indicated that parents and caregivers experience varying levels of support, capacity, capability, and inconsistency from teachers in the support of students with diverse needs. This leads back to ITE programme content and policies framing that content, and O'Neill (2019) believes that initial teacher education has an important role to play in how both novice and experienced teachers approach inclusion in the classroom. ITE programmes also contribute to teachers developing positive attitudes with the appropriate capabilities to be inclusive educators (Bentley-Williams et al., 2017).

It is noted by Shoham Kugelmass and Kupferberg (2020) that inclusive education needs to be at the forefront of current research practices as there are a limited number of studies that examine the practice and knowledge of mainstream teachers who work with students with diverse needs in inclusive settings. It is acknowledged by Shani and Hebel (2016) that inclusive education is a challenge worldwide and barriers to policy and its implementation are evident across the globe.

Avissar et al. (2016), Shani and Hebel (2016), Gavish (2017), and Zagona et al. (2017) also emphasise the unpreparedness of mainstream teachers for inclusive learning environments. A 2019 review by Sperling et al. about inclusion in England, Sweden, USA, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Australia, and Canada indicates that teachers in mainstream schools lack knowledge of how best to work in inclusive learning environments to ensure maximum benefit to students. A shift towards inclusive education is also evident in Ireland where a considerable body of legislation guides the educational environment to support students with diverse needs in inclusive settings (McGrath et al., 2019). It is generally accepted that teachers are key in facilitating inclusive learning environments; hence they need to possess the skills, knowledge, and attitudes for their students to succeed (McGrath et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This chapter's literature review provided an insight into what inclusive education is, the policy landscape nationwide and internationally, and the known consequences of policy in relation to ITE programme development in inclusive teaching practices. Research is minimal on how inclusive education provisions frame ITE programme content and how inclusive teaching practices are developed in Aotearoa New Zealand. This research study aims to contribute to research in this area. The next chapter of this dissertation outlines the research design of the study.

Chapter Three: Research Design

Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the research design for the study including the frameworks applied to the study, the data collection and analysis aims and process, and a reflection on the ethical considerations. The frameworks used are social constructionism, structuration theory, and critical policy analysis. The data collection and analysis include an outline of the pilot study preceding this research, an overview of the critical content analysis applied to the policy documents, and reasoning for sampling.

Methodological approach

Frameworks

Qualitative research is underpinned by conceptual frameworks which include philosophical and theoretical frameworks and assumptions (Daniel & Harland, 2018). These frameworks and assumptions determine what is considered important in influencing the decision-making process in choosing the research topic (Newby, 2014). The term paradigm refers to the set of basic beliefs or worldviews that humans possess which consequently guide the researcher towards a particular framework derived from these worldviews (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The term ontology encompasses *what* is known in reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Daniel & Harland, 2018), and epistemology refers to the *how* we know something, the relationship between “the knower and the would-be knower” and what can be known” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Epistemology is, therefore, the process of coming to know something (Daniel & Harland, 2018). The ontological and epistemological assumptions of this study relate to my professional work experience and my personal reflection on my own initial teacher education programme content and its usefulness and relevance in everyday teaching practices. These assumptions led me to examine the implications of inclusive education provisions for ITE programme content and its possible effects on inclusive primary school teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The critical policy analysis of this research study is influenced by social constructionism (Akram et al., 2015), structuration theory (Burridge et al., 2010; Elliott, 2013), and Diem and Young’s (2017) critical policy analysis framework.

Social constructionism

Social constructionism endeavours to make sense of reality (Slater, 2018) by questioning taken-for-granted understandings, ideas, and observations of the world (Burr, 2015). In this research study, it is applied to the critical analysis of inclusive policy documents and their framing of ITE programme development to understand the extent *inclusion* is evident in them. Human actions and ideas are social products that originate from historical and social situations (Slater, 2018). History implies that culture is equally important as these aid in the sense-making of the world where history and culture are *specific to* and a *product of* certain social groups in particular social environments (Burr, 2015). Hence, knowledge is created and sustained by social processes, such as social interactions and everyday experiences, where knowledge becomes a social action (Burr, 2015; Carrington et al., 2012) with power relations existing in flux (Burr & Dick, 2017). This research study examines how inclusive education provisions created by higher governmental power are interpreted by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand and ITE providers and implemented in the development of ITE programmes. The policies under examination are historically and socially contextualised and they are *specific to* and a *product of* those time periods in Aotearoa New Zealand. The policies influence the extent to which inclusive education is practiced in mainstream learning environments and experienced by learners and their families.

Structuration theory

Structuration theory is a broad theoretical framework that studies the interactions between “social structures of meaning, norms, and power” (Canary, 2018, p. 2) through the “production, reproduction and transformation of structure” (Craib, 2011, p. 29) in society. Social structures consist of actors who are the active human agents continually reacting to, re/creating, and re/producing meanings, norms, and power within their social field (Craib, 2011; Elliott, 2013; Giddens, 1984). Structural properties possess power and influence how social practices are produced and reproduced over time (Craib, 2011). Rules and resources frame how production and reproduction happen through social action (Giddens, 1984); however, simple rule-following is insufficient in the achievement of social production and reproduction (Craib, 2011; Elliott, 2013). To understand social reality, this research study examines evidence from news media about the social realities and experiences of a teacher, learners, and their families in relation to policy intention and implementation in practice. The application of rules and use of resources contribute to the production and reproduction of social action and social systems (Craib, 2011)

giving access to different “social, economic, cultural, and political resources (Elliott, 2013, p. 58). This is discussed further in the *Findings* chapter when geographical locations and access to resources are mentioned in news media referring to different areas of Aotearoa New Zealand. The New Zealand government, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, and ITE providers all possess structuring properties and power in creating, recontextualising, and implementing policies. They also all use their agency to re/produce meaning and social norms and practices by reacting to national and international provisions. The structure-agency relationship of policy, its implementation, inclusive teaching practices, and the experiences of learners and families are discussed further in *Chapters Five*.

Critical policy analysis

Critical policy analysis investigates the complex environments policies are created and implemented in (Diem & Young, 2017). This framework complements structuration theory and social constructionism in the examination of structure and agency relationships in policies, ITE offerings, their evidence in inclusive teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand, and in the wider society (Akram, et al., 2015). The *Literature Review* in *Chapter Two* examined the historical background of inclusive education, the inclusive education policy environment on a national and international scale, and the known inclusive education policy relationship to ITE programme development and inclusive teaching practices. These were based on Diem and Young’s (2017) framework of critical policy analysis where 1) the historical background refers to the examination of the roots of policies; 2) the policy environment outlines the re/production of inclusive provisions based on historical roots forming the structure of policies, and 3) the relationship between policy and ITE programme content and inclusive teaching practices relates to the agency indicating a reaction to policy and process within critical policy analysis.

The methodology of this study is guided by Diem and Young’s (2017) critical policy analysis framework that outlines five distinguishable themes for critical policy analysis: 1) examining the difference between the policy and what happens in reality, 2) investigating the development of a policy and how it changed over time affecting society today, 3) reflecting on the beneficiaries and disadvantaged of the policies and their reasons for being so, 4) highlighting social hierarchy and their relationship to policy making, 5) and examining to what extent non-dominant groups engage in policy. While all these elements are important, this research study focuses on the first three themes:

1. examining the difference between the policy and what happens in reality,
2. investigating the development of a policy and how it changed over time affecting society today,
3. reflecting on the beneficiaries and disadvantaged of the policies and their reasons for being so.

The figure below demonstrates how the conceptual and methodological frameworks are related and how they are designed to investigate and answer the research questions. This figure is an extension to the one demonstrated in the *Literature Review* in *Chapter Two*:

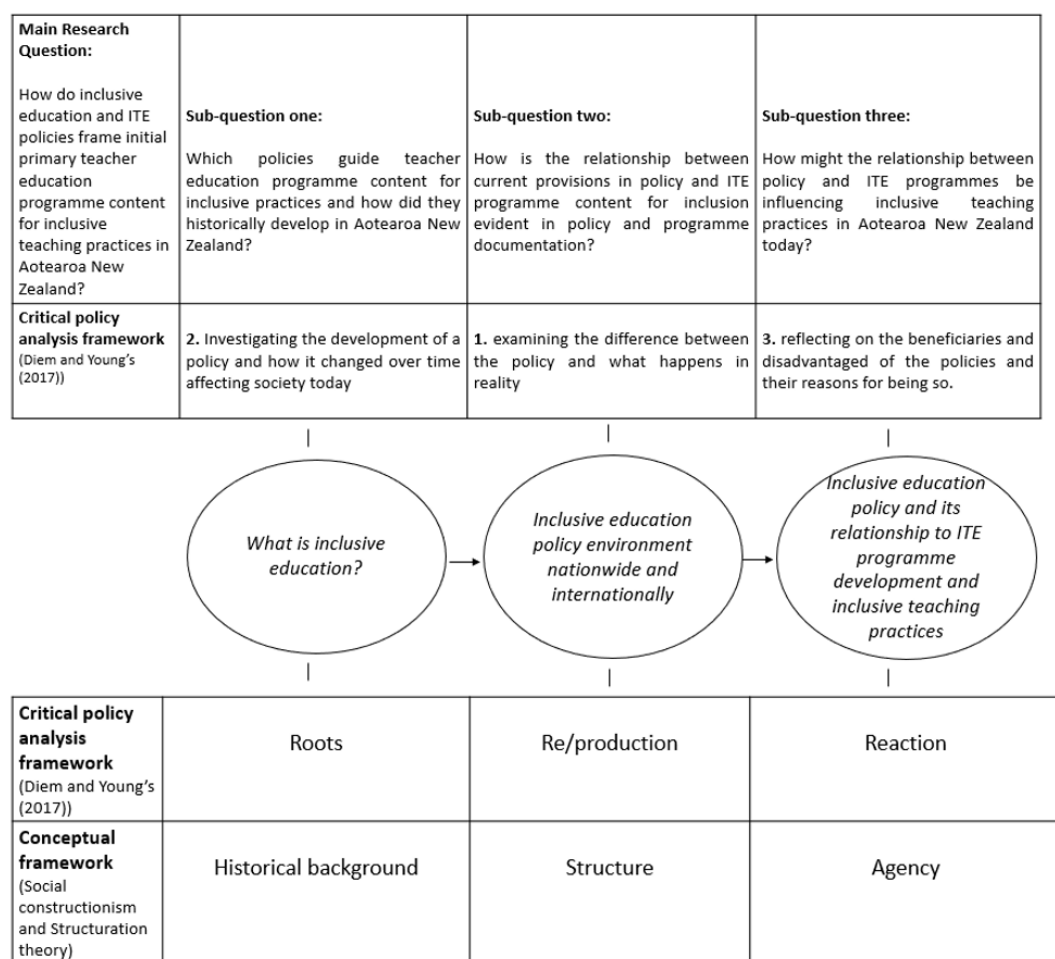


Figure 2: Conceptual and methodological framework relationship

Data Collection and Analysis

The pilot study

Piloting an aspect of a research study is an important element of the main study as it provides the opportunity for exploring a certain aspect of the project with informed reflection on the benefits and challenges of research methods and techniques used for knowledge generation (Gudmundsdottir & Brock-Utne, 2010; Bloor & Wood, 2021). Piloting is also seen as an “important concept in educational research” that adds validity, reflection, and better praxis to the field (Gudmundsdottir & Brock-Utne, 2010, p. 360). A pilot study, conducted in 2021 as part of a research paper within the Master of Education programme, aimed to assess the feasibility and relevance of this research study by focusing on one aspect relating to one of the research sub-questions:

- *How is the relationship between current provisions in policy and ITE programme content for inclusion evident in policy and programme documentation?*

The pilot study was conducted in phases focusing on three main methods for knowledge generation: internet search of ITE offerings for inclusive education at New Zealand universities, content analysis of paper descriptors, and discourse analysis of paper descriptors in relation to two policy documents framing ITE programme development for inclusion (Gajdocsi, 2021). Only publicly available documents and programme information were used for the pilot study, and the lecturer had delegated authority to approve the examining of the chosen documents for the pilot (Gajdocsi, 2021). The first phase involved the internet search of New Zealand ITE providers and their ITE programme offerings for primary inclusive education. The ITE offerings were reduced to primary teaching only to fit the scope of the pilot and consequently the scope of the main research study in this dissertation. Seven universities were selected for the data analysis stage (Gajdocsi, 2021). This approach enabled a generic overview within this sample size manageable for the scope of the pilot and it was found that the seven universities were also a large enough sample for the dissertation (Gajdocsi, 2021). The sample size needs to be manageable, viable, purposive, and valuable to the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), hence, the justification for narrowing it down to seven universities and a specific programme specialisation for primary teaching only.

The second phase of the pilot focussed on the selection of two out of the seven universities to examine their paper descriptors in more depth by content analysis (Gajdocsi, 2021). The language under examination in the pilot study was related to inclusive education and the following terminology were predetermined as keywords: '*inclusion, inclusive, special needs, diverse learners, diversity*' (Gajdocsi, 2021). These keywords arose from an initial literature review and the review of policy documentation relating to inclusive education that preceded the pilot study (Gajdocsi, 2021). The keywords provide a link between ITE programme content, education acts, and policies framing ITE programme content (Gajdocsi, 2021). For the content analysis, one paper was selected with inclusive education being obvious from the paper title and paper descriptor, and another where inclusive education was less obvious and embedded within the paper (Gajdocsi, 2021). Additionally, one of the paper descriptors was a master's level paper, and the other was a bachelor's level paper to show the difference between an undergraduate and a postgraduate paper in terms of the frequency of the keywords appearing (Gajdocsi, 2021).

The final phase was the discourse analysis of two policy documents to analyse in relation to the two paper descriptors mentioned above (Gajdocsi, 2021). These policy documents were:

1. *Advice Paper: Positioning Teaching as a Postgraduate Profession?* prepared by the Education Council New Zealand (n.d.), and
2. *ITE Programme Approval Monitoring and Review Requirements* by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (2019).

Using the predetermined keywords, the policy documents were analysed in conjunction with paper descriptor content to see how the language used in policy documents related to the paper descriptor content within ITE programmes, how the language was used to indicate inclusive education content, and to what extent the course content was in line with ITE programme guidelines (Gajdocsi, 2021). As a coding technique, I highlighted keywords within the policy documents and the paper descriptors to investigate language use and made notes and comments within those documents to indicate structure-agency relationships evident (or their lack of) between the policy documents and their implementation in paper descriptors.

While it is possible to conduct critical policy analysis simply by examining policies without human participants being involved in the study (Diem & Young, 2017), I began to realise that conducting a few interviews on the decisions ITE providers make on undergraduate and postgraduate paper content would add a meaningful element to this main research study. For the main study, ethics board approval was gained; however, invited experts either declined or did not respond to

participate in the study. Instead, evidence was gathered from other sources to examine the extent inclusion policies are evident in the wider society. These sources include an Education Review Office (ERO) report *Inclusive practices for students with special needs (2015)*, the Ministry of Education and Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) websites, and news media articles. This approach still enabled for going beyond the policy documents and examining their effects on society in Aotearoa New Zealand. The pilot also resulted in the decision that three paper descriptors are appropriate alongside four policy documents to conduct the main study. A decision was also made to only use critical content analysis as that is sufficient in demonstrating how the linguistic features of the policy documents affect ITE programme content and teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Critical content analysis

The critical policy analysis is conducted through the method of critical content analysis.

Critical content analysis is associated with analysing words within a text focusing on the frequency of terms used (Cardno, 2018). This is considered to be a systematic, objective, and flexible approach to determining where and how often certain terminology is used (Cardno, 2018) within Acts, policies, ITE programme development guidelines for inclusion, paper descriptors, and the ERO report to show structure and agency relationships between these documents under investigation. Critical content analysis is also performed on the ITE offerings for inclusive primary teaching practices at the seven New Zealand universities, on the Ministry of Education and Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) websites for inclusion, and news media articles.

Language use is important for both social constructionism and structuration theory. In social constructionism language is used to develop thought, reproduce culture, and make sense of our world by giving human habits credibility, reality, and the construction of society (Burr, 2015; Burr & Dick, 2017; Slater, 2018). In structuration theory language is a methodical process with a significant role in reproducing knowledge and actions and contributing to the legitimization of rules in the reproduction of social practices (Craib, 2011; Elliott, 2013; Giddens, 1984).

Table 1 below demonstrates the critical content analysis approach:

Critical Content Analysis
Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Training Act 2020 • Special Education 2000
Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements (2019) • Advice paper: positioning teaching as a postgraduate qualification? (n.d.) – (Education Council of New Zealand)
Paper descriptors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper Descriptor 1 – PD1-UG • Paper Descriptor 2 – PD2-GD • Paper Descriptor 3 – PD3-PG
Education Review Office (ERO): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive practices for students with special needs in schools (2015)
ITE programme offerings in Aotearoa New Zealand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University 1 – U1 • University 2 – U2 • University 3 – U3 • University 4 – U4 • University 5 – U5 • University 6 – U6 • University 7 – U7
Ministry of Education and Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education – Inclusive education • TKI – Inclusive education
News media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't blame teachers; the needs of all children are important • Special school with low roll says its service is still needed

(Advice paper: positioning teaching as a postgraduate qualification? is listed under the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand but was published by the Education Council of New Zealand. In 2018 The Education (Teaching Council of Aotearoa) Amendment Bill changed the name of the Education Council to the Teaching Council of Aotearoa (Education (Teaching Council of Aotearoa) Amendment Bill, 2018).

Table 1: List of policies for critical content analysis

Based on the evaluation of the pilot study, the following information and meanings are aimed to be derived from the critical policy analysis of this study:

Policy documents *Education and Training Act 2020*, *Special Education 2000*, *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements*, and *Advice paper: positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?* aim to identify the social and political environments these provisions were developed in and identify patterns in language use in conjunction with *inclusive education*. Terminology is colour-coded to show patterns and only two patterns are selected. One pattern refers to the terminology *special* used in relation to inclusive education. The other pattern is the term used to refer to primary school-aged individuals that is *children/students/learners*. The three words make up one terminology as they show a historical development in their usage.

These policy documents have structuring properties that frame ITE programme content through human agents reacting to and producing and reproducing meaning arising from the language of policies over time (Burr & Dick, 2017; Craib, 2011; Elliott, 2013). This is related to Diem and Young's (2017) critical policy analysis framework for the development of policies affecting society today. The meanings derived from the language of these policy documents relate to how policy is implemented in practice at Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand level and at ITE providers through their paper and programme offerings.

ITE offerings and paper descriptor content relate to the agency ITE providers have when considering the structuring properties of inclusive education provisions framing their decision-making. The information and meanings derived from ITE offerings and paper descriptor content aim to examine offerings at Bachelor, Graduate Diploma, and Postgraduate levels to identify inclusive education content not only within the programme but across programmes within the selected seven universities. The determined keywords and patterns are carried through to this component of the study to make connections to the structure-agency relationship framing the research. The ITE providers are the active human agents that react to and transform the structuring properties of policy documents into a socially constructed reality within their particular social field (Craib, 2011; Elliott, 2013; Giddens, 1984). The meanings derived from this process refer to Diem and Young's (2017) critical policy analysis framework of examining the difference between policy and what happens in reality. The examination of the structuring properties of inclusive education policies in relation to ITE programme offerings and paper descriptor content shows how active agents in the world of ITE translate policy into practice.

