

The perceptions and experiences of immigrant teachers with regard to the literacy requirements of the New Zealand secondary school curriculum.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

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

Signed.....

(Sue Crossan)

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ABSTRACT

New Zealand relies on overseas teachers to fill approximately 30% of annual vacancies (Ministry of Education, 2006). 41% of this cohort were teaching in Auckland when this study was conducted (Ministry of Education, 2001, 2003). As only 7% were new to teaching, it is likely that they bring a wealth of teaching experience to New Zealand classrooms. In 2002 New Zealand introduced a new school-leaving qualification, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), which includes a literacy strand in all subjects (Taylor, 2001). This thesis aims to investigate the needs, perceptions and insights of overseas teachers in Auckland regarding the literacy requirements of the New Zealand secondary curriculum.

In this qualitative study, interviews were carried out with ten teachers who had been teaching in Auckland between one and six years and who had all previously taught overseas. Interviews were also carried out with two literacy leaders as part of the research.

Key challenges that emerged were the incorporation of the NCEA literacy requirements in discipline areas; catering for the needs of students who speak English as a second language; dealing with the challenges of teaching literacy across the curriculum and subject specific language; finding and developing relevant resources and sourcing professional development relating to literacy teaching.

Findings revealed there were two categories of teachers – teachers who were very aware of the literacy needs of their students and those who were less aware. Teachers from England and South Africa were very aware of the varied literacy needs of New Zealand students and had received professional development in this area. Other teachers seemed less aware of the literacy demands of their students, the curriculum or their own professional development needs.

This study also reveals that recognition and provision for the professional needs of newly arrived teachers from overseas seems to vary.

There is very little research on the experiences of immigrant teachers in New Zealand; this study helps to clarify the issues which these teachers face, particularly with regard to the

dual challenges of teaching students with ESL and the expectations that all teachers will include literacy in their approach to teaching, which is part of the NCEA curriculum.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The teaching of literacy has become an increasing priority in New Zealand high schools in recent years. This focus on literacy teaching has developed as a result of a fall in New Zealand's literacy results in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) PISA (Programme for International Student Achievement) tests (Limbrick, 2001). New Zealand had enjoyed a reputation in the OECD for high scores in the comparative reading comprehension tests for school students. However, reading results from the most recent IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) tests showed that New Zealand students were not all achieving the same kind of success (Elley, 2004 & Limbrick, 2001). In the 1990s, the OECD PISA scores revealed that New Zealand had more "students performing at the highest level" (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 12); despite this excellent result, there was concern about the 10% of New Zealand students who scored the lowest level. Poor performance was strongly linked to students with low socioeconomic status or students with English as a second language (ESL) (Limbrick, 2001). New Zealand schools had an influx of ESL students during the late 1990s; this sector of the school cohort was shown to be performing poorly in literacy in the PISA tests (Elley, 2004).

The population of New Zealand changed in the late twentieth century from a largely monocultural society to being increasingly multicultural (Wilkinson, 1998). This was most apparent in the Auckland region. According to the New Zealand census statistics, Auckland is "the most ethnically diverse region in New Zealand" with 44.4% of Aucklanders identifying with an ethnicity which is non-European (Statistics New Zealand, 2007).

As a result of the PISA findings in the 1990s, the Ministry of Education introduced a National Literacy strategy (1999), a Literacy Taskforce and a Literacy Experts Group (Limbrick, 2001). In 2002 the Secondary Literacy Advisory Group began working with schools, leading to the initiation of the SSLI (Secondary Schools Literacy Initiative).

If students' literacy levels were to be improved, it was essential to identify successful teaching strategies (Limbrick, 2001). Other OECD countries were also concentrating on this issue. In the US, Parris and Collins Block (2007) investigated the similarities between successful teachers of literacy. These teachers were able to "recognise, respect, and adapt to the diversity in backgrounds and the diverse needs of their students" (p. 589). In New Zealand, the Best Evidence Synthesis (Alton-Lee, 2003) also drew attention to the importance of the individual classroom teacher. Secondary school teachers are often employed as experts in their subject specialism but they may not necessarily be literacy experts. This particularly applies to immigrant teachers who may come from different education systems and may not be aware of the literacy emphasis within the New Zealand curriculum which now includes "Using language, symbols, and texts" as a Key Competency (Ministry of Education, 2007a). This broad strategy includes critical literacy and multi literacies along with the ability to communicate in a variety of ways.

In 2002, New Zealand introduced a new school-leaving certificate, NCEA (National Certificate for Educational Achievement), which places greater emphasis on literacy skills in all subjects (Alkema & O'Connell, 2003). NCEA uses the following definition of literacy taken from the New Zealand Literacy Strategy: "Literacy is the ability to use and understand those language forms required by society and valued by individuals and communities" (Ministry of Education, n.d.,b). The Literacy Learning Progressions (Ministry of Education, n.d.,a) outlines the skills students should possess in order to meet the reading and writing demands of NCEA.

1.1.1 Overseas teachers in Auckland

New Zealand experienced a "population boom (in) the late 1980s and early 1990s" (Ministry of Education, 2003, p.1). As a result of this it became necessary to "actively recruit teachers from overseas". Two Surveys of Overseas Teachers were carried out by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2001, 2003). 41% of overseas teachers were working in Auckland at the time of the 2003 survey. Only 7% of the teachers surveyed were new to teaching when they arrived in New Zealand so it can be assumed that the

majority of immigrant teachers bring with them experience of teaching in other cultures. If teacher turnover is to be kept to a minimum, these teachers need to be retained whenever possible (Ministry of Education, 2006). It is desirable to reduce teacher turnover if a school community is going to sustain its professional practices (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung, 2007). Teachers who have received professional development designed to improve student outcomes in a specific school community should be valuable assets for a school.

Very little New Zealand research to explore the experiences of this group of teachers has taken place although there has been research published in Australia (Cruickshank (2004), Inglis and Philps (1995), Kostogriz and Peeler (2007), Peeler and Jane (2005), Reid (2005), Santoro, Reid, and Kamler (2001) and Seah and Bishop (2001)) which has been helpful to this study.

Areas which would benefit from exploration in the New Zealand context would include the induction of overseas teachers, the effects of mentoring overseas teachers, the most relevant professional development for this cohort and their cultural adjustment to the New Zealand education system. These topics are significant in New Zealand particularly if issues of retention are going to be addressed (Timperley et al., 2007).

1.2 Aims of the research

New Zealand high schools have been facing two important issues in recent years:

- The necessity of including a literacy element in all subject areas at high school level in order to help all students to access the curriculum;
- The issue of teacher scarcity and high teacher turnover leading to the need to increasingly recruit from overseas.

There are, of course, many other issues competing for priority in high schools, however, this study focuses on these two in particular. If some sectors of society continue to fall behind in reading literacy, this will lead to students leaving school without qualifications and will affect their future as well as the wider economy of New Zealand. If overseas teachers are going to be recruited in large numbers to high schools in New Zealand, they will need to be aware of the New Zealand requirements to teach literacy in all subject areas

and be equipped with the expertise required. These two issues are the primary focus of this study which will investigate the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of overseas teachers of the literacy demands of the New Zealand high school curriculum?
- What professional support would be useful as they adapt their teaching styles and experiences to meet the New Zealand literacy requirements?
- What can be learnt from their experiences of literacy teaching overseas?

I was a secondary teacher for 11 years in England until 2002. The teaching of literacy in secondary schools was becoming increasingly important at that time. I emigrated to New Zealand in 2002 and became interested in exploring the experiences of overseas teachers both before they came to New Zealand and their integration into New Zealand secondary schools; thus these questions were of particular interest to me.

1.3 Outline of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 considers the changing nature of literacy in the twenty first century. It also reviews the relevant literature available in the field of literacy teaching in secondary schools. The approach to literacy taken by some OECD countries, including New Zealand, is discussed. The literature which focuses on successful teachers of literacy is included along with a consideration of the research surrounding immigrant teachers.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach used in this study. Key findings from an analysis of the results are presented in Chapter 4 and the findings are discussed in more detail, with reference to the literature.

In the concluding chapter the findings of the study are summarized, limitations are discussed, and recommendations flowing from these findings are made. The researcher also indicates areas where further research would be beneficial.

CHAPTER 2 A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the first section identifies the literature surrounding the definition of literacy with particular reference to the types of literacy taught in high schools.

The second section presents literacy as it is taught in secondary schools in some OECD countries, namely, England, the US, Finland, Australia and New Zealand. The third section focuses on literacy in the New Zealand national curriculum.

In the final two sections, research relating to the qualities possessed by successful teachers of literacy is investigated followed by an exploration of the literature relating to the experiences of immigrant teachers.

This literature review also discusses the extent to which overseas teachers arriving in New Zealand are prepared for teaching literacy as part of the high school curriculum; a belief in the ability of the individual teacher to make a difference in the classroom undergirds this study.

2.2 Literacy

The term “literacy” has become increasingly controversial in recent years with academics contesting the meaning. As Searle contends (1999, p. 57) “being ‘literate’ depends on the definition of literacy that is adopted at a particular time in history and in a particular context”. Barton (1994) suggests that it is impossible to define literacy succinctly. Nevertheless, it has always been seen as advantageous to be literate in the Western world.

2.2.1 Autonomous views of literacy

In the past, literacy referred to the basic skills of being able to read and write – this is an “autonomous” view according to Street (1993, p. 5) who is critical of this separation of literacy from its “social context”, the situation in which it is being taught or learnt. This narrow focus on equipping people with the basic skills of reading and writing fails to take into account the fact that literacy evolves with society (Hannon, 2000), an argument which cannot be ignored in the twenty first century. Nevertheless, the traditional school curriculum relies on an autonomous use of literacy to a large extent causing educators to

concentrate on teaching the basic skills, often with tests in mind which students need to pass. This focus on the technical aspects of literacy tends to assume that literacy is “the same thing to everyone” (Baynham, 1995, p. 6), disregarding the situation in which it is being taught. The emphasis on skills which a person either has or has not acquired leads to “deficit thinking” (p.14) which easily leads to blame being placed on a person or a sector of society, for example, the teaching profession may take the blame in the media for a fall in literacy rates. The autonomous approach to literacy seems simplistic leading to Gee’s (1996) argument that literacy is not simply “the ability to read and write”, skills a person can acquire; literacy is entrenched in the society in which it is taught.

Literacy in schools is often measured quantitatively (Roberts, 1995), relying on the autonomous view of literacy. Roberts demonstrates how the autonomous approach to literacy is used by politicians and the media in their fixation with statistics and standardized tests, debating the value of this approach since he maintains that there is no one single definition of literacy. Attempts to measure literacy rely on an autonomous approach which is limiting and flawed. Comparing literacy results across the OECD presents numerous difficulties some of which are outlined by Elley (2004) who illustrates that results cannot be taken at face-value. Countries included students with differing age ranges which would have affected results. In addition some countries excluded ESL or special needs students from their test cohort.

Olsen and Torrance (2001, p. 3-5) point to the influence of the Enlightenment period on the West’s preoccupation with the benefits of literacy. This concentration on “what literacy does to people” rather than “what people can do with literacy” ignores recent technological advances which provide increased opportunities to consider how literacy can be used. The Western approach to education was rooted in the Enlightenment and seems to be slow to adapt to the significant changes in communication which are taking place at a rapid pace. In the twenty first century, Olsen and Torrance claim that literacy should be seen as an “instrument” from which the user can benefit.

Street and Street (1991) oppose the tendency of society to confer superior status on the autonomous approach, which is seen as the standard for whole nations to aspire to. Additionally, Searle (1999) takes issue with the autonomous perception of literacy as a

social goal, disputing the ideology which elevates literacy to a status which endows it with the ability to improve a nation's economic performance, for instance.

2.2.2 Situated literacy

Street (1993, p. 7) refers to the “ideological model of literacy” which places particular emphasis on the situation in which literacy is being used, in contrast to the autonomous view. “Situated literacy” refers to the fact that “literacy cannot be separated from culture and practice” (Street, 1997, p. 37).

Baynham's (1995, p. 3 - 4) discussion of the importance of context on literacy use highlights the need for more attention to be given to “the social dimension of literacy practices” which are largely ignored by the autonomous approach. According to Baynham, literacy is always situated and cannot be randomly imposed in a different context.

Baynham (p. 36) rejects the “deficit model” of literacy in which students are seen as empty vessels to be filled up because this views “students in terms of lack”. His argument demonstrates the need to value the contextual use of literacy outside the educational arena. This theme is taken up by Larson and Marsh (2005) who see the need to build bridges from the use of one type of literacy to another without devaluing the literacies which are not traditionally taught in school. Heath (1983) provides evidence of the importance of social context to the acquisition of literacy in her ethnographical study of two different US communities in Trackton and Roadville. Heath showed the need for teachers to understand the background of their students if they are to make meaningful connections and help the students to learn more effectively. At the opposite end of the spectrum, an autonomous approach would ignore the social context and simply teach the skills, disregarding other factors. Heath along with Larson and Marsh realize the influence of home literacy practices on each learner, recognizing the importance of the social context in which learning is taking place.

In New Zealand, May (2002) reiterates the need for teachers to take responsibility for students' learning rather than taking a deficit approach which makes it far too easy to blame the students, their background and their families for their failure in school. Gee (1996) pinpoints the failure of schools to make a difference in the lives and expectations of “non-elite populations”.

2.2.3 Multiliteracies/New Literacies

Barton (1994, p. 13) explores the tendency to attach the word literacy to “area(s) of knowledge” to be acquired, for instance, “political literacy” or “cultural literacy”. The terms multiliteracies or plural literacies (Roberts, 1995, p. 420) encompass the idea that people can be literate in different fields, for instance, “computer literacy” which refers to the level of competence a student acquires in computer use. School leavers need to be proficient in multiple literacies as technological advances change the nature of the workplace.

“New Literacies” (Street, 1993) is another term used to describe the range of communication skills required at the beginning of the twenty first century. The traditional view of literacy being associated with printed language has been challenged by the changes in technology so that it is necessary to include multimodal texts in any definition of literacy. Moje, Young, Readence, and Moore (2000) demonstrate the need to be more inclusive of teenagers’ use of literacy outside school, using the term “adolescent literacies”; they argue that by devaluing teenage literacy practices, teachers are alienating teenagers who become marginalized at school. Unsworth (2001) also argues for the inclusion of multiliteracies in the school curriculum, widening the range of literacy practices to incorporate new advances in technology, viewing the idea of a single literacy as “anachronistic” (p. 8). Commenting on the tendency of educators to try to “squeeze new technologies into familiar literacy education procedures...”, Unsworth (p. 12) argues that these new technologies demand an approach which embraces “new and emerging literacies”. Kress and Jewitt (2003, p.1) suggest “multimodal literacy” require consideration of all areas of “representation and communication” since they are inter-related.