Instead of interviews, further documents and evidence beyond policy are used to reflect on the beneficiaries and disadvantaged of inclusive education provisions. This is done with the aim to derive information evidenced in society by teachers and families having had experience in inclusive education. *Inclusive practices for students with special needs in schools* released by ERO in 2015, *Ministry of Education and TKI websites* on inclusion, and *news media articles* were used to examine the evidence of inclusion in teaching practices and in the experiences of families in social contexts. Taking the critical policy analysis beyond the policy documents and finding evidence of policy implementation in practice reinforces the structure-agency relationship of the study where meaning is reconstructed by active agents in their social fields (Jain, 2016). Through language use, the beneficiaries and disadvantaged of inclusive education provisions are examined and reported on with the inclusion of this evidence.

Sampling

This research study used *availability-based* population for the critical content analysis with *purposive sampling* as a technique. *Availability-based* means that the documents under examination are available to the receivers at a particular given time (Neuendorf, 2019b). The receiver in the instance of this research study is myself as the researcher and anyone else who wishes to access the education acts, the policies, the ITE programme development guidelines, the ERO report, Ministry of Education and TKI websites, and the news media articles. They are publicly available online. *Purposive sampling* refers to the researcher deciding on the sample size and the exact documents to include in the research study (Neuendorf, 2019b). The study examines language features in the inclusive education provisions in relation to paper descriptors, the ERO report, Ministry of Education and TKI websites, and news media articles in social and political contexts through the use of language.

The following table indicates how the policies under investigation relate to the research questions and the critical policy analysis framework. The arrows in the table indicate that while each column is connected, there is also a connection between the three columns by having a structure-agency relationship with each other

Main Research Question: How do inclusive education and ITE policies frame initial primary teacher education programme content for inclusive teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand?	Sub-question one: Which policies guide teacher education programme content for inclusive practices and how did they historically develop in Aotearoa New Zealand?	Sub-question two: How is the relationship between current provisions in policy and ITE programme content for inclusion evident in policy and programme documentation?	Sub-question three: How might the relationship between policy and ITE programmes be influencing inclusive teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand today?
Critical policy analysis framework (Diem and Young's (2017))	2. Investigating the development of a policy and how it changed over time affecting society today	1. examining the difference between the policy and what happens in reality	3. reflecting on the beneficiaries and disadvantaged of the policies and their reasons for being so.

Inclusive Education Provisions	Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and Training Act 2020 Special Education 2000 Teaching Council of Aotearoa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements – Teaching Council (2019) Advice Paper: Positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession? – Education Council (n.d.) 	ITE Programme Offerings in Aotearoa New Zealand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> University 1 (U1) University 2 (U2) University 3 (U3) University 4 (U4) University 5 (U5) University 6 (U6) University 7 (U7) Paper Descriptors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper Descriptor 1 (PD1) Paper Descriptor 2 (PD2) Paper Descriptor 3 (PD3) 	Education Review Office (ERO): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive practices for students with special needs in schools – ERO (2015) Ministry of Education and Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Education – Inclusive education TKI – Inclusive education News media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't blame the teachers; the needs of all children are important Special school with low roll says its service is still needed
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Table 2: List of policies in relation to research questions and critical policy analysis framework

Ethical Considerations

Research ethics is an important consideration and a researcher needs to locate oneself in relation to the data investigated, the research context and process, and the time required to conduct the research (Cohen et al., 2018; Holmes, 2020; Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). While this research study examines publicly available Acts, policy documentation, ITE programme information, paper descriptors, Ministry of Education and TKI websites, and news media articles, there is no requirement for ethics committee approval for that part of the study. However, all research must be conducted respectfully and without causing harm to others (Cohen et al., 2018; Mutch, 2013) regardless of whether there are human participants in the study. When human participants are not involved, ethical considerations need to focus on appropriate and lawful access to and gathering of data as without the appropriate authorisation the researcher may face unethical misconduct (Mutch, 2013). Hence, this part

of the study only focuses on publicly available documentation available through internet searches, and pseudonyms are used to de-personalise universities and their paper descriptors to protect their anonymity.

Ethics approval was, however, sought from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) based on the evaluation of the pilot study (Gajdocsi, 2021). The application was approved with reference number 22/70, but unfortunately, no invited experts agreed to participate or responded to the invitation request. Hence, the study used evidence beyond policy documents to link the beneficiaries and disadvantaged of inclusive education policies to the study in the form of the ERO report, Ministry of Education and TKI websites, and news media.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research design of the study. The pilot study formed an important element of the decision-making process and while an attempt was made to include human participants in the study, their decline or non-response initiated a different approach in the way of going beyond policies and looking at evaluations and experiences of ERO, teachers, and individuals through reports, Ministry of Education and TKI websites and news articles for further evidence. This reinforces the iterative nature of research (Cohen et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) where adjustments are necessary to be made to overcome challenges to ensure the completion of the research study in a meaningful manner.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research study. The research sub-questions are used to organise the findings into categories to answer the main research question. Sub-question one focuses on inclusive education policies and their development in Aotearoa New Zealand, sub-question two centres around the relationship of how inclusive education policies frame ITE programme content, and sub-question three focuses on how inclusive education policy and ITE programme content influence inclusive primary teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. Finally, a conclusion is drawn to highlight the overall findings of the study.

Research Sub-Question One

The development of inclusive education provisions was discussed in the *Literature Review* section in *Chapter Two*. As there is not one specific policy that guides initial teacher education and inclusive teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand, this study assembled four up-to-date policy documents to examine. These are *Special Education 2000 (SE2000)*, *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements (Teaching Council of Aotearoa, 2019)*, *Education and Training Act 2020*, and *Advice paper: Positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession (n.d)*.

The critical content analysis identified two terms as a pattern that are used in conjunction with the concept of inclusive education in the reviewed policy documents. Pattern one is the word *special*, and pattern two refers to the primary school-aged human individuals by way of *child/ren / student/s / learner/s*. These last three words were combined into one terminology to show a historical development in their usage. The critical content analysis found how New Zealand government policies and Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand documents use different terminology. New Zealand government policies still use more historical versions of terminology, whereas Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand documents are more in line with international language use relating to inclusive education. This section looks at the four policy documents individually as the findings are outlined.

Special Education 2000 (SE2000)

The critical content analysis examined the frequency of the terminology *special* used in *SE2000* and it occurs thirteen times referring to *special* education needs, and equipment; while the word *specialist* is created from the root word *special* and is used eighteen times in relation to *specialist* support, therapy, and teachers. The word *inclusion* does not appear in *SE2000* which may be indicative of the era still developing a concept of inclusion in Aotearoa New Zealand at that time as the word *special* precedes the term and concept of *inclusion / inclusive education* that are embedded in human rights movements and legislative changes to support human diversity (Ballard, 1996; Blanton et al., 2018; Hellblom-Thibblin, 2018; Imray & Colley, 2017; Selvaraj, 2016; Slee, 2018). The 1990s and early 2000s saw a commitment in Aotearoa New Zealand moving towards inclusive education opportunities for *all* students (Carrington et al., 2012; Selvaraj, 2016), and this framed the development of *SE2000* as a policy to provide high-quality inclusive education to *all* learners (Creech, 1997; Greaves, 2003; Wills, 2006). Despite the developing concept of inclusion, the title of *SE2000* indicates the policy refers to *special* education and the *special* education needs of individuals rather than focusing on *all* learners as part of the concept of inclusion. The terms *child/ren / student/s / learner/s* are all words referring to primary school-aged individuals. *SE2000* uses the word *child/ren* twice only and refers to primary school-aged individuals as *student/s*. The term *learner/s* is not yet evident.

SE2000 reflects historical language use that overarch the document as a structure (Craib, 2011; Elliott, 2013) in the use of the term *special* that is embedded in time and history preceding it (Portschy, 2020). At policy level the challenge is to change language habits that are embedded in policy documents and the mindsets of policymakers (Slater, 2018). This embeddedness is evident in *SE2000* in the use of *special*. As chronologically *SE2000* is the oldest document under examination in this research study, historical influences of *special needs education* are still evident.

ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements

When comparing the critical content analysis of *SE2000* with the *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements* policy released in 2019, it is noticeable that the term *special* education needs is only used once, and *specialist* teachers, teaching, and experts three times in the *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements* document. This is a definite reduction in the frequency of the terminology used and it can be attributed to discursive shifts

and a move towards *inclusion* as a concept. The word *inclusion* and *inclusive* have a combined occurrence of ten in the document which suggests the concept of *inclusion* and *inclusive* is evident in this current policy document today.

There was a recognisable shift in language use between the late 1900s and early 2000s, when *SE2000* was developed and released, in comparison to 2019, when the *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements* were published. There seems to be a distinct move away from referring to primary school-aged individuals as *children* and *students*, and rather the document uses the term *learner/s* two hundred times which is significantly more than referring to these individuals as *student/s*.

While this document prefers the use of *learner/s* it also aims to avoid repetition of the same word in a sentence and in sentences to follow. Therefore, the assumption is that the terms *child/ren* and *student/s* are used interchangeably to refer to *learner/s* to avoid repetition. This is in line with the methodical process language is used that guides the interpretation of the text via humans acting on the document (Craib, 2011; Elliott, 2013; Giddens, 1984). For the term *learner/s* to become specialised knowledge, it needs to be dispersed for reality to be constructed through the meaning of the word (Mourad, 2018). The terms *special* and *specialist* are only used a few times; the term *inclusion* is the preferred terminology to indicate a commitment to align with international policy documents regarding inclusion (Ballard, 1996; Blanton et al., 2018; Hellblom-Thibblin, 2018; Imray & Colley, 2017; Selvaraj, 2016; Slee, 2018).