2.2.4 Critical literacy

One field of literacy which is becoming increasingly relevant partly because of the prolific nature of the internet is that of critical literacy. Maclellan (2008, p. 1987) describes this as “the analysis and critique of the relationships among texts, language, power, social groups and social practices, (which) shows us ways of looking at texts to question and challenge the attitudes, values and beliefs that lie beneath the surface”. Critical literacy skills expand the role of literacy as simply being able to decode the text, requiring the reader to be able to

discern the message behind the text (Freebody and Luke, 1990). Lankshear (1998) examines the Australian literacy policy, arguing for the inclusion of critical literacy, while in New Zealand, Limbrick and Aikman (n.d.) demonstrate the need for critical literacy to be included in the school curriculum. Additionally, Snyder (2008a) stresses the importance of teaching students critical literacy skills so that they can navigate “the contemporary literacy landscape...” in order to become effective citizens. Snyder (1999, p. 296) contends that “literacy education (should) create opportunities for learners to become informed, articulate and critical contributors to society”.

2.2.5 Political views of literacy

Governments and economists often employ an autonomous approach (Street, 1993) to the literacy which is taught in schools, with a view to quantifying it, using statistics about literacy in order to boost their party’s electoral support (Roberts, 1995). This competency approach to literacy enables governments and the media to focus on an apparent ‘crisis’ in the literacy arena, portraying literacy as a simplistic solution to society’s problems, while blaming schools (Snyder, 2008b; Lynagh, 2005) and deflecting attention away from other strategies to tackle these problems. Lynagh’s analysed the media’s response to the OECD scores over a period of time in three major New Zealand publications (*The New Zealand Herald/Metro/North & South*); Lynagh identified the theme of literacy “crisis”, noting that the “social context in which education takes place” was largely ignored by the journalists, whose articles embraced such sub-themes as “nostalgia”, (looking back at the past) and “blaming the educators”:

Problems and solutions to do with literacy are seen as located firmly within the education system... (while the media) tend to ignore, simplify or dismiss external social issues, such as poverty or immigration. Although it is sometimes suggested that problems with literacy can have wider social effects, the reverse of this, that social structures can affect an individual’s acquisition of literacy, is downplayed (p.104).

Snyder (2008b) berates this view of literacy, seeing it as escapism from the reality of a world which is dominated by the multi-media, rapid technological advances and the challenges of a global economy. Snyder (p. 62) decries the tendency of governments and the media to blame teachers for literacy under-achievement without taking heed of other factors such as a child’s “class, race, gender and socio-economic status”. Snyder suggests

that the argument over which is the best way to teach literacy detracts from the heart of the matter, social justice, by assuming that all children start school with an equal chance of success.

In many western countries there is a growing gap between “the school literacy achievement of students of diverse backgrounds and those of mainstream backgrounds” (Au, 1998). Au (p. 298-301) suggests five reasons for this underachievement –“linguistic differences, cultural differences, discrimination, inferior education, rationales for schooling”.

Bourdieu (1973, as cited in Dumais, 2002, p. 44) explores the concept of inequality in the education system which begins when children from diverse backgrounds start school without the necessary “cultural capital” to succeed:

By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture.

Researchers have investigated the theory that cultural capital is the key to success at school although without a definitive theory of what actually constitutes cultural capital, it is difficult to prove or disprove Bourdieu’s theory (Dumais, 2002). De Graaf, De Graaf and, Kraaykamp (2000) carried out research into the effect of parents’ reading behaviour compared to the effects of parents’ participations in arts related activities, such as theatres and museums. Their study revealed that parents’ reading activities in the Netherlands were more influential on children’s educational progress than participation in “high-brow cultural activities”. It is difficult to compare the results of the Netherlands research because some countries provide more variety and easier access to “cultural activities” than others. In large parts of New Zealand and Australia, for instance, access to theatres and museums depends on the proximity of the nearest city. De Graaf et al.. point to research carried out in Australia by Crook (1997, cited in De Graaf, 2000) who found that reading was more important as cultural capital in Australia; activities such as opera, theatres and museums may not only be geographically inaccessible in some parts of Australia but such activities may also be more highly regarded in some cultures than others. Luke (2003, p.133) defines “cultural capital” as the “discourse practices and skills” students need to use in school.

Heath (1983) explored the need for cultural capital in *Ways With Words*, recommending that teachers attempt to bridge the gap between communities and their school, making literacy socially situated rather than adopting a skills approach. May (2002, p.13) also advocates that teachers take responsibility for their students' learning by insisting that the problem "does not lie with the students"; May suggests teachers should find bridges to help make literacy practices more accessible to their students (p.8). This sociocultural model is also recommended by Larson and Marsh (2005).

2.2.6 School literacy

This literature review is primarily concerned with the nature of literacy taught in school. Goodwyn and Findlay (2003, p. 24) use the phrase "school-centric literacy" to identify the type of literacy skills required in school. The type of literacy essential for success in school tends to be awarded a greater sense of importance than other types of literacies; this could be attributed to the sense of empowerment which comes for successful school-leavers (Alvermann, 2002).

Despite the fact that academics (for example, Sire, 2006, Lankshear, 1998) assert that literacy is far more than being able to read and write, twentieth century educational policy has tended to focus on basic skills, intending to provide a safety net for school leavers. There is an assumption that the technical aspects of literacy, "a discrete set of skills...can be taught in similar ways across varying contexts...despite the very different needs and experiences of learners" (Larson and Marsh, 2005, p.11). More recently, education policies are becoming more inclusive of a wider concept of literacy. New Zealand's Ministry of Education (2002) defines literacy as "the ability to use and understand those language forms required by society and valued by individuals and communities".

2.2.7 Literacy teaching in primary school

Larson and Marsh (2005) outline the history of literacy teaching in primary schools. They draw attention to the fact that school curriculums have been modeled on the assumption that all children learn to read and write in a linear way "along a carefully traced" track which works on the assumption "that children progress in similar ways... (learning) specific skills in sequence". Children who do not progress in a linear fashion have

traditionally been labeled as “underachieving” (p. 4 - 5) and the individual child is then seen as “deficit” or “at risk” which can lead to teachers abdicating responsibility.

There has been much debate over the most effective way to teach literacy skills in primary schools (Soler and Openshaw, 2007), with different teaching methods taking the blame for poor literacy results –the implication being that teachers are to blame (Soler, 2002).

Primary schools are often held to account when students fail to achieve expected standards of literacy with high school teachers assuming primary schools should be held accountable rather than taking responsibility themselves for ensuring their students can access their curriculum (Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, and Mueller, 2001; Alger, 2007).

2.2.8 Literacy in secondary schools

There is an assumption that the process of learning to read will have been mastered before students reach secondary school (Wright, Smyth, May, and Whitehead, 2003, p. 37; Alger, 2007) when students need to “read to learn”. Wright et al.. (p. 39) describe secondary students as “inexperienced readers” rather than the ‘beginning readers’ of primary schools. This idea is expanded upon when Wright (2005, p. 2) refers to literacy as ensuring pupils are competent “in the kinds of academic language” they will come across. Academic English is “highly specialized and context-specific... (and therefore needs) to be explicitly taught” according to May (2002, p. 8). Lynagh (2005, p. 90) notes that children in primary school spend a large amount of curriculum time on literacy activities whereas high school pupils need “the literacy skills they have already gained to master new subject matter”. Students need to be able to read for meaning, to glean information for particular assignments, for instance. Nicholson (2000, p. 309) observes that reading “is...crucial” at high school with a wide variety of reading tasks required for different subject areas. The type of literacy required in the high school classroom may be unfamiliar to many students (Schleppegrell and Oliveira, 2006), particularly those with ESL who may only speak English at school and may not be familiar with the type of language used in the classroom as opposed to everyday conversational English..

Freebody (2007, p. 64) refers to the “fragmented” approach to high school teaching which revolves around students moving around the school for different subjects at designated times of the day. This approach assumes that literacy skills can be easily transferred from

subject to subject whereas Freebody argues that each subject will have a contextual approach to the use of literacy. Many students are struggling to cope with these literacy demands which are dependent on the “cumulative nature of effective curriculum knowledge over the school years...” (Freebody, p. 62). Alvermann (2002, p.193) emphasizes the need for students to possess both “appropriate background knowledge and strategies for reading a variety of texts”. The literacy skills required in individual subject areas are referred to as “content literacy” in the US where there is growing concern that “content literacy” is becoming increasingly removed from the lives of multiliterate teenagers leading to a worrying disconnect between school practices and the reality of the everyday lives of many teenagers (Moje, et al., 2000). Moje et al. consider the reasons why adolescents excel in the arena of multi literacies which are often found outside the classroom but the same students fail to access the types of literacy valued in school. Bridging the gap between academic literacy and students’ lives is a challenging issue, which twenty first century schools will need to address if students are to be engaged successfully in the classroom.

In 1997 New Zealand’s Education Review Office (ERO) produced a report on Literacy in New Zealand Schools which concluded that students were not being taught the “reading research skills appropriate to their subject” in many secondary schools (p. 23) and that reading material was often inaccessible to the students (p. 21). The report provided evidence that secondary schools need to provide literacy teaching across the curriculum in order to support students’ learning. However, Unsworth (2001) points out that “curriculum literacies” is a more relevant term than “literacy across the curriculum” which implies the literacy used in each subject will be the same, whereas the reality is that a variety of genres are used in the spectrum of subjects taught in high school. Despite Unsworth’s valid argument for the term “curriculum literacies”, the phrase “literacy across the curriculum” is more commonly used; for this reason “literacy across the curriculum” is the phrase used in this thesis to describe the types of literacy taught in different subjects.

The type of literacy skills needed in secondary schools differs, then, from that taught in primary schools. There seems to be some crossover between the use of the term “content literacy” in the US and the idea of academic literacy; both require the skills needed to access different subject areas in high schools.

For the purpose of this thesis the following definition of academic literacy is adopted (Valdes, 2004, p. 110): “the language used within particular disciplines (which) follows particular conventions for presenting information specific to the field”.

The following section will outline the strategies used to teach academic literacy in secondary schools in five different countries, all of which take part in international reading tests designed to compare the literacy ability of 15 year olds. New Zealand takes part in these tests and will be considered along with four other countries.

2.3 Approaches to literacy in secondary schools by some OECD countries

The countries discussed in this section are all part of the OECD and have all taken part in the PISA Reading Literacy tests which are used to compare the reading ability of 15 year olds in different countries. However, the way in which reading literacy is taught and included within the curriculum differs from country to country. As Hannon (2000, p. 40) points out “literacy is the outcome of actions taken over a long period by...agencies of the state, elected governments, local education authorities, and individual teachers”.

Approaches to teaching school literacy are embedded in the culture of the country in which it is being taught. The following countries illustrate the different approaches governments have taken to address literacy issues. A comparison of reading results across the OECD should take into account a country’s historical background and culture (Elley, 1997). Soler and Openshaw (2007, p. 334) draw attention to the “pressures, tensions and crises embedded in...particular national and regional political contexts” which strongly influence literacy policy.

The way in which literacy is taught is also affected by the country’s examination assessment system. The theory of “washback or backwash” (Cheng and Curtis, 2004) describes the effect of assessment on what is actually taught in the classroom. The content of lessons will be affected by the context of assessment, including the literacy element of all subjects: “what is assessed becomes what is valued, which becomes what is taught” (McEwen, 1995, p. 42, as cited in Cheng et al., 2004). The impact of testing at school-leaving age will affect lesson delivery in secondary schools.

2.3.1 England

The Bullock Report: A Language for Life (Education in England, n.d.) was the result of a study commissioned as a response to the growing number of children with ESL who were unable to succeed academically in mainstream schools. The report paved the way for a focus on language across the curriculum with its investigation into the teaching of language in both primary and secondary schools and its suggestion that secondary schools should appoint a teacher to be in charge of language across the curriculum. The Report's recommendations (numbers 138 & 139) included the following for secondary schools:

All subject teachers need to be aware of:

- (i) the linguistic processes by which their pupils acquire information and understanding, and the implications for the teacher's own use of language;
- (ii) the reading demands of their own subjects, and ways in which the pupils can be helped to meet them.

To bring about this understanding every secondary school should develop a policy for language across the curriculum. The responsibility for this policy should be embodied in the organisational structure of the school. (Education in England, 2008, p. 284).

Following this, the Kingman Report (1988) instructed every school to “develop a coordinated policy for language teaching” (Kingman, 1988, as cited in James, 1999, p. 95). The emphasis was on teaching language under the heading “Knowledge about Language”. The English National Curriculum was largely based on the Kingman Report; it came into effect in 1989 (Literacy Trust, 2009). Even with these major curriculum developments, literacy was still not perceived as being the domain of all subjects in secondary schools; the National Curriculum divided subjects into discrete areas which worked against the principle of delivering a whole school strategy (Marland, 2001). Marland hailed the arrival of the Literacy Strategy in 2001 which was launched for Years 7 – 9 hoping it would encourage secondary schools to develop a more integrated approach to language across the curriculum.

The introduction of Standards Assessment Tasks (SATs) in English, Maths and Science for Years 3, 7 and 9 was phased in between 1991 – 1995. School results have been published in the media (Literacy Trust, 2009). Problems with the marking of Year 9 SATs tests led the government to reconsider the necessity of mid-secondary school tests (The Times

Educational Supplement, 2008) leading to the recent abolishment of Year 9 SATS in favour of teacher assessment (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008).

There was a renewed impetus to improve literacy results when New Labour came to power in 1997 with Tony Blair (the British Labour party leader) focusing the election campaign on “education, education, education!” (Labour party conference, 1996 & Soler, 2002). Initially the new administration focused on literacy in primary schools where the introduction of the Literacy Hour concentrated on teaching children to read; this was extended in 2001 to include secondary schools which were expected to teach literacy across the curriculum as part of the strategy to target Years 7 – 9. The Framework for English, implemented in 2001, also placed more emphasis on literacy skills within the secondary English curriculum.