Education and Training Act 2020

The *Education and Training Act 2020*, released a year after the *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements*, however, uses the word *special* forty times and the term *specialist* thirty-four times. The terms *inclusion* and *inclusive* only appear twice, one occurrence for each word in the Act. This can indicate that Hochstrasser Fickel and Guerin's (2019) findings on the term *special education*, and related terminology, are still used interchangeably with *inclusion* and *inclusive education*. It is also indicative of the language still in use at New Zealand government level compared to Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand level in the *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements*. A year after the release of the *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements* the New Zealand government released the *Education and Training Act 2020* with more reference to *special* education and *specialist* schools than the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand a year prior in the *ITE*

programme approval, monitoring and review requirements document. The *Education and Training Act 2020* fails to align with the language the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand used in 2019, and a regression to the word *child/ren* is noticeable within the Act. The term *child/ren* is used eighty times and the word *learner/s* is only ten times which is even fewer than the term *student/s*.

To contrast *SE2000* to the *Education and Training Act 2020*, similar findings are evident except for the term *inclusion / inclusive* appearing in the *Education and Training Act 2020* compared to *SE2000*. Embedded language habits (Slater, 2018) are still visible in the *Education and Training Act 2020*; however, a discursive shift is also evident in the use of *inclusion / inclusive* that indicates intentional actions and knowledge reproduction (Craib, 2011; Giddens, 1984) to make *inclusion* more visible twenty years after *SE2000* was released. The term *learner/s* is also evident, unlike in *SE2000*, which is indicative of the dispersion of specialised knowledge and terminology through language use (Mourad, 2018).

Advice paper: positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?

The *Advice paper: positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?* document does not use the word *special* when discussing making initial teacher education a postgraduate qualification. The term *inclusive* occurs once in the document referring to *inclusive* learning environments and this potentially indicates an approach in postgraduate qualifications that the focus is more on *inclusive* educational practices over *special* education needs. The *Advice paper: positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?* policy is similar to the *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements* in that the term *learner/s* is the dominant terminology used in the document. The avoidance of repetition within sentences and paragraphs is evident similarly to the *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements*, and by using terminology consistently in Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand policy documents a commitment at policy level is made to incorporate the concept of inclusion. The term *special* is completely omitted from this document which indicates an approach towards inclusive educational practices.

Research Sub-Question One was an examination of policy documents through critical content analysis. Similarities between New Zealand government policies and Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand documents have been found in terms of the language used.

Discrepancies were also noted as the language between government documents varied from Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand policies. Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand was found to be more in line with international terminology used in inclusive provisions globally.

Research Sub-Question Two

To examine the structure-agency relationship of policy documents to ITE programme content, ITE programme offerings across the seven universities were examined by looking at paper descriptors to see where inclusive education content was evident within the programme. A distinction is made between undergraduate, graduate diploma, and postgraduate qualifications to show the types of ITE qualifications offered at the seven universities with inclusive education content within their programme. Paper descriptor content indicated that universities have made a conscious effort to offer inclusive education content across undergraduate, graduate diploma, and postgraduate levels. This is indicative of universities giving options to student teachers to select from ITE qualifications at various levels while making an effort to enhance teaching as a profession through postgraduate qualification options complementing undergraduate and graduate pathways (Education Council New Zealand, n.d). As the *Education and Training Act 2020* was aimed to be less prescriptive than the previous Education Acts (Ministry of Education, 2021b), it can be assumed that ITE providers rely on their own interpretations of ITE programme content for inclusion, hence, the extent to which inclusive education is incorporated into a programme varies across the levels, and across universities.

As Table 3 shows, inclusive content is evident at different levels across the seven universities and five universities have papers that have the terms *inclusive*, *inclusion*, *diverse*, *diversity* evident in the paper title. The rest of the papers have paper titles that are not indicative of specific *inclusive* content and the paper descriptors need to be read more in-depth to realise that *inclusive* content is embedded within the paper. U1 and U3 offer one undergraduate paper each where the paper title is indicative of inclusive content; U4 offers one graduate diploma level paper and two postgraduate papers indicative of inclusive content in the paper title; U6 has the most even distribution of papers with inclusive education indication in the paper title, two in undergraduate, graduate diploma, and postgraduate levels respectively; U7 has one paper at postgraduate level where the paper title indicates inclusive content. This comparison indicates that most paper titles do not include any terminology related to inclusive education.

Name of University	Undergraduate level paper (Bachelor's degree)		Graduate Diploma level paper (Graduate Diploma)		Postgraduate level paper (including Postgraduate Diploma and Master)	
	Total number of papers with inclusive content	Paper title indicative of inclusive content	Total number of papers with inclusive content	Paper title indicative of inclusive content	Total number of papers with inclusive content	Paper title indicative of inclusive content
U1	5	1	0	0	7	0
U2	0	0	2	0	0	0
U3	1	1	information not available	information not available	0	0
U4	11	0	1	1	4	2
U5	0	0	3	0	3	0
U6	6	2	6	2	13	2
U7	0	0	0	0	2	1

Table 3: Inclusive education content in paper offerings across seven New Zealand universities

Based on this information, paper descriptors were examined in more depth to see how inclusive education content is evident in the papers. Figure 3 shows language referring to inclusive education used in paper descriptors across the seven universities. The most common terms used in paper descriptors are in line with New Zealand government and Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand policy documents in that words such as *inclusion*, *diversity*, and *special needs*, and their use with other words, are the most prevalent. These include *inclusion of all children*, *inclusive classrooms and learning programmes*, *diverse and additional learning needs*, *special needs and abilities*. Terminology such as *priority learners* and *targeted learners* only appear once in two different paper descriptors, and the use of the words *disability* and *exclusion* also appear once in two different paper descriptors.

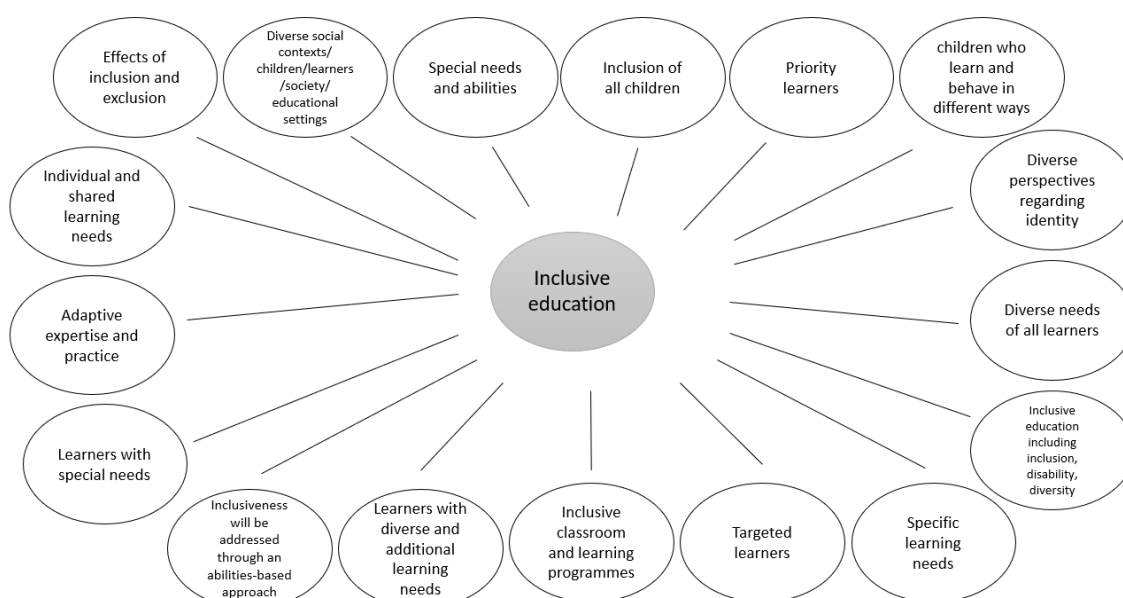


Figure 3: Inclusive education language use in paper descriptors across seven New Zealand universities

Critical content analysis of three paper descriptors

Three paper descriptors were selected to examine in more depth in relation to the four policy documents discussed in *Sub-Question One*. The three paper descriptors are referred to as PD1-U, PD2-GD, and PD3-PG thereafter, and each paper descriptor is from a different university in Aotearoa New Zealand. PD1-U refers to an undergraduate paper, PD2-GD is a graduate diploma level paper, and PD3-PG is a postgraduate, Master level paper.

PD1-U	Undergraduate, Bachelor level paper
PD2-GD	Graduate Diploma level paper
PD3-PG	Postgraduate, Master level paper
PD = Paper Descriptor U = Undergraduate GD = Graduate Diploma PG = Postgraduate	

Table 4: Paper Descriptor Legend

The paper descriptors were selected to compare and contrast one undergraduate paper, one graduate diploma level paper, and one postgraduate level paper at master's level with the aim of having an overview of a small selection of offerings across different levels to fit the scope of the study (Neuendorf, 2019b). Critical content analysis was performed on the three paper descriptors to show the structure-agency relationship between the language of policy and its implementation in practice in the ITE environment. The critical content analysis revealed that PD1-U was the only paper that used the word *special* and *speciality* in the descriptor alongside the terms *inclusion* and *inclusive*. Although the occurrence of *inclusion* and *inclusive* was much higher than the terms *special* and *specialty*. PD2-GD and PD3-PG used the terms *diverse* and *diversity* almost in equal occurrence to *inclusion* and *inclusive* with the addition of the word *disability* in PD3-PG and the term *intersectionality* relating to learner needs. The word *special* was omitted from PD2-GD and PD3-PG and the preference was on *inclusion* and *inclusive* instead. The language of referring to primary school-aged individuals within paper descriptors also varied. While the term *learner/s* occurred four times in PD2-GD and three times in PD3-PG, PD1-U had no occurrence of *learner/s*. The word *child/ren* was dominant in PD1-U, occurring five times, while PD3-PG used it three times and PD2-GD completely omitted it. The use of the word *student/s* only appeared in PD2-GD on two occasions.