England has adopted a standardized approach to the teaching of reading, including a system of national testing (Soler, 2002). Soler notes the prescriptive nature of the reforms introduced under the banner of the National Literacy Strategy which consequently increased government control over the curriculum and the pedagogy employed. There is a significant difference between the strategies adopted by England and New Zealand in the delivery of a new focus on literacy (Joliffe, 2004). Joliffe reveals the de-skilling of teachers which took place under the National Literacy Strategy in England when teachers were told “what to teach” without the “underlying pedagogy” (ibid, p. 9). In comparison, the emphasis in New Zealand has been on the individual teacher’s ‘best practice’ (ibid, p. 4). The implementation of these measures in England has been accompanied by promises from the government that reading standards will improve (Joliffe, 2004; Snyder, 2008b).

2.3.2 United States

The US is similar to England in that it has faced the challenges of teaching in large multicultural cities for many years and the plethora of research in the area of literacy reveals the concerns various governments and educational bodies have held regarding literacy.

An attempt was made by the 2001–2009 George W Bush administration to address the problem of underachievement with the controversial “No Child Left Behind (NCLB)” programme, which tackles literacy as well as other areas of education. Greater

responsibility was placed with individual schools to ensure there is no academic discrepancy between students attending the same school – regardless of gender, race or socio-economic status, for instance (EdGov, 2004).

Snyder (2008b, p. 205) views this piece of legislation as a “quick-fix approach to improving literacy rates”; Snyder is critical of the proliferation of teaching materials which schools can buy to provide teachers with resources to teach literacy. Larson refers to these teaching materials as “snake oil”, a reference to the history of medicine when only a few centuries ago a new medicine with a “secret formula” often claimed to “cure everything” (Larson (2002), as cited in Nora, 2003).

In a move away from more traditional teaching resources, researchers such as Alvermann (2002) and Moje et al.. (2000) draw attention to the need to widen the term literacy to include multiliteracies, thereby making school more accessible and more relevant to today’s teenagers.

Larson and Marsh (2005) emphasise the importance of connecting with students’ background in order to teach literacy effectively. They criticize the US curriculum because it fails to address literacy as a “complex social practice” (p. 3 - 4) by imposing a linear approach to literacy development. Literacy learning cannot be reduced to “a set of discrete skills that can be taught in isolation”, argue Larson and Marsh (p. 5), advocating an ideological model of literacy in order to connect with learners more effectively.

Some schools in the US have attempted to improve their student outcomes through concentrating on improving reading skills. Fisher (2001) outlines the measures one multicultural urban high school took in order to improve the literacy levels of the students. The enormous improvements in reading levels were attributed to the professional development of the teaching workforce and the quality of the individual teacher. There was also a change to the school structure in order to accommodate more reading time which is evidence of the high priority the entire staff gave to the literacy focus.

An emphasis on literacy across the curriculum was also the backbone of improvements to the reading scores of students in an urban high school in Rhode Island (Clarke, 2006). By using formative assessment reading tests, the school made students aware of their reading

scores which proved to be highly motivating. Students began to realize that “literacy is a springboard for academic success” (p. 69) which led to a change in attitude.

Greenleaf et al.. (2001) designed a course to help improve reading skills for high school students in San Francisco. Greenleaf et al.. argues the case for inclusive teaching rather than isolating underachieving students outside the mainstream classroom. The view that all teachers should include literacy learning within their subject area helped students to access subjects with more bridges being built between the students’ knowledge and experiences outside of school and the academic subject concerned.

2.3.3 Finland

The OECD PISA results have shown that Finland students score consistently high in the reading domain. In 2000 and 2003, Finland took first place for reading and second place in the 2006 assessments. Other countries have looked to Finland to discover what contributes to these remarkable results. The Finnish Ministry of Education draws attention to the uniformity of the results, with little variation regardless of school, region or other factors (Finnish National Board of Education, n.d. & Ministry of Education, Finland, n.d.). Some of the contributing factors to the Finnish success in teaching reading were noted earlier in 1993 by Linnakyla (Linnakyla, 1993):

- the Finnish focus on equal opportunities in education
- the high status and good salaries awarded to the highly qualified teachers
- the low class sizes
- the quality of the public libraries
- the frequent use of sub-titles on television encouraging children to speed read
- the small number of immigrants in Finland
- the ‘regular orthography’ of the language making it easier to learn to read according to some researchers
- well equipped, well resourced schools providing pleasant environments (Malaty, 2006).

It appears from this information that there are a variety of factors contributing to the success of Finnish students in reading. Finnish society has traditionally shown great respect for the teaching profession and awards good salaries; teaching is seen as a desirable profession by young adults (Simola 2005). Simola (p. 457) comments on the nature of the “Finnish culture (which)...incorporates a meaningful element of the authoritarian, obedient and collectivist mentality...” Simola provides an historical background for these cultural characteristics in an attempt to explain the respect society still holds for the teaching profession and the conformity of young adults in schools.

Lie, Linnakyla, and Roe (2003).attribute immigration growth and greater diversity to the fall of Finland from first to second place in the 2006 PISA results. It is also a point of concern for Linnakyla, Malin, and Taube (2004) and Valijarvi, Linnakyla, Kupari, Reinikainen, and Arffman (2002) who point out that in the PISA 2000 data, Finland’s percentage of non-native students was considerably lower than the OECD average. Additionally, Linnakyla (1993, p. 68) reveals that while “94% of people speak Finnish and 6% speak Swedish as their mother tongue, Finnish and Swedish” speakers are educated in separate institutions. Linnakyla et al.. (2004) and Valijarvi et al. (2002) warn that with increasing diversity, Finnish teachers will face new challenges if reading standards are to continue to achieve such good results. Finland may need to grapple with factors which other multilingual countries are already facing.

2.3.4 Australia

The Australian National Literacy Benchmarks for Years 3, 5, and 7 are promoted as minimal standards; they are not as prescriptive as the route taken by either the US or England (Snyder, 2008b) although they are still controversial. Recommendations for schools were outlined in the National Inquiry in the Teaching of Literacy’s Teaching Reading report (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, 2005). This seeks to address the “high social economic costs” associated with young people leaving school without acceptable standards of literacy. Each state is obliged to implement a literacy strategy to which there have been a variety of responses.

Freebody & Luke (1990) developed a guide for teaching reading called “the four resource model”; which has largely been adopted by Australian educators. It includes the following categories:

- Code breaker
- Meaning maker
- Text user
- Text critic.

The interdependence of these four types of literacy is emphasized. Freebody & Luke view literacy as “a repertoire of practices” which are “called into play when managing texts in ways appropriate to various contexts”.

Queensland’s Literate Futures report (Luke, Freebody, and Land, 2000) widens the concept of literacy in an attempt to accommodate the needs of an information-driven society. The report states that it is not a prescriptive curriculum based in the past as it introduces a Literacy Strategy which has planned for a future generation by including multiliteracies.

Despite this Snyder (2008a) points out that teachers have been slow to respond to the changing literacy needs of today’s adolescents with school literacy traditionally based on “the world of the page”, ignoring “the world of the screen”. She calls for the “effective integration of print literacy and digital literacy” in the classroom. Although Snyder makes a valid argument, it is only fair to remember that teachers need the appropriate resources and training in order to incorporate multiliteracies successfully into their teaching. Snyder criticizes schools for being slow to change the curriculum to include multiliteracies, implying schools “make a choice between the world of the page and the world of the screen” when the reality for the classroom teacher is often more to do with funding, resources and relevant professional development.

Comber and Hill (2000) carried out two longitudinal studies in Australia to investigate the “literacy development of diverse and disadvantaged groups of children” (p. 82). Their overt “social justice agenda” sets out to investigate “who gets what from schooling...” (p. 84). Comber and Hill explore the “relationships between literacy curriculum and pedagogy...poverty and teachers’ work”. Their work is steeped in the reality of economics which Snyder seemed to ignore. They voice concern about the focus of the media on illiteracy (p. 81) which deflects attention from the reality of the inequalities in people’s lives. (Lynagh’s (2005) study of the media’s portrayal of literacy issues in New Zealand reflects the same concerns.)

Addressing this argument in Australia, Luke (2003, p. 136) has advocated the need for literacy policies to be “divorced from ...issues of blended identity, linguistic diversity, and economic enfranchisement”, suggesting a more inclusive approach is needed. A sociocultural approach to literacy is also proposed by Freebody (2001), arguing that literacy cannot be seen as a quick-fix approach to society’s problems.

2.3.5 New Zealand

There are obvious comparisons between the neighbouring countries of New Zealand and Australia with their backgrounds of colonization, an English-speaking majority, diversity in the cities and the problem of native peoples underachieving in the mainstream education system.

Alongside Australia and other western countries, New Zealand has also faced in recent years what was considered a “literacy crisis” when the OECD PISA scores showed a significant decline in the reading skills of certain sectors of the population (Limbrick, 2001). New Zealand had previously scored extremely well in these international tests: in 1970 New Zealand’s 14 year old students achieved the “highest mean score” in an IEA reading survey (Elley, 2004, p. 33). The PISA tests in 2000 showed that New Zealand students ranked third out of 32 countries for reading. New Zealand had more “students performing at the highest level” (Ministry of Education, 2001, p.12); however, about 10% of New Zealand students were at the lowest level. The results showed that there was a wide variation of scores within individual schools, which became a focus point for improvement. Socioeconomic status had a strong correlation with poor performance and students who did not speak English as their first language also showed disappointing results (Limbrick, 2001).

During the past 30 years, the population of New Zealand has changed from being a largely monocultural society, becoming increasingly multicultural particularly in urban areas (Wilkinson, 1998). The 1990 PISA results drew attention to the fact that teachers in New Zealand were not experienced at teaching in a multilingual classroom. Limbrick’s (2001, p. 9) exploration of New Zealand’s reaction to the decline in reading standards, emphasizes the fact that “the needs of all children in New Zealand” were not being met. The wide gap between the high achievers (who tended to be English-speaking middle class Pakeha

students) and low achievers (which included students of other nationalities and cultures) became known as the “long “tail” of low achievers” (Elley, 2004, p. 35) with the results revealing a “home language gap” (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 147).

New Zealand began to lose its reputation as a “classless society”, as socio-economic factors were seen to contribute to the decline in reading scores, with the repercussions of government policies affecting “the well-being of many New Zealand families” (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 144). Reflecting upon the fact that there was “a greater polarization of wealth and living conditions...” which affected schools during the 1980s, Limbrick (2001, p. 11) adds that teachers also had to contend with teaching an increasingly diverse bilingual population. Additionally, in 1998, schools underwent significant changes in the way they were managed and funded, as well as a new national curriculum which was introduced in 1993 (ibid).

In an attempt to identify and tackle these problems, the Ministry of Education introduced a National Literacy Strategy, a Literacy Taskforce and a Literacy Experts Group (Limbrick, 2001). Initially changes were aimed at the primary area with a Professional Development Programme which emphasized the quality of teaching within each classroom. The Best Evidence Synthesis (Alton-Lee, 2003) also drew attention to the importance of the individual classroom teacher. Similarly, May (2007) places responsibility on the individual teacher’s need to adopt effective literacy practices in order to meet the needs of all students in their classroom.

The Best Evidence Synthesis (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung, 2007, p. 2) notes that “a large proportion of under-achievers are Maori”. The Treaty of Waitangi places an obligation on the Ministry of Education to address any “inequalities relating to the Maori population.” In recent years there has been a focus by the Ministry of Education on improving the performance of low decile schools which often include “the highest percentages of Maori and Pasifika students” (p. 130). Te Kotahitanga (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, and Teddy, 2007), a project designed to tackle the problem of Maori under-achievement in schools, seeks to address what it terms the “education debt...that the education system owes to Māori children who have been short-changed by the education system for generations”. As Fancy (2007, p. 332) points out, the research highlighted the

need for all teachers to believe they can make a difference in children's lives regardless of their socio-economic circumstances since there is little teachers can do to change a child's background. The focus became very much orientated towards improving individual teaching practice.

There has been little debate on other ways to improve the socio-economic conditions which are impeding children's access to the mainstream curriculum. Although an individual teacher can make a difference as is claimed by the Best Evidence Synthesis and Te Kohitanga (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, and Teddy, 2007), it is questionable whether or not long term significant improvements will be seen in literacy achievement in areas of socio economic deprivation. Thrupp (2001) questions School Effectiveness Research with its attention on school improvement which excludes consideration of any other factors in the make up of the school's population. Various studies have been carried out in areas of socio-economic deprivation in New Zealand primary schools (for instance, McNaughton, Phillips, and MacDonald, 2003, Lai, McNaughton, and Timperley, 2008, McNaughton, Lai, and Amituanai-Toloa, 2007, and Timperley, Phillips, Wiseman, and Fung, 2003) but the emphasis has been on improving individual teacher performance through professional development.

In response to the obvious need for literacy to be taught in all subject areas, Limbrick, and Ladbrook (2002) conducted a survey of the perception of teachers of the literacy needs of the student population in 20 city secondary schools. Teachers revealed a lack of knowledge of how high schools were tackling literacy issues, revealing a need for professional development on teaching literacy across the curriculum.

In 2002 the Secondary Literacy Advisory Group (SSLI) provided voluntary workshops for principals and literacy leaders. The intention was to equip school leadership with the skills needed to lead literacy initiatives in their respective schools. Following the workshops, the SSLI was implemented in 60 schools over a three year period. Schools could use the facilities of a regional literacy facilitator to help plan and implement a scheme for literacy improvement (Smyth and Whitehead, 2007). The appointment of a Literacy Leader within the school has been crucial to the successful implementation of various literacy initiatives (Wright, 2007). This role was an important one for the SSLI in terms of liaison within the

school and with outside agencies (ibid). The Literacy Leader was assisted by a team of volunteers from various departments in order to provide a network within the school which supported the literacy focus. Wright notes that “in some schools” the Literacy Leader was awarded free time to concentrate on the literacy leadership, for instance, helping individual classroom teachers by observing lessons and encouraging good practice. The ideal would be that the “Literacy Leader (would be) so highly respected that staff (would be) keen to learn from that expertise.” Wright (p. 430) is emphatic that “positive literacy leadership is critical...” Literacy Leaders need to have the support of the school management in order to allow them the resources necessary to do justice to the role and assist staff in a process of change. There does not seem to be any official figures on how many schools have introduced the role of literacy leader to their schools. Wright’s work with the SSLI led her to conclude that for a successful literacy focus in secondary schools, the Literacy Leader needed a “supportive principal and/or school management team”. Further research into the successful implementation of this role might encourage other schools to follow suit.