Linguistically the paper descriptors align with both the New Zealand government and Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand policy documents. PD1-U has more similarities to *SE2000* and

the *Education and Training Act 2020* in the use of the word *child/ren* being more prominent. PD2-GD and PD3-PG align more with Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand and their *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements* and the *Advice paper: Positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?* documents using the terms *learner/s* and *student/s* more. PD3-PG was the only paper that included policy knowledge and analysis in the paper descriptor making the paper relevant by including the structuring element of policies in the ITE programme. The term *intersectionality* appeared in PD2-GD in the same sentence as *diversity*. *Intersectionality* refers to marginalised and disadvantaged individuals or groups (Merriam Webster, n.d.), and based on the language use of PD2-GD it is related to inclusive education. These differences in meanings indicate that *child/ren* and *student/s* are less favourable to the most recent definition of *learner/s* in current policy documents. This can be contributed to a conscious move towards recognising learners as individuals as the same regardless of age, diverse abilities, and backgrounds.

As the *Education and Training Act 2020* aims to be less prescriptive (Ministry of Education, 2021b) than the ones preceding it, it can be assumed that this contributes to the variety of language used in paper descriptors. PD1-U is more in line with *SE2000* linguistically, while PD2-GD and PD3-PG embed more recent adoptions of terminology from the *ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements* and *Advice paper: positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?*. PD3-PG seemed to be the most comprehensive incorporating not only general inclusive education content but also a focus on policies that frame inclusive education. This indicates a structure-agency relationship to policy, ITE, and inclusive teaching practices that are framed by inclusive provisions.

Research Sub-Question Two examined three paper descriptors more in-depth in relation to inclusive education provisions. It is evident that PD3-PG was the most comprehensive in terms of covering inclusive content and a variety of language use was found in paper descriptors to indicate inclusive education relevance in the papers. These linguistic features all have connections either to the New Zealand government or the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand policies in the choice of language used.

Research Sub-Question Three

As invited experts from ITE providers either declined to participate or did not respond to the invitation to participate in this study, sub-question three draws on evidence from other sources

to link the structure-agency relationship of inclusive education provisions and ITE programme content to primary inclusive teaching practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. These sources include *Inclusive practices for students with special needs in schools – Education Review Office (ERO) report (2015)*, *Ministry of Education* and *Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) websites*, and *news media*. The news media articles in particular link to the beneficiaries and disadvantaged of inclusive education provisions as outlined in the *Research Design* chapter.

Inclusive practices for students with special needs in schools (2015)

This ERO document focuses on future steps for both schools and the Ministry of Education to achieve inclusive education for all students regardless of their abilities (Education Review Office, 2015). The terms *inclusion/inclusive* and the term *special education needs* appear an almost equal number of times in the document. The search resulted in approximately 180 occurrences for both throughout the document. The primary school-aged individuals are referred to as *student/s* over four hundred times in the document which significantly exceeds the very few occurrences of *learner/s* and *child/ren*. This is interpreted as a conscious attempt from ERO to incorporate terminology used both in New Zealand government and Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand documents finding a middle ground between language use. The report defines inclusion and justifies the use of *special education needs* in comparison to students with *some form of additional needs*. This indicates that at the release of this report, there is still a discrepancy in what specialised language is used to construct the understanding of reality by the reader (Mourad, 2018). As this report is linked to the evaluation of *SE2000*, the terminology of *special education needs* is naturally evident from the historical structure that frames the report (Craib, 2011; Elliott, 2013).

Ministry of Education and Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI)

The Ministry of Education and TKI claim that they are both committed to achieving fully inclusive learning environments in the New Zealand education system (Ministry of Education, 2021c; Te Kete Ipurangi, n.d.-a). TKI's inclusive education website has the word *inclusive* in large bold letters grabbing the viewers' attention as the middle of the word *inclusi*ve changes colour, shown in New Zealand Sign Language, and Braille (Te Kete Ipurangi, n.d.-a). This immediately indicates that the intended focus is on *us* that aligns with the New Zealand government and Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand policy documents outlining that *all* learners need to be

included in the education system regardless of background and abilities. The Ministry of Education (2021c) website refers to *all* learners and the meaning aligns with TKI's use of *us* giving guidance to schools about the importance of achieving and maintaining inclusive learning environments for *all*. Both websites refer to the school environment as a learning community (Ministry of Education, 2021c; Te Kete Ipurangi, n.d.-a) that can be interpreted as an extension of the terms *us* and *all* by changing the discourse from learning environments. Figure 4 is a screenshot of the word *inclusive* on the TKI website.



Figure 4: Inclusive education. Te Kete Ipurangi (n.d.,-a)

News media

The concept of inclusive education is evident beyond policy and school environments. News media articles report on what inclusive education looks like in practice and how it is experienced by families and teachers. This is related to the critical policy analysis framework of reflecting on the disadvantaged and beneficiaries of inclusive education provisions (Diem & Young, 2017).

Article: Don't blame teachers; the needs of all children are important

The article *Don't blame teachers; the needs of all children are important* (McBreen, 2021) reports on the real-life experiences of a teacher who worked in an inclusive mainstream learning environment with children referred to as having special needs (McBreen, 2021). Language from the article suggests that this teacher found working in a mainstream inclusive learning environment challenging and felt that her initial teacher education failed to equip her with skills

and knowledge necessary to successfully support all learners in inclusive learning environments (McBreen, 2021):

“As a trained primary school teacher, I am not a psychologist, a social worker, trained in restraint, neurodiverse behaviours, autism, dyspraxia, ADHD, or any other behavioural needs.”

“I was only trained to teach the curriculum, and even though we are sent on courses on how to deal with special needs, it in no way prepares us for what really happens in the classroom.”

(McBreen, 2021, para. 6, 7)

The teacher acknowledges that the term *all* refers to every individual learner and based on this teacher’s experience she found that while learners with special needs were accommodated and supported in inclusive learning environments, other learners were missing out on essential learning due to the lack of funding available and the time it takes to gain funding to hire teacher aides to support the teachers, the learners and the learning environment (McBreen, 2021).

“There is a lack of funded help available to schools and they must prioritise the worst cases. The paperwork is complicated and takes weeks, if not months, to be approved. You can apply for funding for a teacher aide in term one and then not actually have anything happen until term two.”

“I went to university and spent a lot of money on learning how to teach, but in a classroom with special needs students, too often the other children are left to their own devices.”

(McBreen, 2021, para. 16, 32)

The teacher concluded that she is supportive of mainstream inclusive learning environments with the adaptation that students with special needs have access to their own specialised classrooms and teaching staff while mingling on the playground (McBreen, 2021). This approach would enable *all* learners to have access to education that fully caters to their needs without disadvantaging anyone (McBreen, 2021).

I now believe that these students do have a place in mainstream education, but they need their own learning space, their own classroom, their own specialised teaching staff and aides.

They can mingle in the playground with the other students in their breaks.

I believe this to be the best outcome.

Education these days is like life, we have to be inclusive, we cannot discriminate, everyone has the same rights, but we are not doing our children any justice by locking them in classrooms with children who have high needs.

(McBreen, 2021, para. 34, 35,36,37).

The article presented two main issues. One relates to initial teacher education and the unpreparedness of teachers to work in mainstream inclusive learning environments that align with international research in this area (Avisar et al., 2016; Bentley-Williams et al., 2017; Gavish, 2017; Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin, 2019; Shani & Hebel, 2016; Zagana et al., 2017). The other issue is the policy system that overarches and structures mainstream inclusive learning environments. While there is evidence that policy has the best intention to achieve full inclusion (Carrington et al., 2012; Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin, 2019; Selvaraj, 2016), there is a discrepancy between policy intention and what happens in reality. The in-between layer of initial teacher education that sits between policy and real-life teaching practices is the area that is relied upon the most by teachers to gain sufficient knowledge and expertise that equips them to work in real-life learning environments. The experiences of this teacher in this article indicate that initial teacher education fails to equip teachers with sufficient skills, knowledge, and expertise to successfully educate *all* learners in mainstream inclusive learning environments. The findings of this study indicate that while inclusive education content is evident in ITE programmes, the extent of it varies between providers and levels. This may be a contributing factor to how teachers experience inclusive education if they feel unprepared to work in them.

Article: Special school with low roll says its service is still needed

Article *Special school with low roll says its service is still needed* (Jones, 2022) indicates similar findings to *Don't blame teachers; the needs of all children are important* (McBreen, 2021). While government initiatives have been made to support the inclusion of learners with high needs in mainstream learning environments, some families believe the best place for their children with high needs is a specialised learning environment that fully caters to learners' needs (Jones, 2022).

“The Armstrong family went through what seemed to be a never ending ordeal in trying to find adequate education for their daughter due to Wairarapa primary schools not being equipped to cater for special needs students.”

(Jones, 2022, para. 7)

The article also acknowledges that Aotearoa New Zealand has policies to support inclusion that are based on international provisions and agreements, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Jones, 2022):

“We have a whole range of education and disability policies in New Zealand that support inclusive education, and we also have obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to be shifting our entire education system towards inclusion, and away from exclusion.”

(Jones, 2022, para. 52)

However, families in certain geographical locations in Aotearoa New Zealand find that they are more disadvantaged than others as their communities do not receive the same level of services as other areas (Jones, 2022). This is evident in Morton et al.’s (2012) evaluation of inclusive provisions being poorly executed in Aotearoa New Zealand which has a direct effect on ITE providers and teaching practices.