May (2007, p. 389) outlines the phases schools need to go through in order to establish and sustain literacy teaching across the curriculum: the first phase “involves a school raising the awareness of staff about the need for effective literacy practices”, the next phase includes implementing “school-wide strategies” designed to have an effect on “student literacy outcomes. The last phase, which May sees as “crucial”, involves ensuring the changes in literacy teaching are sustained. In order for long term change to come about, May emphasizes the need for ongoing professional development which is particularly important since new staff may not be aware of the school’s literacy practices. Some urban schools, especially low decile schools, experience a high turnover of staff exacerbating the problem of sustainability unless new teachers are continually inducted into the school’s literacy programme (May, 2007).

Similarly, Mehl (2002) maintains that there is a need for ongoing professional development regarding a school’s approach to literacy teaching since teachers need to feel they are equipped to teach literacy but many secondary teachers do not perceive themselves as literacy teachers.

A survey of teachers and employers in Wanganui undertaken by Massey University (Watson, Neilson, Murray, Dempsey, Sligo, Comrie, and Vaccarino, 2007) asked participants for a definition of literacy. The wide variety of responses serves to illustrate the elusiveness of the term. Most of the employers included some mention of “communication skills” in their definition (p. 38) as well as the “skills of reading (and) writing” (p. 61). Teachers (p. 5) focused on the “empowering” nature of literacy, which they saw as enabling students to move successfully into the world of employment. This type of literacy, which is needed in everyday life, has been defined as “functional literacy” in Maclellan’s (2008, p. 1) examination of various definitions of literacy. The Wanganui research demonstrates the importance both teachers and employers place on students learning a form of functional literacy. Teachers interviewed for the Wanganui study (ibid) also raised the problem of sustaining a school wide literacy focus when professional development was often short term due to the nature of the funding. This was also the case with any extra provision provided for students with literacy difficulties.

Additionally, Knight (2005, p. 471) discusses the sustainability of reform in relation to numeracy strategies. Her point that individual teachers need to be motivated to embrace professional development if ongoing change is going to take place, is one that also applies to literacy. Knight mentions the problem of schools having “competing priorities” which hampers long term change. May (2007) also raises the issue of competing professional development ventures making it difficult for literacy to remain a school’s focal point. May (p. 388) stresses the importance of teacher “buy-in” if change in literacy practices is going to be maintained.

May warns that the organization and structure of secondary schools tends to mitigate against long term change which affects the sustainability of effective literacy practices. The size of high schools in New Zealand leads to increasingly intricate management structures. May draws attention to the traditional structure of high schools which includes layers of “bureaucracy”.

Poskitt and Taylor (2008, p. 30) reflect on the need for change to become “embedded” which takes time “otherwise people tend to revert to former ways...” The sustainability of reform is an issue which is relevant to this thesis; if literacy is to be taught effectively

across the curriculum, all teachers will need to be part of that and short term funding could affect the successful implementation of a literacy strategy.

As Wright (2007, p. 431) claims “the development of literacy across the curriculum in New Zealand secondary schools is a work in progress.” Schools in New Zealand are at vastly different stages regarding their implementation of effective literacy teaching (May, 2007) following the introduction of NCEA.

The recent implementation of the NCEA includes a greater emphasis on literacy skills in all subjects (Alkema & O’Connell, 2003). For each subject in NCEA, candidates need to achieve 80 credits, 8 of which must be in literacy. NCEA is awarded at 3 different levels – Achieved, Merit and Excellence (New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), n.d). Students need to demonstrate their ability to read and write at a certain level in order to gain accreditation.

The definition of literacy used by NCEA is taken from the New Zealand Literacy Strategy: “Literacy is the ability to use and understand those language forms required by society and valued by individuals and communities” (Ministry of Education, n.d.b). The Literacy Learning Progressions (Ministry of Education, n.d.a) clarifies the skills students will need in order to meet the reading and writing requirements of NCEA. The title of the Literacy Learning Progressions document indicates that literacy is accumulative. The document emphasises three strands of literacy – reading, writing and critical literacy. A list of literacy requirements for University Entrance is provided by the NZQA, (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2008). These are prominently reading and writing skills despite the broader definition of literacy provided in the New Zealand Literacy Strategy.

Secondary schools are now expected to prepare students for NCEA with its greater focus on independent research; this has provided the impetus to reconsider how literacy is taught in high schools, drawing attention to its centrality in all subject areas (McDonald & Thornley, 2005). McDonald and Thornley have studied the literacy strategies needed across the secondary school curriculum for NCEA, concluding that students need help to develop their independent research skills. Their recent investigation (2008) involving three high schools affirmed the need for all teachers to include literacy teaching in their content areas in order to ensure their students could meet the demands of NCEA. Wright (2008) adds to

McDonald and Thornley's case by reiterating the point that "Literacy is not extra/added content on top of everything else; it underpins access to learning... Literacy-oriented pedagogy improves students' achievement". NCEA has had a positive effect on the teaching of literacy according to the teachers interviewed for the Wanganui survey (Watson et al., 2007, p. 10). The necessity of literacy skills to "underpin" NCEA in all subjects was mentioned. As Limbrick and Aikman (2005, p. 40/41) state "by setting literacy standards for students to achieve, NCEA is encouraging teachers to be more aware of students' literacy needs". They advocate the need to see literacy as situated within each subject area at secondary level, increasing the individual teachers' responsibility for literacy teaching.

2.4 Successful teachers of literacy

As we have seen it is becoming increasingly important to include literacy teaching in all subject areas in order to address the New Zealand curriculum. Other countries have carried out research into successful teachers of literacy, for instance, Parris and Collins Block (2007) surveyed secondary literacy supervisors in the US, looking for commonalities between successful teachers of literacy. Their study drew attention to the importance of the practices of individual teachers who can influence a student's progress; this ties in with the New Zealand Best Evidence Synthesis (Alton-Lee, 2003). The most successful teachers of literacy to secondary students were those who were able to "recognise, respect, and adapt to the diversity in backgrounds and the diverse needs of their students" (p. 589). In the UK (United Kingdom), Lewis and Wray (2001) also emphasise the impact individual teachers can have on learning, while back in New Zealand, May (2002, p. 13) asserts that "the problem with literacy does *not* lie with the students" (*May's italics*) despite assumptions to the contrary which are frequently made; May insists that teachers should take responsibility for the learning which goes on in their classrooms. Fancy (2007) notes the impact of high profile studies in New Zealand such as Alton-Lee's (2003) Best Evidence Synthesis and Bishop et al.'s Te Kotahitanga (2007).

These studies have led to a "focus on effective teaching... (which) is now seen as the biggest and most powerful lever within the education system to change outcomes". The argument put forward is that it is easier to focus on the child in the classroom than to look at the wider picture which includes a socio-economic perspective. Thrupp and Willmott (2003) continues to argue, however, that school improvement is not the only answer and

that the wider social picture should be taken into account if real change is going to come about. It seems a simplistic approach to assume teachers can make a profound difference in the lives of students from low socio-economic and diverse backgrounds; however, the most effective teachers will be capable of making *some* difference which has to be worthwhile. The Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration: Teacher Professional Learning and Development (BES) (Timperley et al., 2007) draws attention to the Treaty of Waitangi which places responsibility for the progress of Maori students on to the Ministry of Education. However, it also notes that professional development is not mandated by the Ministry in New Zealand but is organised at individual school level. The study evaluated different types of professional development ‘within the context of enhancing literacy achievement for diverse learners’ (p. 130). Timperley et al. (2007, p. 225) advocate that teachers should be allowed both ‘time and opportunity to engage with key ideas...’ if a change in practice is to be sustained. In addition, Timperley, Phillips, Wiseman, and Fung (2003, p. 17) note that improved student outcomes are dependent on “a strong teaching force, which in turn, depends on sustainable and high-quality professional development.” Their work in decile one schools highlighting the need for teachers to be adequately prepared to teach ‘students for tomorrow’s society’ means that it is imperative to continually train teachers to keep pace with technological advances and changes in society.

Lester (2000) stresses the need for teachers to have some understanding of their own attitudes towards literacy instruction and its place in specific content areas. Subject teachers may have been employed on the basis of their expertise and experience in their specialist subject but it cannot be assumed that all teachers have received professional input regarding literacy teaching in their subject area or even be aware of the need for it. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (2006, p. 8) in the US revealed concern that teacher education did not spend enough time on literacy issues making it “possible for teachers to be identified as highly-qualified even though they are not prepared to address the challenges of adolescent literacy.”

It may also be argued that successful teachers of literacy have an awareness of the micropolitics taking place in their school. Micropolitical literacy is defined as “the competence to understand the issues of power and interests in schools” (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002). This ability to understand the complexities of schools is also known as

“organisational politics” (Blasé, 1997 p. 941). An insight into a school’s power structure is useful if a teacher is going to be proactive and successful in initiating a change from more traditional teaching methods even within their own classroom.

Highlighting the need for teachers to change the fundamental ways in which they teach, Wright (2007, p. 421) draws attention to the irrefutable fact that most of today’s teaching workforce grew up when “the written and spoken word (were) prime sources of formal learning”. Wright emphasizes the need to teach “learning processes” rather than factual “content”, so that students can have the skills to be independent learners. The New Zealand curriculum emphasizes learning processes so teachers are becoming more aware of the need to alter the focus of their teaching.

Alger (2007) found it difficult to instil the need for teaching literacy skills in content areas in her role as teacher educator at a US training college. She argues that new teachers tend to mould their teaching on their own experiences of school and fail to perceive the scale of the problems some students have with literacy because they have themselves been successful students. Alger developed a course which helped trainee teachers gain insights into “the links between literacy and social justice and about the consequences of illiteracy” (p. 629).

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education have designed an optional guide which secondary schools may use. This includes a Guide for the Literacy Team which suggests that in order to ensure all staff members are aware of the literacy initiative in the school, it is imperative that new staff are inducted into the “ongoing literacy initiative” (p. 42). This is particularly important because each school is encouraged to design its own literacy strategies according to its intake. The Ministry of Education (2008a, 2008b) also provides DVDs for teachers in different subject areas. These provide examples of good practice in literacy teaching. These resources are particularly useful for teachers who may be new to New Zealand and unfamiliar with the Literacy Strategy, a topic explored in the next section.

2.5 Immigrant teachers

The increased demand for teachers in New Zealand secondary schools was a motivating factor for the Surveys of Overseas Teachers undertaken by the Ministry of Education in

2001 and again in 2003. Secondary schools are expanding because of the “significant roll growth as a result of the population boom of the late 1980s and early 1990s” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 1). The Ministry of Education (2001) has “actively recruit(ed) teachers from overseas” in response to this population growth. There is also recognition of the importance of retaining these teachers (Ministry of Education, 2006). 41% of overseas teachers were working in Auckland at the time of the 2003 survey. Only 7% of the teachers surveyed were new to teaching when they arrived in New Zealand; the majority of immigrant teachers bring with them experience of teaching in other cultures.

In the US, Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Lieu, and Donaldson (2004) discovered a worrying trend in schools in low socioeconomic areas; they identified what they termed a “support gap” for new teachers despite the fact that these schools had a higher staff turnover and recruited less experienced teachers. Dewar and Vissar (2000, p. 6) carried out four research projects with overseas teachers in New Zealand in 1997/98. The results showed that overseas teachers were predominantly employed “in urban areas, in lower decile (1 – 3) schools, and in schools where the proportion of Maori students was between 21% and 80% of the total roll.” (In New Zealand the decile rating refers to the socioeconomic area of the school.) This is an area which would be worth investigating in New Zealand schools; it is beyond the scope of this study.

In New Zealand all new teachers are required to undergo a period during which they are Provisionally Registered. During this time teachers should be provided with an induction programme and support by the school. New Zealand has been a “world leader” in the provision of new teacher support (Cameron, Dingle, and Brooking, 2007, p. xi). However a recent survey found that not all schools organized a supportive environment for new teachers, some of whom would be new arrivals in the country. It is worth noting that in New Zealand professional development is not mandatory (Timperley, et al., 2007, p. 25), and “much of the responsibility for promoting the professional development of teachers rests with school leaders”.

Individual schools are not only responsible for the professional development and mentoring of staff but also the development of a literacy policy. The autonomy of New Zealand schools was emphasized by the Secondary Literacy Experts Group during the workshops in

2002 which aimed to equip school leadership with the skills needed to devise a literacy initiative for their schools (Alkema & O'Connell, 2003). New staff may need to adapt previous experience to the school community in which they are working (May, 2007).

There has been very little qualitative research into the experiences of immigrant teachers in New Zealand. Vohra's (2005, p. 95) research into the experience of Indian immigrant teachers in New Zealand highlights the need for further research to explore "immigrant teachers' familiarity and understanding of the New Zealand curriculum and its implementation in the classroom..." Vohra points to the limited research on immigrant teachers and the ways in which they "adjust... to the customs and practices of the local education system" (p. 21), recommending further research to explore whether or not "there are gaps within their teaching practice" (p. 95).

Jhagroo (2004) interviewed South African immigrant teachers, who supported the idea of induction for newly arrived teachers to help them "understand all facets of the New Zealand curriculum" (p. 84). The areas highlighted as being different to the South African system were "curriculum content and delivery; the teaching methodology and practices..." (p. 90). Jhagroo concludes that immigrant teachers would benefit from relevant professional development when they arrive, particularly with regard to the New Zealand curriculum and methods of delivery.

Australia seems to have given some consideration in planning for overseas teachers. The Queensland Board of Registration provide a leaflet for schools entitled "Welcoming Overseas Teachers" (1998) which encourages schools to provide professional training and support and remind schools that they can benefit from the new teacher's previous experience. It suggests a thorough induction programme be provided, for instance, and alerts schools to the type of problems overseas teachers face in gaining permanent employment, pointing out that those who work as relievers in the first instance do not get access to induction support or professional development.

A teacher education programme for immigrant teachers is offered in Australia; Cruickshank (2004, p. 134) studied evidence from 110 teachers at the University of Sydney: "The findings challenge any notion of overseas-trained teachers as a homogenous group. The need for flexibility in program organization and delivery was a constant theme." Despite

these findings, Cruickshank draws attention to the teaching shortages in countries like the UK, US, and Australia, insisting that “the increasing mobility of teachers between countries” will create a need for planned provision for this group.

Santoro et al.. (2001, p. 62) undertook a study in order to “better understand the experiences and challenges facing...” overseas teachers in Australian secondary schools – an “invisible” sector of the profession. They also comment on the fact that overseas teachers bring with them a wealth of teaching experience which is largely ignored in their new setting. Santoro et al.. do not, however, suggest any ways in which schools can benefit from the experience these teachers bring. Their main recommendation is that assistance is provided for these newly arrived teachers to help them adapt to teaching in a new culture.