“Beth and Nick Armstrong with Madeleine, left, and Molly endured a tough eight years with inadequate support for children with highly complex needs in their community's primary schools.”

“Wairarapa, where the family lived, was “a desert” in services for the disabled, with primary schools not equipped to cater for special needs students, he said.”

(Jones, 2022, para. 56, 58)

While this article did not mention initial teacher education, it highlighted the important aspect of policies structuring the education system and how a well-intentioned policy can still fail to adequately support families and their children. The perspective and voices of families need to be taken into consideration when making education available to *all* learners despite their backgrounds and abilities (Jones, 2022). The article *Special school with low roll says its service is still needed* (Jones, 2022) indicates that a one-size-fits-all model may not work for everyone, and accommodations in funding, access to services, and choice of education providers need to be in consultation with families, schools, and the wider community.

Research Sub-Question Three examined the extent to which inclusive education provisions are evident in the wider society. It was found that linguistically ERO aligned more with the language of policy documents released by the New Zealand government relating more to special needs education. However, an attempt was made to include more inclusive language into the report to indicate an understanding of inclusion as a concept. Ministry of Education and TKI have made a conscious effort to provide the most up-to-date information about inclusion to the wider society and on their websites. They are fully supportive of inclusion and the internationally used inclusive education terminology is also used at Ministry level. The news media articles discussed education from a special needs education perspective and touched on initial teacher education. They also captured the experiences of families in how they navigate the differing concepts of inclusion and special needs education. On interpretation, the teacher and the families in the articles feel they are disadvantaged by the lack of effective implementation of inclusive education provisions across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Conclusion

This chapter found that while there are similarities between New Zealand government and Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand released policy documents there are also differences in the terminology used. Words used in context show a discursive shift from historical meanings and associations to more recent concepts around defining individuals. The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand was found to be more in line with international approaches to inclusive education when examining linguistic elements. ITE offerings and paper descriptors using their agency to respond to the structuring properties of inclusive education policies also showed contrast. Some aligned more with New Zealand government, and others with the language of the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. Looking at the effect of policy beyond the documents itself indicated that an attempt is made at ERO, ministry, and TKI levels to support inclusion. However, experiences of families and a teacher in the news media articles indicated that navigating and implementing inclusive education provisions varies not only between ITE providers but also geographical regions in Aotearoa New Zealand. The question remains as to why there is still a discrepancy in the implementation of inclusion at ITE provider, school, and community level when an attempt is made to embrace fully inclusive educational practices at policy level?

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter provides a critical discussion of the findings of the study by focusing on three elements that emerged as the most significant aspects of the findings. These include a discussion about the difference in language use between policies released by the New Zealand government and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, the response of ITE providers to inclusive education provisions, and policy implementation in practice affecting schools, teachers, and families. The discussion provides a framework for how policy actors recontextualise, interpret, and translate policies in practice. The chapter also discusses policy intermediaries in the context of the Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand, ITE providers, and schools having the intermediary roles in policy implementation in practice.

Policy framework and intermediaries

A policy is a text where through the social agency of actors an understanding is constructed based on the interpretation of the text (Ball, 1993). Policy is not a linear process, rather it exists in a cycle and has three main facets: a *context of influence* that refers to the historical underpinnings of the policies, a *context of text production* that is related to the structuring properties of the policy environment, and a *context of practice* that provides the agency of ITE providers and schools in this research study (Lingard & Sellar, 2013). This framework is in line with the conceptual and methodological approaches of the study using Diem and Young's (2017) critical policy analysis framework and social constructionism and structuration theory to indicate structure-agency relationships (Burr, 2015; Canary, 2018; Carrington et al., 2012; Craib, 2011). The roots of the policies in Diem and Young's (2017) framework form the *context of influence* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013) together with the historical background in social constructionism and structuration theory (Burr, 2015; Canary, 2018; Carrington et al., 2012; Craib, 2011). The *context of text production* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013) relates to the structuring properties of the conceptual frameworks that influence the re/production of policies within and beyond the policy landscape (Burr, 2015; Canary, 2018; Carrington et al., 2012; Craib, 2011; Diem & Young, 2017). And the *context of practice* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013) is in line with how agents react to (Burr, 2015; Canary, 2018; Carrington et al., 2012; Craib, 2011; Diem & Young, 2017) policies in practice. The way of understanding policy can be further extended by two more facets: the *context of outcomes* that affect teachers and families in the case of this study, and the *context of political strategy* that contributes to the cyclical, interactive, and multidirectional reality of policy where political

strategy is continuously reviewed in response to contexts of outcomes and practice (Lingard & Sellar, 2013). This forms the framework for the discussion of the findings as outlined in Figure 5.

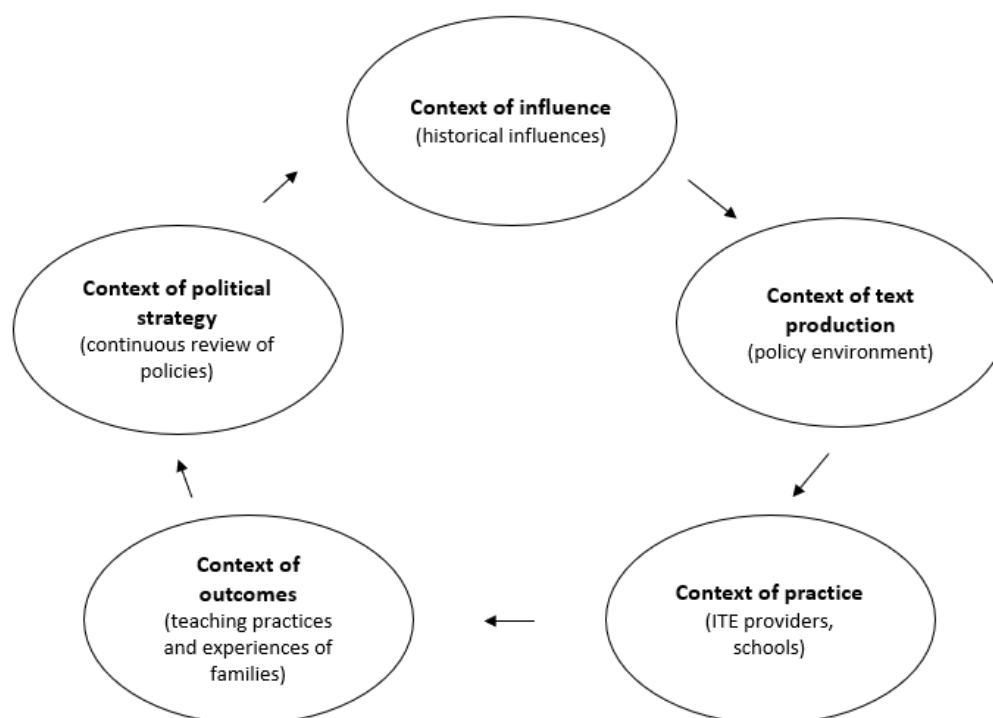


Figure 5: Cycle approach to policy

The term *intermediary* is defined as *being or happening between* (Collins, n.d.), and in policy contexts intermediaries are referred to as “organisations or programmes that work between policy-makers and service providers to facilitate effective implementation of evidence-informed policies, programmes and practices” (Bullock & Lavis, 2019, p. 1). Policy implementation relies on governments and other organisations to use their agency to achieve policy intentions in practice (Bullock & Lavis, 2019). In the case of this study, the intermediaries are the Ministry of Education, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, ITE providers, schools, teachers, and families navigating the policy environment where the structuring properties are provided by the New Zealand government. Intermediaries play an important role in translating policies into practice and aid in the interpretation of the descriptive nature of policies (Bullock & Lavis, 2019) through interpreting language use that contribute to policy recontextualization in practice (Ball & Bowe, 1992). Recontextualising policy involves an understanding of the intended policy that is influenced by ideologies and historical underpinnings (Ball & Bowe, 1992). The actual policy that acts as text and exists as formal legislation before it becomes policy-in-use is translated into institutional practices with linguistic features particular to specific settings (Ball & Bowe, 1992). This process is evident in how the actual policies of the New Zealand government are interpreted

and recontextualised by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand before ITE providers implement them in their own specific settings. ITE providers create their own policies in the form of internal policies and paper descriptors that guide their ITE programmes. These have an effect at school level impacting on teachers, learners, and their families understanding, implementing, and navigating the inclusive education policy and practice environment.

The language of policies: the New Zealand government and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand

While New Zealand has made a commitment to providing inclusive learning environments and learning communities (Ministry of Education, 2021c; Te Kete Ipurangi, n.d.-a) at policy level, discrepancies between the use of terminology are evident between policies released by the New Zealand government and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. In terms of language use, the New Zealand government is found to be more in line with what is traditionally known as *special needs education* rather than *inclusive education*. Language use from the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand indicates that while they are governed by the New Zealand government, they also incorporate terminology from international inclusive education policies in their ITE programme development guidelines. These international policies influencing the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand include the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* (Blanton et al., 2018), the *1994 Salamanca Conference on Special Needs Education* (Morton et al., 2012; UNESCO, 1994), *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* (Blanton et al., 2018), *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)* (Blanton et al., 2018), the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and on the *Rights of People with Disabilities* (Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin, 2019), and the *UNESCO (2019) Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*.