In 2007, Kostogriz and Peeler also found that the previous experience which immigrant teachers’ bring is devalued in Australia with the onus always being on the immigrant teacher to adjust to a new system. Their study revealed that these teachers are often marginalized within the school community, although this seemed to be overcome in schools which advocated supportive professional relationships such as mentoring immigrant teachers.

Another Australian researcher, Reid (2005), interviewed 11 immigrant teachers and also established that although Australia actively recruits teachers from overseas, the previous teaching experience of this cohort is often devalued in their new teaching context.

Inglis and Philps (1995, p. 54) carried out a comparison of the experiences of two groups of overseas-trained teachers in Australia; one group benefited from a mentor when they arrived while the second group did not receive any formal induction or mentoring. The conclusion was that mentoring “has worked well and the teachers have adjusted well to the Australian system.” High teacher turnover is disruptive to the timetable and inevitably the students suffer. It can be assumed that the teachers who were provided with a mentor were able to settle in to their new culture and position more easily and the effect was lower teacher attrition.

Research in Australia involving immigrant teachers by Peeler and Jane (2005, p. 325) revealed that “teachers who are born and trained overseas lack culturally specific

educational knowledge” and would benefit from mentors to help bridge “the gap between the newcomers’ former ways of knowing and current practice”.

An investigation into the values and beliefs of migrant mathematics teachers in Australia was carried out by Seah and Bishop (2001) who studied the extent to which immigrant teachers adapted the socio-cultural aspects of their mathematics teaching to accommodate Australian culture. Findings revealed that these teachers were expected to adjust their teaching styles although they were not always sure how to or even aware of the need to do so. In Israel, Court (1999) interviewed immigrant teachers to find out how they adapted to teaching in a new culture. Her recommendation is that newly arrived teachers need time to reflect on their past practice if they are to recognize the different aspects of teaching in a new culture.

Wright et al.. (2003) stress the need for an awareness of the wide variety of opinions teachers hold regarding literacy which will have been affected by their background, culture and education. The teaching experiences and literacy expertise of overseas teachers is a factor which has not yet been explored in the New Zealand context.

2.6 Conclusion

There has been very little research carried out into the experiences of immigrant teachers in New Zealand, despite the fact that in recent years there has been an increase in immigrant teachers in order to meet the growing population, particularly in urban areas. Research on literacy teaching in New Zealand has concentrated on the primary sector until recently so there is very little of direct relevance to this study. It would be useful to know to what extent newly arrived teachers need help to adjust their teaching style to help them adapt to the New Zealand environment and what experience they bring with them which could be of benefit in their work in New Zealand secondary schools in the area of literacy, therefore this study seeks to answer the three research questions.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces a discussion of the methodological approach chosen to examine the research questions set out previously. The chapter includes an explanation of the choice of participants and their background information. There is also a description of the process of data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

3.2 Qualitative research

This research uses a qualitative approach to research which is “grounded in the lived experiences of people” (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, p. 2) with the aim of bringing about change. Qualitative studies have become common in the field of education because researchers are interested in “the meanings the participants themselves attribute to” certain situations (p. 2) relevant to the study. As Patton (2002, p. 437) points out, “thick, rich description provides the foundation for qualitative analysis”. Qualitative research often begins with the researcher’s “real-world observations, emerging from the interplay of the researcher’s direct experience, tacit theories, political commitments, interests in practice, and growing scholarly interests” (p. 25). This study came from all of the above.

3.2.1 Interpretivist paradigm

Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggest that “researchers should design the study according to the research questions they seek to answer”. Designing a study should take into account the purpose of the research, the questions being investigated, and the sources available (Crotty, 1998).

This interpretative research centres on “the construction of knowledge (being) a democratic process” (Burton, Brundrett, and Jones, 2008, p. 62) in which the researcher and the respondents are all involved in building a picture of the issues relevant to the research questions. The inclusion of a variety of cultures while essential to the questions being investigated helped create a “diversity of perspectives” (p. 61).

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Snowballing

Participants were selected using the snowball approach. Neumann (2003) outlines this approach which hinges on one or two initial contacts which then “snowball” as further contacts are made. It was time-consuming obtaining contacts for the research but once a contact had been made, often participants encouraged other teachers they knew to take part. This snowballing technique helped to overcome the barrier of being a stranger to the respective volunteer. Various methods of snowballing were used. Initially, the researcher contacted a number of high schools to ask for volunteers but this method proved fruitless. However, the researcher had two contacts already working in Auckland schools and they agreed to be interviewed; they also put the interviewer in contact with two other teachers who took part. The researcher asked any immigrants she knew if they had any contacts in the education field and this provided one more participant. The Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA) agreed to send an email asking volunteers to contact the researcher to teachers on its database who fitted the category. This resulted in another five participants. It was important to arrange a time to carry out the interview which was convenient for the participant and in a place of their choice in order to ensure they would agree to take part.

Participants were given an Information Sheet which is attached as Appendix A.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

“Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful...” according to Patton (2002, p. 341). Interviews are used in order to “uncover and describe the participants’ perspectives on events”. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000, p. 269) refer to the “greater depth” that interviewing provides compared to other methodological techniques. In-depth interviews provide space to tap into the knowledge and insights that a participant might have to offer (Burton, Brundette, and Jones, 2008).

One- to- one semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study because they were more likely to lead to more information from each participant. According to Morse and Field (1995) semi-structured interviews involve using a list of questions with some flexibility. The questions act as a prompt to steer the conversation and encourage the participant to talk about certain subjects in detail. It is important therefore to keep the questions open-ended.

An interview guide approach was used (Patton, 2002); a number of open questions encouraged longer answers and ensured certain topics were discussed with each participant (Gillham, 2005). This method gave the interviewer some freedom to ask for further information, to encourage the interviewee to explore areas of interest in more detail. It allowed the researcher to modify the order of the questions based on the perception of what seemed appropriate. Occasionally a question had already been answered as part of a previous answer so in that case it was easy to move on without being repetitive. The interview guide helped keep the interviews on track making it easier to compare transcripts during analysis (Cohen et al., 2000; Hughes, 2002). All respondents addressed the same topics.

All interviews were taped and transcribed which guaranteed the researcher did not “substitute (her) own words for those of the person being interviewed” and ensured accuracy before they were coded (May, 2001).

According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), the strength of interviews lies in the fact that they enable the researcher to facilitate immediate follow up for clarification and obtain large amounts of data quickly. Gillham (2005) sees the depth of conversation which is really only possible through one-to-one interviews as another advantage, whereas Wisker (2001, p. 165) points out, interviews are useful if you need “information based on...insider experience”.

There are also some limitations to the interview approach. According to Neuman (2003) there are a variety of limitations which might apply to this particular project. For instance, an interviewer may inadvertently guide the interview in a certain way to trigger the responses the interviewer is looking for; carrying out personal interviews can be time consuming for the researcher; traveling to and from the interviews can be costly; interviews are dependent upon volunteers to give up their time.

One limitation to this project was the time taken contacting teachers and arranging a convenient time for an interview. It took many emails and phone calls with teachers to persuade them to take part and agree a specific time and place. Teachers' workloads are well-known and asking for volunteers to offer their time free of charge was relying on the good will of the participants.

Marshall and Rossman (1999, p. 110) also point out that the participant ‘may be unwilling or uncomfortable sharing all the interviewer hopes to explore’; this was found to be the case with one participant who seemed unhappy about the tape recorder but chatted freely when it was turned off.

3.3.3 Interview Questions

Compiling a list of interview questions (Appendix B) involved making a list of questions relevant to the subject matter and then putting them into logical order. The questions arose as a result of extensive reading which took place during the Literature Review. Advice was also taken from a Literacy Advisor at Team Solutions.

The interview began with a few demographic questions. The interview started with a more basic level of questioning before honing in on subjects which required more detail.

Gaining demographic background information about the participant was thought useful in order to draw comparisons at a later stage. For instance, comparing a teacher’s previous experience with their present employment turned out to be extremely relevant to the responses. Since New Zealand is only one of many countries tackling literacy issues it was hoped participants might bring with them valuable experience of literacy teaching (see Chapter 2, Section 5) so one question focused on any previous experience. Hannon (2000) notes the importance of each country’s history and culture and the impact these will have on the way literacy is valued and taught in schools. The majority of immigrant teachers bring with them experience of teaching in other countries (Ministry of Education, 2001; 2003). For this reason questions about previous teaching experience were included. It was useful to ask about each participant’s experience of professional development both in their home country and in New Zealand especially since professional development in teaching literacy across the curriculum was highlighted as a need by Limbrick and Aikmann (2002). The Ministry of Education have provided resources to assist teachers in different subject areas to integrate literacy strategies; by asking a question about resources available in their schools, it was hoped to establish whether or not these resources are used by the teacher, or whether the teacher even knows about them. A focus on the literacy skills needed for NCEA was prompted by Alkema and O’Connell (2003) who note the importance of literacy in all subjects for NCEA.

Once a list of questions was drawn up, a pilot interview was carried out with a Science teacher who had been teaching in New Zealand for just over six years. This volunteer was not used as a participant in the main study. This interview proved useful in helping to clarify whether or not the questions were easy to understand. Some of the questions were reworded following the interview. Carrying out such a pilot adds reliability to results (Neumann, 2003, p. 181): “Reliability can be improved by using a pretest or pilot version of a measure...”

3.3.4 Participants

The Ministry of Education has carried out two surveys of overseas teachers (2001; 2003) to monitor the number of overseas teachers in New Zealand schools. 41% of overseas teachers were working in Auckland at the time of the 2003 survey so Auckland was selected as the geographical area to be investigated. Teachers arriving in New Zealand will have been influenced by the education system followed in their own countries (Hannon, 2000) and all of the participants had taught before they arrived in Auckland. It was hoped that this would enable the interviewees to compare their previous experience of literacy teaching with their present experience and also to comment on any resources or professional development in this area they may have already received.

Ten participants were teaching in Auckland schools at the time of the study. Two additional participants were literacy leaders in schools based in Auckland.

The ten teachers who volunteered:

- were not born in New Zealand and did not study here
- have taught between 1 – 6 years in New Zealand high schools
- are either a first or second language speaker of English.

The ten teachers represent a variety of cultures which helped give a wider picture of the issues and so enhanced the results; this in turn adds “credibility” to the research (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 67). This cross-cultural perspective allowed access to a variety of insights and views.

Two literacy leaders were also interviewed; this provided some insight into the role literacy leaders are able to take with immigrant teachers.

All of the participants were qualified experienced teachers, the researcher's peers.

Hughes (2002) refers to the fact that interviews are more likely to be successful if the interviewee has a similar status and similar interests as the researcher. The fact that the respondents were the researcher's peer group helped create a congenial atmosphere in which the interviews took place. The researcher has also taught overseas and is an immigrant to New Zealand although she has not taught in New Zealand. The interviews were carried out at a place of the participant's choice, usually their school, at a mutually convenient time. By traveling to the participant's school, the interviewer put herself in the position of being a visitor which shifted the power relations involved in the researcher asking questions of the participant (Limerick, Burgess-Limerick, and Grace, 1996).

Table 1 outlines the countries the participants taught in previously, what age groups and subjects the participants had taught previously. There is also information about the school-leaving qualification in their previous country and demographics relating to the schools they had taught in, such as whether or not it was an urban or rural school.

Table 1 – Research Participants - Information

Name	Country of origin	Age taught before NZ	Urban/Rural school	School-Leaving qualification	Subjects taught before NZ
Sandra	S Africa	Yrs 9 - 13	Urban	Senior Certificate	Science Biology
Lorraine	England	Yrs 7 – 13	Urban	GCSE & A level	Chemistry Science
Grace	Germany	Yrs 5 – 6 & Yrs 9 – 13	Urban	No national Qualification	Primary & English & PE
Susan	England	Yrs 9 – 13	Urban	GCSE & A level & GNVQ	Science Biology
Jenny*	England	Yrs 7 – 13	Urban	GCSE & A level	French English
Deb	S Africa	Yrs 0 – 2 & Yrs 8 – 13	Urban & rural	Senior Certificate	English
Millie	India	Yrs 7 – 11	Urban	Public Exams	Maths
Ralph	England	Yrs 7 – 13	Urban	GCSE & A level	Science Physics Chemistry
Alice	Pacific Islands	Yrs 9 – 13	Urban	University Entrance	Social Studies Geography
Heather	England/ Mexico	Yrs 7 - 13	Urban	GCSE & A level/ IGCSE & Mexico exams	Biology Science

- Jenny had taken a career break of approximately 9 years between teaching in England and taking a teaching job in New Zealand so she had not been involved in the literacy strategies adopted recently in England.

- ❖ A level – Advanced level
- ❖ IGCE – International General Certificate of Secondary Education
- ❖ GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education
- ❖ GNVQ – General National Vocational Qualification

Table 2 (below) outlines further information about the participants such as what subjects they are teaching in New Zealand and the decile of the school. Information is also included about how many years interviewees have been teaching in New Zealand. The number of New Zealand schools taught in was also considered relevant although schools where participants had carried out short term relief teaching were not included in this count. Participants were asked to record schools where they had held a permanent post or had worked in for at least six months although they drew on their wider experience when answering the interview questions.

Table 2 – Research participants information (continued)

Name	No of Years teaching In NZ	Subjects Taught in NZ	School decile*	No. of Schools Taught at In NZ
Sandra	6	Maths	10 & 5	2
Lorraine	3	Chemistry Science	7	1
Grace	3	Primary & PE & German	4 & 10	3
Susan	5	Science Biology	10	1
Jenny	18 months	French	4	1
Deb	6	English	4	2
Ralph	6	Science Physics Chemistry	7	1
Alice	4	Social Studies	1	1
Millie	18 months	Maths Science IT	1	1
Heather	3	Biology Science	10/ & 9	2

❖ PE – Physical Education

❖ IT – Information Technology

* New Zealand schools are categorized by decile number (1 – 10). The lowest numbers refer to schools in areas of lower socio-economic status (Ladd & Fiske, 2001).

The length of time participants had been teaching here was relevant because if they had been teaching in New Zealand for less than a year, they might not have developed a sense of perspective on their initial experiences and would not have as much experience to actually discuss. A cut-off of six years was used because the new qualification (NCEA) in

New Zealand was introduced in 2002; this had an effect on the literacy skills students needed to succeed at the school-leaving certification stage (McDonald and Thornley, 2005). This factor caused schools to reassess the teaching of literacy across the curriculum. There are other factors why literacy across the curriculum has become increasingly important in Auckland schools quite recently – these have been explored in depth in Chapter 2.

3.4 Data collection

Data collection occurred from July – September 2008. Interviews were carried out in a location chosen by the interviewee, usually their school, in the hope that this would help set them at ease and make it more convenient for volunteers to take part. Each interview lasted between 20 – 50 minutes and was recorded and transcribed. The use of a tape recorder helped the researcher to concentrate on the respondents during the interview itself. Participants were then sent the transcript to check and edit before analysis took place.

3.4.1 Data Analysis

As a first step, interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and checked by respondents.

Content analysis was used to analyse interview data which involved organizing data categorically, using coding methods to identify themes which emerged during the course of the interviews. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) contend that coding consists of bringing fragments of data together to create categories that have some common property, arguing that the important analytical work lies in establishing and considering such linkages. Coding helped to classify themes which emerged.

The interviews were read individually before answers to each question were compared. Gradually a number of themes emerged which showed a consistency in answers. The themes were not necessarily grouped under one question; sometimes answers seemed to overlap the questions so it was decided to take a thematic approach to the findings rather than analyse the answers to each question separately.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has outlined the research design and described the procedure used in detail. A qualitative approach was adopted in an attempt to fill a gap in the literature that called for greater awareness of the issues which face newly arrived overseas teachers surrounding the

teaching of literacy in their subject area. Interviews were used to allow participants to express their thoughts in detail.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will seek to answer the questions asked in this study:

- a) What are the perceptions of overseas teachers of the literacy demands of the New Zealand high school curriculum?
- b) What professional support would be useful as they adapt their teaching styles and experiences to meet the New Zealand literacy requirements?
- c) What can be learnt from their experiences of literacy teaching overseas?

The interviews with 10 overseas teachers and two literacy leaders are discussed individually since their experiences and comments varied so greatly.

The following themes will be discussed:

- The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students
- The literacy needs of students with English as a Second Language (ESL)
- The literacy requirements of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)
- Literacy across the curriculum
- Subject specific language
- Resources
- Professional development relating to literacy teaching.

The penultimate section considers the results in the light of the above themes. This is followed by a brief summary of the results.

4.2 Overseas teachers

4.2.1 Heather

a) *Background*

Heather had trained as a teacher in England, where she had taught Science for three years in an urban school with an intake which was mainly students who have English as a first language. This school was the focus of a literacy initiative which was being piloted in selected secondary schools when Heather taught there; the

students at the school were underachieving in all subjects because many of them had very low reading ages, with 50% of students on the Special Needs register. Before arriving in New Zealand, Heather taught in Mexico for six months, in a city school where she gained experience with ESL students. In Auckland, Heather has taught in two schools; the first school she taught in was decile 9 and she stayed there for a year before moving to a decile 10 school where she has been for two years.

b) The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students

Heather did not see students' literacy needs as being any higher in New Zealand than either the students in Mexico or England. The technical terms used in Science and Biology, needed to be constantly reinforced so that students could understand the concepts behind them, and Heather saw this as part of the subject literacy required.

c) The literacy needs of students with ESL

In Heather's experience, ESL students often suffered from a lack of confidence in their communication skills in a second language.

d) The literacy requirements of NCEA

Heather explained that students needed to be made familiar with the "NCEA style assessment speak". She spends time teaching students what certain terms mean which might occur in exams, such as "achieved, merit, excellence, describe, explain, discuss..." Heather placed importance on teaching skills such as summarizing information, using "sentence linkers", writing "succinct answers", and covering the different writing styles needed for exams.

These comments indicated that Heather counted these exam skills as literacy skills; her emphasis was very much on specifically training students to succeed in NCEA style exams. She was aware of this:

We're always driven by our assessment systems, even though I know fundamental educationists say that it shouldn't be the case, it should be learning for learning, not to pass assessments, but unfortunately...the reality (is)...we're assessment driven and I think we have to embrace that, try and prepare students.

Heather compared NCEA with England's equivalent school-leaving qualification, which usually requires shorter answers in Science and Biology papers, sometimes including multiple choice questions. Although students need to be able to read and understand the question, the writing skills needed to succeed at NCEA Science and Biology seems higher, according to this comparison.

e) Literacy across the curriculum

Having spent her first years of teaching in a school which prioritized literacy across the curriculum, Heather was a great advocate for this approach, which included strategies such as encouraging students to read by having a reading time for the whole school every day. Teachers were expected to use "similar methodologies", employing the same terminology for generic skills so that students learnt to transfer skills and use them in all subjects rather than compartmentalizing. Heather's experience in New Zealand was that teachers were not encouraged to adopt the same terminology or teach similar skills and that many still focused on the "subject content", making the assumption that students already possessed the literacy and study skills needed at high school level. One example Heather gave of this being a problem, was that for NCEA every subject has a research element and students were being taught different methods of referencing rather than a standard approach. A more co-coordinated approach to literacy across the curriculum would be beneficial to the students in Heather's opinion, but she recognized that funding a Literacy Co-coordinator in every school to orchestrate this would be difficult financially.

f) Subject specific language

Heather noted that Science hinges on the use of technical terms which students must be able to use confidently if they are to succeed in the subject. She therefore focuses on key words in every lesson, even with the most able students, to ensure they understand the concepts behind the terminology used.

g) Resources

The resources that Heather used frequently were prepared by Team Solutions, a professional development support service based at the University of Auckland. Heather had also brought resources with her from England, which she adapts to suit the New Zealand curriculum. Heather also makes her own literacy resources. She

commented on the fact that Science textbooks in England would include literacy activities, which were very useful, but New Zealand textbooks did not incorporate literacy in the topics covered.

h) Professional development relating to literacy teaching

Heather had benefited from extensive professional development on whole school literacy in England. The school she had taught in had a strong focus on literacy; it was a pilot school for introducing a Literacy Strategy in secondary schools. Heather had also received professional development in Auckland run by Team Solutions, which focused on the literacy skills needed to answer NCEA Science and Biology exam questions.

4.2.2 Ralph

a) Background

Ralph had taught Science and Physics in an urban school in England where 99% of the students were English first language speakers. Since moving to New Zealand, Ralph has taught the same subjects in a decile 7 school where only 40% of the students are Pakeha.

b) The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students

Ralph's impression is that the literacy ability of the "average New Zealand English speaking" student is good, but he was keen to point out that at the school he teaches in, the majority of the students have English as a second language.

c) The literacy needs of students with ESL

Ralph described meeting the needs of ESL students as being a major challenge when he first arrived in Auckland. He mentioned various literacy strategies which his school promotes in order to target ESL students who may struggle with the language requirements at high school.

Ralph explained that all newly arrived ESL students attend an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programme, in which ESOL teachers immerse the students in the English language. Once a student has "demonstrated they have sufficient language..." they enter mainstream classes and each case is monitored

individually to ensure they are coping. Sometimes in-class support is provided to help a student initially.

d) The literacy requirements of NCEA

Ralph discussed the “dual criteria” required for NCEA Physics, which includes “a language strand and a maths strand” making it imperative that students are able to explain their answers in detail. He stressed the importance of literacy in this context. Students are taught the key phrases and words for each topic covered in the exam. In England, Ralph had not needed to focus on the literacy to such a great extent because students were not expected to describe and explain outcomes in such detail. He concludes “my teaching of Physics is completely transformed from what it was in the UK where it’s pure maths...”

e) Literacy across the curriculum

Ralph’s school has a literacy policy. The school has also focused on the language content of lessons since NCEA was introduced. He commented that “literacy is a constant focus within (the school) and we have a number of school strategies...a lot of our PD (professional development) focuses on those strategies...”

f) Subject specific language

Ralph mentioned the use of glossaries which the students compile for each subject, encouraging the students to learn key words in every lesson. He stressed the need to ensure students understand key words so they can decipher the exam questions.

g) Resources

Ralph brought many of his own literacy resources with him when he immigrated. He has shared these with his department and they have been very useful. Ralph mentioned the purchase of relevant resources for the department. He provided many examples of how these resources were used.

h) Professional development relating to literacy teaching

Ralph had received whole school training relating to literacy, both in New Zealand and in England. He mentioned the sharing of ideas during faculty meetings as an example of professional development.

4.2.3 Susan

a) *Background*

Susan had also taught Science and Biology in an urban school in England. The intake was 99% English first language speaking students. Since Susan arrived in New Zealand six years ago, she has been teaching in a decile 10 school in Auckland.

b) *The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students*

Susan had noticed that students sometimes struggled to understand the content of certain readings she used in class, such as magazine and newspaper articles. She also found that students sometimes have difficulty deciphering exam questions.

c) *The literacy needs of students with ESL*

At the decile 10 school where Susan was teaching, ESL students found it difficult in the mainstream classroom, although they did attend a “literacy course” before joining mainstream classes. She thought students needed more “preparation to cope with the senior” syllabus. She was keen to point out that the school was providing support for these students, but she still thought that it was not really enough, particularly for students who have just arrived in the country.

Susan also commented on the fact that students tended to socialize outside lessons with other students from the same country, speaking their first language rather than English, which meant they were not practising their English.

d) *The literacy requirements of NCEA*

In Susan’s opinion, literacy is more important in NCEA Science, Biology and Physics than in the English school leaving exams, “where they only expect short answers”. She reflected that “in New Zealand the curriculum...require(s)...deeper levels of thought...showing more thinking and understanding...” She compared this to England when brief answers were acceptable and concluded that “the literacy requirements for students in New Zealand are much higher than it is in the UK”.

Susan had also noticed an emphasis on critical thinking skills in NCEA.

She had to learn how to teach essay writing skills when she arrived in Auckland, in order to teach the skills needed for NCEA Science and Biology. She talked about the need to teach students what is expected when certain terms occur in exam questions, such as, “describe, explain, discuss”. Susan had been involved with NCEA exam marking to help herself gain “an insight into the literacy (and) what was being expected of students...”

e) Literacy across the curriculum

Susan did not make any specific comments on this area; the decile 10 school in which she teaches does not have a literacy policy to encourage staff to implement strategies across the curriculum.

f) Subject specific language

Susan focuses on teaching the concepts behind key words in her subject area so that students can become familiar with the terminology and feel confident with using these terms. Her approach is to teach a particular concept in as many different ways as possible, harnessing as many different learning styles as possible.

g) Resources

Susan gave various examples of how a variety of resources are used in the classroom. She was, however, unaware of any literacy resources which could be purchased in her subject area.

h) Professional development relating to literacy teaching

Susan had not received any useful professional development relating to literacy when she was in England but had found the professional development in New Zealand to be very helpful on this subject, with most courses including a literacy element.

4.2.4 Lorraine

a) *Background*

Lorraine has taught in an urban school in England which was part of the literacy strategy pilot. This meant that she had received extensive professional development regarding literacy before she arrived in Auckland. She described the school as “very white European”. Lorraine is now teaching Chemistry and Science in a decile 7 school where only 40% of students are Pakeha.

b) *The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students*

Lorraine noticed the difference in literacy ability when she first arrived in Auckland; she considers the literacy ability of Auckland students to be quite low, although she recognized that her comparison is with a selective school in England. When she first arrived in Auckland, Lorraine noticed students’ lack of “prior knowledge”, making it important to ensure background information is given before a new topic can be tackled.

c) *The literacy needs of students with ESL*

Lorraine had no experience of teaching ESL students before she came to Auckland. She sees the need to teach students how to write longer answers, to teach writing techniques and to ensure they understand the key words which are used in each topic.

d) *The literacy requirements of NCEA*

Lorraine focuses on teaching students to decipher the exam question correctly, emphasizing such key words as “describe, explain, discuss”. She is aware of the need to teach exam techniques because longer answers are required for higher marks. In England, Lorraine had not needed to teach writing skills to such an extent because the exam requirements were different, but in New Zealand she notes that “how to answer a question does come down to their literacy ability” – at least in the subjects she teaches.

e) *Literacy across the curriculum*

Lorraine had a positive experience of a whole school approach to literacy before she came to Auckland. She stressed the importance of focusing on literacy in all subject

areas because students do not grasp the cross-curricular element of the skills they are using in each subject. Lorraine would like to see literacy skills taught “across the board” in her school and is part of a working party which focuses on literacy. She commented that there is a “need to be doing literacy skills in all subjects...not just...a couple of teachers that are using literacy...”

f) Subject specific language

Lorraine used a variety of different methods to teach key words in her subject area. She referred to ‘word jumbles...scaffolding...taboo...paired reading’ and other activities which she used in her lessons to help students become accustomed to using key words and to be familiar with their meanings.

g) Resources

Lorraine had a wide variety of resources from the UK which were relevant to her subject area and obviously used them frequently. Lorraine shares her resources and training with her department, acting as the key worker relating to literacy. She noted “Anyone who had been in the UK teaching in the past 4 – 5 years will have something to bring with them.” Her department tended to use her resources, some of which she had ordered from England since arriving in New Zealand.

h) Professional development relating to literacy teaching

In England Lorraine had received extensive professional development relating to literacy and had attended an Effective Literacy Strategy course in Auckland.

4.2.5 Jenny

a) Background

Jenny had taught French and English for a number of years in England in an urban school, with students from a variety of backgrounds, some with ESL. The students were from a “very, very poor area” and had great difficulties with literacy. After an extended teaching break of nine years, Jenny returned to teaching in a decile 4 school in Auckland eighteen months ago. Jenny’s teaching experience in England was before the Literacy Strategy was introduced.

b) The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students

Jenny had not noticed any specific literacy needs in her school in Auckland. She compared the students favourably with her experience of teaching in a deprived area of England.

c) The literacy needs of students with ESL

Jenny's experience of teaching students who have ESL was quite positive because she found that they enjoyed learning a third language, French, and were quite enthusiastic. She did not note any specific literacy needs in ESL students.

d) The literacy requirements of NCEA

Jenny noted the need for students to have a good grounding in literacy if they are to succeed in NCEA French. She felt that this was because students need to be able to "make comparisons with their own culture and language".

e) Literacy across the curriculum

Jenny thought students should be encouraged to read and use the library more. Her school did not focus on this, however.

f) Subject specific language

Jenny did not comment on any subject specific language, although in French vocabulary must be learnt frequently.

g) Resources

Jenny was highly appreciative of AsTTle (Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning) (Ministry of Education, n.d.d.) and the Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs) (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, n.d.), which help teachers to differentiate using accessible language for specific students. This resource is very practical, with photocopiable materials provided.

In Jenny's experience, finding resources which the students were interested in helped to motivate them.

h) Professional development relating to literacy teaching

Jenny was extremely positive about the professional development she had received at her decile 4 school: “The PD system here is just amazing; in this school it’s fantastic...the PD certainly is alive and kicking and it’s very real.”