This influence is indicative of the historical *context of influence* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013) relating to intended policies (Ball & Bowe, 1992) being recontextualised for the policy environment as *actual policies* (Ball & Bowe, 1992) in the *context of text production* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013) by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. The *context of influence* was outlined in the *Literature Review* in *Chapter Two* providing a background to the development of inclusive education provisions. The New Zealand government is responsive to their *context of influence* by recontextualising international policies to suit the specific settings (Ball & Bowe, 1992) of the country. The *context of influence* relates to the historical environment the examined policies were influenced by. The *actual policies* are both the international and New Zealand government provisions that the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand interpreted and recontextualised

for the New Zealand education environment through the *context of text production*. In the case of this study, *Special Education 2000* and the *Education and Training Act 2020* form the *actual policies* released by the New Zealand government. The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand policies (*ITE programme approval, monitoring and review requirements* and *Advice paper: positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?*) are part of the *context of text production* that are developed from the *actual policies*. This is important in the structuring properties of power that generate meaning and contribute to the structure-agency relationship (Singh et al., 2013) between the New Zealand government and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. At policy level, the New Zealand government's *context of influence* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013) is more related to the historical aspects of *special needs education* rather than the more recent concept of *inclusion*. The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand is a mid-level policy actor with the responsibility to interpret and translate policy (Singh et al., 2013) released by the New Zealand government to ensure that ITE providers are clear about how to include inclusive content in ITE programmes. Mid-level policy actors need to be experts in decoding abstract policy documents so that they are in a format that is easily read and understood by those who may never read the *actual policy* documents first hand (Singh et al., 2013). The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand is an intermediary (Bullock & Lavis, 2019) to the New Zealand government and possesses the power to recontextualise government policy documents and create specialised policy and pedagogic language. By doing so, the language of policy discourse becomes specialised knowledge (Mourad, 2018) as ITE providers follow the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand guidelines when developing ITE programme content for inclusive teaching practices.

The findings on the difference in language use between the New Zealand government and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand indicate that research evidence is correct about misconceptions and misunderstandings existing about the historical *special needs* education approaches and the more recent *inclusive education* approaches not only at policy level but also in teaching practices today (Avissar et al., 2016; Ballard, 2012; Carrington et al., 2012; Selvaraj 2016). Based on the findings of this study, these misconceptions and misunderstandings can arise from the terminology used in policy documents and where they historically originate.

ITE providers' response to inclusive education provisions

ITE providers are influenced by the *context of text production* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013) created by partly the structuring properties of the New Zealand government and also the agency of the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand in terms of their ITE programme development guidelines. ITE providers work within their *context of practice* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013) to interpret and translate policy into practice within the ITE programmes they offer. ITE providers also act as intermediaries (Bullock & Lavis, 2019) between the New Zealand government, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, student teachers, and schools across Aotearoa New Zealand. ITE providers interact with *actual policies* (Ball & Bowe, 1992) released by the Teaching Councils of Aotearoa New Zealand and with *policies-in-use* (Ball & Bowe, 1992) at tertiary institution level that include particular practices and linguistic features in response to the New Zealand government and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. Three paper descriptors were assembled as policy documents released by ITE providers at undergraduate, graduate diploma, and postgraduate levels. The paper descriptors exist both as *policy as text* (Ball, 1993) where interpretations of inclusive education policies change from one tertiary institution to another. At ITE provider level the interpretation of policies becomes the *interpretations of interpretations* (Ball, 1993) as the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand already re-interpreted policy documents released by the New Zealand government that contributes to ITE providers having to interpret what has already been interpreted before. While the structuring power (Singh et al., 2013) of the New Zealand government and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand is evident in relation to each other, ITE providers also have structuring properties in the content they include in their ITE programme that contributes to the *context of outcomes* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013) for inclusive teaching practices. ITE providers also structure their ITE programme content through their own internal policies relating to teacher education that are developed from the New Zealand government and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand policies. This structure-agency relationship is evident in the language of paper descriptors where ITE providers, as actors, respond to policies by translating the meaning of policies into their own policy documents as paper descriptors which in turn are interpreted into practice by university lecturers and student teachers.

The PD1-U (paper descriptor 1 – undergraduate) was found to have language more in line with the New Zealand government in terms of using the terminology *special*. The term *inclusive* was also evident but they were used alongside each other incorporating both *special needs* and *inclusive education* concepts almost interchangeably. PD2-GD (paper descriptor 2 – graduate diploma) and PD3-PG (paper descriptor 3 – postgraduate) omitted the term *special*, however,

included the word *disability* alongside *inclusion* and *diversity*. This is indicative of the recontextualising of policy documents that influence undergraduate and graduate/postgraduate programmes and the *actual policies* (Ball & Bowe, 1992) that influence the decision-making processes. PD2-GD and PD3-PG align more with the *Advice paper: Positioning teaching as a postgraduate qualification?* document in terms of language use that derives from the concept of inclusion and terminology from international inclusive education provisions mentioned in the *Policy discourses of the New Zealand government and the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand* section of this chapter. The justification for making initial teacher education a postgraduate qualification derives from international research evidence from Finland, Norway, and Estonia where integrated ITE pathways move from undergraduate to postgraduate qualifications over a five-year period (Education Council New Zealand, n.d.). Teachers are found to develop more advanced knowledge and skills based on research-based teacher education, and student learning outcomes are raised respectively (Education Council New Zealand, n.d.).

For the primary school sector in New Zealand the challenge is to ensure that all curriculum and subject areas are covered in depth within a shorter, two-year, master's qualification, therefore, possessing strong content knowledge and gaining expertise in particular learning areas relevant to the New Zealand Curriculum need to underpin postgraduate studies (Education Council New Zealand, n.d.). The paper descriptors indicated that inclusive education policies are interpreted differently across ITE providers where each provider used their own agency and recontextualization of policies to translate their meaning into paper descriptor content to include the concept and practices of *inclusion* to various degrees. The findings of Selvaraj (2016) and Carrington et al. (2012) about New Zealand ITE programmes failing to prepare teachers for fully inclusive teaching practices can be explained by the descriptive nature of policy documents (Ball, 1993; Bullock & Lavis, 2019) and their interpretations at different locations and contexts across New Zealand. Similarly, international research outlined in the *Literature Review* chapter also indicated related findings of teachers feeling unskilled and lacking in knowledge working in inclusive learning environments (Avissar et al., 2016; Bentley-Williams et al., 2017; Gavish, 2017; Hochstrasser Fickel & Guerin, 2019; Shani and Hebel, 2016; Zagona et al., 2017). While these research studies were not linked to inclusive education policy analysis, based on the findings of this study, it can be assumed that the descriptive nature of policies and their interpretation also pose challenges internationally, contributing to the different elucidation and implementation of policy documents into ITE programme content.

Effects of inclusive education provisions beyond policy

While ITE providers structure their own ITE programmes through internal and external policies, they also have a structure-agency relationship with schools, teachers, and families where the latter use their agency to put inclusive teaching practices into practice or experience and reflect on them. These responses can vary between locations and contexts (Ball, 1993) and this study made use of ERO's 2015 report, the Ministry of Education and TKI websites, and two news media articles to understand the extent inclusive education policy is evident in the wider society. This is related to the *context of outcomes* and the *context of political strategy* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013). The *context of outcomes* is ERO's report on their findings and experiences of teachers and families in the news media articles. The *context of political strategy* relates to the Ministry of Education, TKI, and evidently the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, and the New Zealand government as to how they respond to the *context of outcomes* evident and experienced in the wider society.

Linguistically, a distinct difference was found between the ERO report released in 2015 and the inclusive education content available on the Ministry of Education and TKI websites. As the ERO report was an evaluation of *Special Education 2000*, historical language features on *special education needs* were prominent throughout the document. The term *inclusion* was used interchangeably with *special education needs* that confirms what Selvaraj (2016), Carrington et al. (2012), Avissar et al. (2016), and Ballard (2012) highlighted in their research that confusion still exists today about what inclusive education is in practice. This research study found that this confusion can be linked to the choice of language used in policy documents and beyond where terminology predating the concept of *inclusive education* is still in use today, often interchangeably with the term *inclusion*. As outlined in the *Literature Review* chapter, O'Neill's (2019) research of *Inquiry into Students with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Autism Spectrum Disorder* found varying levels of experiences from families in terms of teaching practices and the inclusion of students with diverse needs in mainstream classrooms. The findings of O'Neill's (2019) study and the findings of this study examining the news media articles align with the experiences of families and learners. These findings are also indicative of the challenges teachers face in interpreting *inclusive education* when the historical term of *special needs education* is still in widespread use (O'Neill, 2019). O'Neill (2018) related the findings to initial teacher education and their importance in equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to work in fully inclusive learning environments. In McBreen's (2021) article the teacher's experience supports O'Neill's (2018) findings.

As ITE providers interpret inclusive education provisions differently, they develop their ITE programmes in line with those interpretations. This is what Ball (1993) refers to as a localised response to policy that is often ad hoc due to the descriptive rather than prescriptive nature of policy. Graduands from different ITE providers, and with different levels of qualifications, experience different *contexts of outcomes* (Lingard & Sellar, 2013) that influence their teaching practices for inclusion as beginning teachers and beyond. The agency ITE graduands have moving from the ITE environment into real-life teaching contexts contributes to the variety of approaches inclusion is evident in primary schools across Aotearoa New Zealand. As the news articles indicated, initial teacher education is an intermediary (Bullock & Lavis, 2019) between policy and everyday teaching practices and how learners and their families experience inclusive education (McBreen, 2021; Jones, 2022). This cycle leads to the last facet of the *context of political strategy*. The article *Special school with low roll says its service is still needed* (Jones, 2022) referred to how previous political parties in government in Aotearoa New Zealand have made attempts to respond to inequalities and injustices in the education system (Ball, 1993; Lingard & Sellar, 2013) based on community feedback and political and social activities. Therefore, the structure-agency relationship between the cyclical approach to the creation, production, and reproduction of policies influencing ITE programme development guidelines, ITE programme content, teaching practices, and experiences of learners and families are evident in the findings of the study. These elements exist in a flux (Burr & Dick, 2017), continuously interacting with each other framing and reframing social practices.