4.2.6 Millie

a) Background

Millie had taught in an urban, multicultural school in India. Her main subjects were Maths, Science and ICT (Information & Communications Technology). Millie had attended a retraining course at the University of Auckland in 2001. She had applied for numerous teaching jobs in Auckland but had only been employed as a reliever. At the time of the interview, Millie was teaching at a decile 1, multicultural school in Auckland as a Long Term Reliever.

b) The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students

Millie had noticed a difference between the literacy ability of students in some Auckland schools compared to the decile 1 school where she was currently teaching. She had noted that students in the decile 1 school were dependent on the teachers to interpret exam questions, for instance. Millie commented on the importance of differentiation so that a range of reading abilities can be catered for through a variety of worksheets, for instance.

Millie pointed out the difference between the education systems in India and the New Zealand system. In India, students do not progress to the next level until they have passed exams at the end of each year. She thought this ensured students did not enter high school when they were still struggling with literacy.

c) The literacy needs of students with ESL

Millie did not mention any specific literacy needs which ESL students might have, despite the fact that the decile one school’s intake consisted of 83% Pasifika students.

d) The literacy requirements of NCEA

As a Maths teacher, Millie was aware of the need for students to be able to read the questions independently in exams.

e) Literacy across the curriculum

Millie explained the Do Now activities which the decile 1 school implements. All subjects begin with a five minute activity which is language based; for instance, students were encouraged to keep a glossary of key words in all subjects.

Millie was keen to note the many initiatives the school was taking to improve the literacy levels of their students, although she did not give many examples.

f) Subject specific language

Millie was beginning to realize that students needed help to understand the technical language used in her subject area.

g) Resources

Millie was appreciative of the activities provided by the school's Literacy Co-coordinator for the Do Now activities. These activities were used for five minutes at the beginning of every lesson as a vocabulary focus. Students were able to focus on becoming familiar with key words through these short activities. Millie was not aware of any resources available which included literacy teaching within her subject area.

h) Professional development relating to literacy teaching

Although Millie completed the retraining course for secondary teachers at the University of Auckland in 2001, she did not receive any specific professional development with regard to literacy teaching in all subject areas.

4.2.7 Alice

a) Background

Alice had taught Social Studies and Geography at an urban, multicultural school in Fiji before she arrived in New Zealand. The language of schooling was English, although it was not usually the language spoken at home. She had been teaching in Auckland for four years and was employed in a decile one school to teach Maths and Social Studies at the time of the interview.

b) The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students

Although Alice saw the students in the decile one school as having some literacy problems, she was keen to emphasise the ways in which the school was helping the students in this area. In other schools where she had worked as a reliever, literacy levels were good.

c) The literacy needs of students with ESL

In Alice's experience, Pasifica students had greater difficulties with literacy than other students she had taught in Auckland. The school she was teaching in had 83% of Pasifica students. In her classroom she had displayed key words in a variety of languages, to help students memorise the words. Alice recommended the use of differentiation to help students access the lesson content.

d) The literacy requirements of NCEA

Alice recognized the need for students to be able read instructions and understand the questions in NCEA exams.

e) Literacy across the curriculum

Alice mentioned the Do Now activities prepared by the Literacy Co-coordinator, which she found very useful in helping students to access the language used in her subject area. She considered these activities were making a difference in the literacy abilities of the students. Students would begin every lesson with a Do Now literacy activity for five minutes. All subjects cover the same literacy strategy each week, so it is reinforced across the school. This might include concentrating on key words, for instance, creating a glossary for each subject.

f) Subject specific language

Alice displayed key words in a variety of languages in her classroom to help students to access subject specific content. The Do Now activities also concentrated on the language used in exams in her subject areas.

g) Resources

Alice used the Do Now resources mentioned earlier. The Maths department made their own literacy resources. Alice was very positive about the strategies being employed by the school and their effect on the students' literacy abilities.

h) Professional development relating to literacy teaching

Alice said she had received whole school professional development relating to literacy on numerous occasions, which she considered to be very practical and useful. She did not elaborate on the nature of this PD though.

4.2.8 Grace

a) Background

Grace had taught in Germany in both primary and secondary schools. In secondary school, she specialized in PE and English. She had taught in schools where it was common for students to have German as a second language. Since arriving in New Zealand three years ago, Grace had taught at a decile 4 and a decile 10 school respectively. She is now working as a reliever while taking a retraining course at the University of Auckland, which she was finding very helpful.

b) The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students

In Grace's experience, the literacy needs of New Zealand students varied, depending on the decile number of the school. For example, she had found that higher decile schools tended to have enough funding for teacher aides in the classrooms, whereas lower decile schools did not necessarily have the available finance.

Grace was in favour of teaching grammar more explicitly and thought this would make a difference to literacy levels.

c) The literacy needs of students with ESL

Grace observed that schools with a greater number of ESL students tended to be in the lower socio economic areas of Auckland. In her experience, these students tended to have higher literacy needs.

As a second language speaker herself, Grace is grateful when it when other people correct her English. She thought that ESL speakers needed to have their mistakes pointed out; otherwise they would never learn the correct pronunciation or grammar.

d) *The literacy requirements of NCEA*

For NCEA German, Grace stated that students are assessed on their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

e) *Literacy across the curriculum*

Grace advocated a more holistic approach to the curriculum, an approach usually seen in primary schools. The subject specific approach appeared disjointed in secondary schools, in Grace's view, leading to students compartmentalizing subject knowledge. Grace thought "each teacher...should be responsible" for improving literacy skills, by emphasizing literacy and making students aware of it. Grace was not aware of a literacy co-coordinator at any of the schools she had worked at in Auckland.

f) *Subject specific language*

Grace did not comment on any subject specific language.

g) *Resources*

Grace did not mention any resources for literacy teaching that she was aware of.

h) *Professional development relating to literacy teaching*

Grace was not given any professional development when she first arrived in New Zealand to help her understand the whole curriculum or the New Zealand education system. She had found teaching NCEA very stressful when she first arrived because she did not have any training and she did not understand the NCEA curriculum. She said:

I never got PD – it was a jump into the cold water...I think I needed far more PD, definitely and a lot of background information which I didn't have...It was very stressful...it was more teaching day-by-day and I didn't enjoy it...and then I changed my job. Seriously, it was very stressful.

Grace was now benefiting from a voluntary retraining course run by the University of Auckland, which was giving her an "overview". Grace had not received any professional development relating to literacy teaching across the curriculum.

4.2.9 Sandra

a) *Background*

Sandra had taught in an urban school in South Africa where the students were “of Indian descent”. Her subject specialism then was Science and Biology. She had acted as a Reliever for some time before working at a decile 5 school in Auckland. Sandra was now teaching Maths in a decile 10 school in Auckland.

b) *The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students*

In Sandra’s opinion, the majority of Pakeha students were “very literate” but she was aware “the students that actually struggle are the students whose second language is English...” She commented that the literacy needs of the students varied, depending on the socioeconomic area in which the school is based, contrasting her experiences in a decile 10 school with that of a decile 5 school. When she was acting as a Reliever she “found the literacy levels – especially schools in South Auckland – were shocking, were absolutely shocking...”

c) *The literacy needs of students with ESL*

Sandra thought ESL students were not given enough help with the language before entering the mainstream, particularly for subjects like Maths.

The decile 5 school she had taught in previously had a large number of Pacifica students who spoke English as a second language. Sandra commented on the higher literacy needs of the students in the decile 5 school compared to the decile 10 school.

Attending an ESOL workshop had helped Sandra to meet the needs of ESL students in her classroom more effectively. She now focuses on teaching the language associated with the concept, rather than simply teaching the concept.

d) *The literacy requirements of NCEA*

Sandra considered the literacy requirements of NCEA to include “higher order thinking skills” which involved analysing the question and making connections.

e) Literacy across the curriculum

Sandra was in favour of a whole school approach to literacy. She regretted that literacy seems to be associated with the English department and “it seems like other departments are sort of divorced from it...” Sandra would like to see strategies such as whole school reading time being implemented, or encouraging students to develop a glossary in every lesson.

f) Subject specific language

Sandra was able to give a variety of examples of ways in which she helps students to analyse the language content of her lessons. She emphasized the importance of this so that all students can access the subject matter. For example, students were encouraged to keep a glossary of key words and there was a focus on “word of the week”; she also used word matching activities, crosswords and other activities to help students access the language.

g) Resources

Sandra had created many of her own resources, which she shared with her department. The availability of resources to purchase for teaching literacy in Maths seemed to be very limited, in her opinion” “I’d like to see more resources out there that we could purchase to help push literacy forward...”

h) Professional development relating to literacy teaching

Sandra had benefited from the ESOL workshop she mentioned above, and also from whole school professional development relating to literacy, which had been taking place over the past two years.

4.2.10 Deb

a) Background

Deb had taught English for a number of years in South Africa before emigrating to New Zealand. She had taught mostly in urban high schools with Indian students. In New Zealand, Deb is teaching at a decile 4 school as a Specialist Classroom Teacher, a role which she described as “designed to support teachers within the classroom”.

b) The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students

In Deb's opinion, New Zealand students are not taught enough grammar and this has a negative effect on their literacy. She noted the difference between the two education systems – in South Africa, students are held back until they have passed their exams at each stage of the curriculum, whereas New Zealand students move up depending on age. Deb thought that this New Zealand policy had allowed many students to reach high school without sufficient literacy skills.

c) The literacy needs of students with ESL

Deb had undertaken a Graduate Diploma in TESOL (GradDipTESOL) course, partially funded by the Ministry of Education, which helped her to focus on “the way second language learners learn English”. Deb had a great awareness of the specific learning needs of ESL students, but she was keen to note that the skills she had learnt on the course were useful for any students with high literacy needs.

d) The literacy requirements of NCEA

Deb thought that many students struggled to meet the literacy requirements of NCEA because of their lack of basic grammar, and the fact that problems have not been dealt with earlier, before the students arrive at high school.

e) Literacy across the curriculum

For Deb, the “biggest challenge” in her job was trying to persuade all teachers to take responsibility for literacy within their subject area. She complained that “everyone sees literacy as the English teacher's problem”. The school she was teaching in did have a literacy strategy, but she still found that some teachers did not want to own the problem. Believing that all lessons should have “a language focus as well as a content focus”, Deb argued that if the school's literacy programme really worked, there would be an improvement in the literacy skills of the students.

f) Subject specific language

Deb had a variety of different strategies that she used to introduce students to the language needed in a certain subject area. The activities, such as matching games and vocabulary strategies, are designed to help students focus on key words.

g) Resources

The GradDipTESOL has been hugely beneficial to Deb in her teaching; she developed a wide range of resources to use in the classroom during the course.

Deb also mentioned two DVDs (Ministry of Education, 2007b, 2008a) promoted by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, which can be used for professional development for teaching literacy in different subject areas. She lamented the fact that this resource did not seem to be very well used, although it is an excellent resource.

Deb also mentioned the Ministry of Education publication “Effective Literacy Strategies” (Ministry of Education, 2004) which she thought was very helpful.

h) Professional development relating to literacy teaching

During the GradDipTESOL course, Deb had learnt a variety of useful techniques and strategies to help bring the language alive for the students. She had identified the need to do the course herself.

4.3 Literacy leaders

4.3.1 Amy

Amy worked as Literacy Leader and Assistant Head of English at a decile 4 school in Auckland. She believed “the literacy needs of our students are a concern...My concerns are backed up by diagnostic testing.”

When Amy first joined the school, six years ago, the staff were resistant to the idea of literacy across the curriculum, but she felt that this had changed more recently with teachers realizing the importance of including literacy in their lessons. The focus of the school was to improve NCEA results, so literacy was targeted at Years 9 and 10.

Amy had led the school through a variety of professional development initiatives in order to raise awareness among staff of the literacy needs of the students and of ways to help the students to succeed in different subject areas. She regretted the fact that she did not receive any extra time allowance to fulfill her role, so she could not help in classrooms.

Amy mentioned the Ministry of Education DVDs (Ministry of Education, 2007,b, 2008a) for professional development in literacy teaching, which she thought were useful.

Amy had not offered specific resources or professional development to newly arrived teachers but she was considering doing so in future. She had found that some teachers were reluctant to give up their time to attend voluntary professional development, so she was planning to ask Heads of Department to encourage their staff to attend.

The school had introduced AsTTle, which had been very helpful in diagnosing students' literacy needs. Amy spoke highly of the benefits of using AsTTle and the ARBs, which provide differentiated reading material for a variety of subjects. AsTTle had convinced staff of the need to focus on literacy by making them aware of the actual reading levels of the students in their classes.

4.3.2 Hannah

Hannah is employed as a Literacy Coordinator at a decile one school which is part of the AIMHI (Achievement in Multicultural High Schools) consortium. The school is also part of the EHSAS (Extending High Standards Across Schools) project. Both of these projects provide extra funding for the school to target learning difficulties such as literacy, to try to improve the schooling outcomes of decile one students.

Hannah had received extensive professional development in order to fulfill her role and she had also completed the GradDipTESOL which she had found very helpful.

“83% of students are Pacifica students and...most of those are ESL students in some form or another.” Hannah explained that some of these students might have recently arrived in New Zealand and others would only speak English in school. Hannah elaborated, saying that the students lived in a microcosm...a lot of them don't go out of their area for anything...they even have their own language, the only form of English that they speak here – which has got a lot of Hip Hop influence in it...they have their own way of speaking...

The responsibility for teaching English to these students is shared by the whole staff, “every teacher in our school is a teacher of ESOL...” However, there are also special programmes for new immigrants.

The high turnover of staff at the school and the frequent use of overseas teachers meant that Hannah was involved in a programme to help new teachers adjust to the school. Hannah was concerned, however, that all teachers should model correct English to the students and that some of the overseas teachers spoke with accents which the students could not understand, or that their English grammar was not setting a good example.

In her role as Literacy Coordinator, Hannah was able to help support teachers in a variety of ways, such as helping to create literacy resources for certain courses or giving support in the classroom.

Hannah had introduced Do Now activities which all teachers use at the beginning of every lesson. These activities focus on the language content of the subject. Hannah prepares a variety of Do Now activities for teachers to use, but they are also expected to provide their own resources once they are familiar with the format. These activities help students and teachers to concentrate on the vocabulary and particular language features of each subject.

4.4 A theme-based approach to the findings

In this section the findings of the twelve interviews are brought together. The themes which arose are:

- The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students
- The perceived literacy needs of students with English as a Second Language (ESL)
- The literacy requirements of National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)
- Literacy across the curriculum
- Subject specific language
- Resources & professional development relating to literacy teaching.