Conclusion

To give the research study rigour and validity (Burr, 2015; Gudmundsdottir & Brock-Utne, 2010), it was essential to assemble four policy documents to determine their impact in practice (Ball, 1993). The study found that the language of policy varies between the way the New Zealand government words policies and the way the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand interprets them and makes them available and accessible to ITE providers nationwide. The Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand uses language more in line with international directions towards inclusion. These policy-level linguistic features are evident in ITE programme content, although to varying levels depending on the level of the programme and the interpretation of the policies at institution level at ITE providers. This contributes to a wide variety of inclusive teaching practices across Aotearoa New Zealand and differences in learners' and families' experiences in inclusive learning environments. Choice of terminology is not consistent from the top down (from the level of the New Zealand government, to the Ministry

of Education, TKI, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, schools, teachers, learners, and their families). This inconsistency contributes to confusion in policy, ITE programme development guidelines, ITE programme content, inclusive teaching practices, and at the experiences of learners and families levels. Therefore, the question:

‘why is there still a discrepancy in the implementation of inclusion at ITE provider, school, and community level when an attempt is made to embrace fully inclusive educational practices at policy level?’

raised at the end of *Chapter Four* in the *Findings* section needs to be answered. The answer, based on this critical policy analysis that incorporated critical content analysis, can be contributed to the language that is in use at policy level, the historical underpinnings that frame their concepts and their meaning, and the way they are interchangeably applied even though their original definitions and intentions are different. This discrepancy affects the way teacher interpret and implement inclusive education in the classroom and how learners and their families experience inclusive education. The overlapping and interchangeable nature of *special needs education* and *inclusive education* still creates confusion for teachers, learners, and their families about understanding what inclusive education means in practice (Tirri & Laine, 2019).

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Overview of Research

This research study aimed to examine the ways inclusive education provisions frame inclusive education content within ITE programmes across Aotearoa New Zealand. The study also extended to examining how these inclusive education provisions affect inclusive primary teaching practices nationwide. The *Introduction* chapter presented the rationale for the study, a brief outline of the conceptual frameworks, and the research questions. The *Literature Review* chapter provided a background to the study by examining what inclusive education is, the inclusive education policy environment nationwide and internationally, and the known relationship of inclusive education policy to ITE programme content and inclusive teaching practices. The *Research Design* chapter focussed on outlining the methodological approach, the conceptual frameworks, and the data collection and analysis process focussing on critical policy and critical content analysis. Chapter four, the *Findings*, provided a detailed outline of the findings relating them to each research question. The *Discussion* chapter extracted the three most important findings and provided a discussion focussing on the structure-agency relationship between policy documents and their practical implementation, and the extent policy is evident beyond the document itself.

The study concluded that inclusive education policies released by the New Zealand government differ from the ones published by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand in terms of language use. This consequently contributes to discrepancies in both language use and to the extent ITE providers implement inclusive education content within ITE programmes. This has a domino effect on schools and teachers to the extent that inclusion is evident in the community. The experiences of learners and families, therefore, vary between not only schools but also geographical locations as more remote and rural areas in Aotearoa New Zealand have limited or no access to inclusive education. The study concluded that the historical concept of *special needs education* has not fully been replaced by the concept of *inclusive education* and often the two terms are used interchangeably to refer to inclusion even though the two terms have very different meanings.

Areas for further research

The study focussed on policy analysis and the implementation of policy in practice at ITE provider level influencing teaching practices nationwide. As invited experts either declined or did not respond to participating in the study, further research could focus on including more real-life experiences in the research study. These could include approaching ITE providers again to speak to their programme and paper leaders about how they interpret policy and implement it in practice when developing ITE programmes for inclusion. Schools and teachers working in inclusive learning environments could also be interviewed to gain insight into their everyday experiences with regards to implementing inclusive education policy in practice. Families with neurotypical and neurodiverse children could also be interviewed to gain insight into their own experiences in inclusive mainstream learning environments. The focus could be the extent they feel disadvantaged or benefited by inclusive education policies. A final area for further research could extend to the funding and resourcing allocations provided by the New Zealand government and how that presents itself in the classroom and in the wider school context. The research could explore the extent funding and resourcing is sufficient and what else might be missing or needed to fully fund all learners that need a form of assistance at school.

Strengths and limitations

The strength of the study lies in highlighting the importance of the relationship between policy and its implementation in practice. As Singh et al. (2013) noted *actual policies* are often not read by those implementing them. Rather, in the context of this study, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand conveys the New Zealand government policy intention to ITE providers in a more condensed and concise manner. This research study found discrepancies between the terminology used to refer to inclusive education that highlights the importance of reading the *actual policies* before implementing them. Another strength of the study is contributing to the scarce literature existing in Aotearoa New Zealand that examines the relationship between inclusive education policy and ITE programme content for inclusive teaching practices.

Certain limitations of the study have also been identified. The structure-agency relationship drawn from the conceptual frameworks focussed on discrepancies in language use. While the structuring properties of governmental organisations are evident, the agency of ITE providers and schools relies on the interpretation of individuals. This contributes to individuals interpreting and implementing inclusive education policy somewhat differently. In this study, I

as the researcher, reinterpreted the discrepancies in language use between the structure and agency relationship in policy documents contributing to including only my own voice in the study. This would have been different if experts developing ITE programmes and papers agreed to participate in the study. Their contribution would have added a meaningful element in providing real-life experiences as to how they interpret and implement policy.

This leads to the strengths and weaknesses of critical policy analysis. Critical policy analysis is important in defining and outlining the purposes of a policy, and it is possible to conduct a critical policy analysis solely by the researcher, without human participants (Diem & Young, 2017). However, as this study acknowledged, human participants provide a purposeful element and this study would have gained more insight into policy analysis as a process if the experts had provided their own views on how they navigate the policy environment.

This study only focussed on language use within the critical policy analysis and found that the terms *inclusive* and *special education* are still used interchangeably. Recent conversations in the field of inclusive and special education indicate that future studies could extend to creating a different vision of education (Kauffman et al., 2022). This includes educating all teachers to be inclusive educators without the need for separate special education teachers (Haines et al., 2022; Kauffman et al., 2022). Another conversation focuses on placing students with special needs under the guidance of teacher aides who are the least qualified staff members in a school (Haines et al., 2022). Full inclusion cannot be achieved if students with special needs are not taught, monitored, and assessed by qualified individuals (Haines et al., 2022). Student progress will be affected if teacher aides lack skills and knowledge necessary supporting students with special needs (Haines et al., 2022).

This indicates that the scope and time frame of the study is important to include more meaningful elements. A larger study would enable a larger sample size of policy documents and interviews with experts that might result in different findings from what was found in the small sample size of this study. It may also reinforce the current findings on a larger scale.

Final Conclusion

The study acknowledges that the inclusive education policy environment nationwide and internationally is complex with policies needing to be assembled from many and various sources. While the small scope of this study only enabled some policies to be examined, the potential is

there to expand the study beyond its limitations. The study's findings of discrepancies in language use can be one contributing factor to why ITE programmes are perceived to fail to prepare teachers for fully inclusive teaching practices and why there is still confusion about what inclusive education actually means in practice (Carrington et al., 2012; Gale et al., 2017; Selvaraj, 2016).

The aim of this study was to examine the ways inclusive education provisions frame inclusive education content within ITE programmes and inclusive teaching practices across Aotearoa New Zealand. This was examined through policy documents and by going beyond policy and finding evidence in the community through the ERO report, Ministry of Education, TKI websites, and news media. This research highlights the importance of terminology used consistently to relay information that consequently affects ITE providers, ITE programme content for inclusion, inclusive teaching practices, and experiences of learners and families within mainstream inclusive learning environments and across various geographical locations nationwide. While Aotearoa New Zealand has been responsive to changing paradigms that frame inclusive education, all Aotearoa New Zealand policies need to be consistent in the way inclusive education is conveyed. This is to ensure that ITE providers, teachers, learners, and their families all receive the same information on what inclusive education means in practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics approval



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)
Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

12 April 2022

Ruth Boyask
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Ruth

Re Ethics Application: **22/70 Implications of inclusive education provisions for initial teacher education (ITE) programme content, and its possible effects on inclusive primary school teaching in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 12 April 2025.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.
8. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: erikagajdocs@outlook.co.nz

Appendix B: Critical content analysis example

Advice paper: positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?

Excerpt:

What qualifications align best with the graduate outcomes we want new teachers to demonstrate?

In determining the appropriate qualification level for future ITE programmes, we need to consider the skills and knowledge we expect future graduates to acquire during their ITE studies alongside the required graduate outcomes of different types of qualifications.

Research tells us that teachers need the right mix of competencies to enable all young people to develop the knowledge, skills and values to be successful in an increasingly complex world (Loughran & Hamilton, 2016). The Education Council has indicated it is seeking future teaching graduates to meet the new Standards for Teaching Professionals (with support). The skills and knowledge include:

- pedagogical knowledge – an advanced understanding of the theory and practice of learning and teaching;
- adaptive expertise – the ability to independently (and collectively with colleagues) research, implement and evaluate the impact of learning strategies on **learner** outcomes and achievement;
- in-depth knowledge in one or more curriculum learning areas – providing an strong understanding of the New Zealand Curriculum/Te Marautanga o Aotearoa/Te Whāriki (curriculum) around which to develop their practice;
- pedagogical content knowledge – how to best teach and enable learning in specific curriculum areas;
- 'disposition to teach' – including the character, values and ability to apply their skills in a way that provides an **inclusive** learning environment that supports **learners** with diverse needs and from the many cultures in New Zealand;

1 Equivalent full-time students (EFTS)

Frequency counting:

Policy: Advice paper: positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?	
Terminology	Frequency of Terminology
special	0
inclusive	1

Policy: Advice paper: positioning teaching as a postgraduate profession?	
Terminology	Frequency of Terminology
child (development)/children	3
student/s	5
learner/s	10