A brief synopsis of the findings related to these themes follows:

4.4.1 The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students

The teachers from England (Lorraine, Ralph, Susan and Heather) were very aware of the varying literacy needs of New Zealand students with regard to their subject areas. Two

teachers from South Africa were equally aware, although both had pursued professional development in this area since arriving in Auckland because their previous experience had not involved integrating literacy teaching in their subject area.

Four of the teachers were less aware of the literacy needs of their students even though three of these teachers were employed in schools of decile four or below, where it might be assumed that the literacy needs of students might be higher than average.

4.4.2 The perceived literacy needs of students with English as a Second Language (ESL)

The teachers from South Africa and England were aware of the challenge involved in making their subject accessible to students with English as a Second Language (ESL). They had little previous experience of teaching new immigrants who might have ESL but they had increased the focus on literacy in their lessons to accommodate these students.

Three of the teachers who fell into the category of being less aware of the literacy demands of the New Zealand high school curriculum were second language speakers themselves.

4.4.3 The literacy requirements of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)

The four Science specialists from England (Ralph, Lorraine, Heather and Susan) spoke in great detail about NCEA, concentrating on altering their delivery of the subject to include attention to the literacy requirements in their subject area. There seemed to be some agreement among all six of the teachers in this category that the literacy requirements were higher for NCEA than for the equivalent school-leaving certificate in their own country, particularly the critical thinking required to achieve high levels at NCEA.

The overseas teachers who did not teach Science did not talk in detail about NCEA.

4.4.4 Literacy across the curriculum

Five of the teachers in the first category (who originated from South Africa or England) expressed strong opinions about the need for all teachers to see themselves as teachers of literacy and the need for integrated whole school approaches to literacy.

Two of the teachers in the second category (those who were less aware of the literacy demands of the New Zealand curriculum), Alice and Millie, were positive about the whole school approach taken in their decile one school.

4.4.5 Resources

Nine of the participants were unaware of the Ministry of Education DVDs, “Making Language and Learning Work” (Ministry of Education, 2007b, 2008a).

Participants had either made their own resources for their subject area or had supplied their own from the UK.

4.4.6 Professional development relating to literacy teaching

Three of the teachers from England had already received extensive professional development in this area before they arrived in Auckland. The two South African participants, Sandra and Deb, had pursued professional development since they arrived in Auckland, recognizing their own needs in this area. The remaining participants were in need of training to help them adjust to the literacy needs of their students and the demands of the curriculum. They had received some training surrounding this, but were in need of further support in this area.

One interesting finding from this Auckland-based study is that participants had received varying receptions from their schools. Some schools seemed to cater for the induction of the newly arrived teacher while other schools were less aware of the need to do so. The experience of Grace, who did not receive any professional development on her arrival at a decile 4 school in West Auckland, supports this suggestion:

“I never got PD – it was a jump into the cold water – never saw the curriculum really, the whole curriculum. I think I needed far more PD, definitely, and a lot of background information which I didn’t have – it was very stressful...I didn’t have an overview at all...so it was more teaching day-to-day and I didn’t enjoy it – and then I changed my job. Seriously it was very stressful.”

4.4.7 Initiatives to raise literacy achievement

There were a variety of initiatives mentioned by these candidates that were designed to help raise literacy achievement such as the use of AsSTtle (Ministry of Education, n.d.d), the

appointment of literacy leaders, or the use of Do Now activities which were mentioned in a decile 1 school.

4.5 Summary of results

The findings of this study reveal that there appear to be two categories of immigrant teachers working in Auckland high schools: those teachers who are very aware of the literacy demands of the New Zealand high school curriculum and who have received relevant professional development, and a second category of teachers who are less aware of the literacy demands of their students and seemed to be in need of further professional development in this area. It was obvious from the interviews that some participants had a wide variety of resources to use in the classroom to support literacy learning in their content area; these participants had received extensive professional development in this area. Other interviewees, however, showed a lack of awareness of the specific literacy learning needs of their students; this group of teachers had received less professional development regarding literacy teaching and were unaware of resources they could use in the classroom. This result is an uncomfortable one in many ways, but it does reveal the range of professional development needs that overseas teachers bring with them.

Another important finding is that teachers who have taught in England in recent years should be able to bring their own literacy resources and may well be able to share these with their department.

The primary objectives of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of overseas teachers of the literacy demands of the New Zealand high school curriculum and establish what professional support this group of teachers would benefit from in order to help them meet the literacy requirements of the New Zealand curriculum. It was also hoped that the research would highlight areas of expertise these teachers might already possess.

A discussion of these results will take place in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents, firstly, a discussion of the key findings of the research. The limitations of the study are assessed subsequently. There are recommendations for further research in some areas. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the preceding sections.

5.2 Discussion of results

In a discussion of the results it is necessary to bear in mind the definition of academic literacy adopted from Valdes (2004, p. 110) for this study: “the language used within particular disciplines (which) follows particular conventions for presenting information specific to the field”. Another important definition of literacy which relates to this discussion is from the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2002): “the ability to use and understand those language forms required by society and valued by individuals and communities.”

The themes that emerged during the interviews are explored in more detail below, under the headings used in the previous section. There are two additional headings for discussion – ‘Initiatives to raise literacy achievement’ and ‘Literacy Leaders’.

5.2.1 The perceived literacy needs of New Zealand students

All of the participants recognized that the literacy needs of New Zealand students varied. Interviewees were positive about the majority of New Zealand Pakeha students who they saw as being very literate. They expressed concern about students with ESL; this will be covered in the next section. Their perception was that students attending lower decile schools have higher literacy needs.

The interviewees compared their previous teaching experience with their present schools; their comments revealed the different perspectives they held. For example, Lorraine compared the students at a multilingual decile 7 school in Auckland with a monocultural selective school in England. The participants’ backgrounds were important in understanding the comments they made; this shows the variety of experiences overseas

teachers bring with them, leading to the conclusion that they cannot be treated as a homogenous cohort. Cruickshank's (2004, p.134) study of 110 immigrant teachers at the University of Sydney revealed: "The findings challenge any notion of overseas-trained teachers as a homogenous group. The need for flexibility in program organization and delivery was a constant theme." Immigrant teachers bring a wide variety of experience and professional training needs.

5.2.2 The literacy needs of students with English as a second language

The results clearly showed that some teachers were more aware of the specific literacy needs of ESL students than others. It was noticeable that three of the teachers who spoke ESL themselves were less aware of the fact that students from diverse backgrounds often require more support with literacy in content areas. However, some of the teachers had recognized their need for professional development in this area and had undertaken this voluntarily. This small-scale study has shown that it cannot be assumed that all teachers will be equipped with the skills to teach ESL students effectively. ESL students often struggle with "the language used within particular disciplines" (Valdes, 2004, p. 110).

Although only a small number of teachers took part in the study, their awareness of the needs of ESL students varied and this indicates that a larger study might reveal further insights into this issue.

Few of the participants had taught ESL students before they arrived in Auckland, yet they were not given professional development to target this area when they first arrived.

The fastest growing ethnic groups in New Zealand are the Asian community and the Pasifica community (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). As has already been indicated, Auckland is the most ethnically diverse region in New Zealand (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1). The school population reflects this diversity and teachers need to be equipped to teach in multilingual schools where a substantial number of students will be ESL learners. Teachers may need specific professional development in order to adapt their teaching styles to take into account the diversity of learners in their classroom. The difference that an individual classroom teacher can make has been highlighted by Bishop et al. (2007) and Alton-Lee (2003) in their New Zealand focused research.

The Ministry of Education in New Zealand provides a variety of resources for schools to help with professional development in the area of teaching ESL students, but not all of the participants were aware of the resources, which suggest they are underused and need further promotion. This may be because each school in New Zealand is responsible for the induction of new teachers from overseas and some schools may spend more time on helping overseas teachers to adapt than others.

New Zealand schools are given autonomy over the professional development of teachers and literacy plans – this has led to some overseas teachers not receiving relevant training in the delivery of a school's literacy policy, despite the resources provided by the Ministry of Education. May (2007) found schools were at different stages in the development and implementation of a literacy strategy and this may account for the oversight.

5.2.3 The literacy requirements of National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) & the high school curriculum in New Zealand

It was noticeable that the only teachers who spoke at length about the literacy requirements for NCEA were four Science teachers from England. They all compared NCEA Science to GCSE Science (the English equivalent school-leaving certificate). Although England has been promoting literacy across the curriculum in secondary schools for a number of years (see Chapter 2), it seems that literacy is not incorporated into the final Science exams at GCSE or A level. Students need to be able to read the question for GCSE but the types of critical analysis and extended written answers which are a feature of NCEA, were not part of the English Science syllabus, in the experience of these teachers. This research did not involve comparing the literacy requirements of the two examinations, however.

These Science teachers showed an extensive knowledge of the literacy requirements of NCEA, revealing the influence an examination can have on the type of literacy taught in schools. There could be more than one reason for this – teachers in England are under pressure to ensure good exam results since these are published in public league tables and departments are held accountable by Ofsted, the English school inspection service (Thrupp & Willmott, 2003). It may be that the focus of these teachers on educational outcomes is a result of the cultural conditioning they have received in the UK. However, these four teachers also worked in Auckland schools which were decile 7 or above, where there may

be more pressure to ensure students achieve their potential at school leaving age. Without further research in this area, it is not possible to draw any definitive conclusions.

These interviews might be suggesting a new kind of literacy is emerging in New Zealand – literacy to pass NCEA. A teacher from a decile 10 school illustrated this possibility: “we use NCEA style assessment speak in all of our unit tests and end of year exams” in order to help the students become familiar with these terms; she referred to this as teaching “exam skills”. All four Science teachers mentioned the need to train students to understand the expectations at NCEA in each type of exam question. The frequent use of terms such as ‘describe, explain, discuss’ means that students need to be able to unpack what is required in order to achieve a Merit or an Excellence in their Science papers. These teachers were concentrating on the “language used within...” (Valdes, 2004, p. 110) their particular discipline.

Professional development mentioned by the Science teachers seemed to be focused on NCEA, including the literacy requirements. The teachers implied that students are being taught a formulaic literacy approach in order to achieve higher levels at NCEA. Susan asked the question: “Are we doing literacy or not?” which seemed to reveal the dilemma of training students to pass NCEA by teaching tailored literacy skills, rather than teaching the literacy skills needed in the wider world in the twenty-first century. The definition of literacy used by NCEA is taken from the New Zealand Literacy Strategy: “Literacy is the ability to use and understand those language forms required by society and valued by individuals and communities” (Ministry of Education, n.d.b.), nevertheless these Science teachers seemed to be suggesting that they were teaching specific literacy skills in order for students to pass NCEA, which were not necessarily skills that would be encompassed in the definition used in the Literacy Strategy.

Heather explained that most of the literacy skills she taught in England and Mexico were the same as the skills she teaches in New Zealand, but there are some particular skills which she teaches that are “assessment driven”:

We’re always driven by our assessment systems, even though I know fundamental educationists say that it shouldn’t be the case, it should be learning for learning, not to pass assessments, but unfortunately in the

reality of where we live now, we're assessment driven and I think we have to embrace that, and try and prepare students.

These Science teachers were altering their practice to train their students to answer a certain type of question common to NCEA. Ralph explained how he had completely changed his teaching style in order to deliver NCEA Physics. This shows the effect NCEA is having on the teaching practices of these teachers, a theory referred to as 'washback' or 'backwash', as discussed in Chapter 2. The discussions with these teachers seemed to point to McEwen's theory that "what is being assessed becomes what is valued, which becomes what is taught" (1995, p. 42, as cited in Cheng & Curtis, 2004). Chapter 2 outlined the different approaches countries take towards literacy teaching, which are culture bound (Hannon, 2000). The effect NCEA is having on the teaching of literacy in Science is specific to New Zealand, but other countries may find that an examination system is affecting the way literacy is taught; the washback effect is so ubiquitous.

The specific training of students to meet the literacy demands of NCEA did not seem to reflect the definition of literacy adopted by NCEA from the New Zealand Literacy Strategy (see Chapter 2). However, the reading and writing requirements of NCEA are clarified in The Literacy Learning Progressions (Ministry of Education, n.d.a). The document emphasises three strands of literacy – reading, writing and critical literacy – all of which were mentioned by these teachers. The list of literacy requirements for University Entrance provided by the NZQA, (February 2009) noticeably focus on reading and writing skills, despite the broader definition of literacy provided in the New Zealand Literacy Strategy.

Heather, from a decile 10 school, explained that in terms 3 and 4, which lead up to the final NCEA exams, Science teachers focus on teaching the students to answer the types of questions NCEA might ask. Although there are many other reasons why students from lower decile schools are less likely to achieve University Entrance, this focus on exam-orientated literacy could be a contributing cause. According to Education Counts (Ministry of Education, 2008b), in 2007 18.6% of students from deciles 1 and 2 schools received University Entrance (UE) while 59.7% of students from deciles 9 and 10 schools achieved UE.

These teachers were positive about the benefits of students being able to explain scientific theory. Susan expanded on this: "I do think New Zealand relies a lot more on literacy

which isn't a bad thing because it's really important to be able to have the literacy, to be able to explain it..."

None of the other participants mentioned NCEA at length, or only when asked specifically to comment on the literacy requirements for NCEA (see Question 8 of the interview questions, Appendix B).

The literacy needs of the students in the lower decile schools seemed to differ, according to the interview results. Hannah, the Literacy Leader at a decile one school, described the Pacifica students who lived in the area, who could:

operate in their first language all the time. This is like a unique situation here where they can actually survive in this area without using English...mostly they only use English when they are watching TV or when they are in a classroom situation...they can go to the shopping centre and use their own language, in the playground they all use their own language...so that's why we say most of our students are ESOL...

Hannah went on to describe the "microcosm" in which these students lived:

The kids are quite sheltered, a lot of them don't go out of their area for anything...they even have their own language, the only form of English that they speak here – which has a lot of Hip Hop influence in it...their own way of speaking. It's hard to understand.

It may be that students in this type of situation need to focus primarily on what Maclellan (2008, p.1) refers to as "functional literacy" as opposed to the academic literacy which is needed for exam success. Teachers in the Wanganui study (Watson et al., 2007; see Chapter 2) identified with functional literacy as a means of "empowering" students and preparing them for the world of work. Maclellan (2008, p. 2) notes that "people may possess (literacy) in varying degrees, that (literacy) is continuously improvable" implying a needs continuum of situated literacy. "Functional literacy" which is needed for everyday life would differ on this scale from "academic literacy" which, according to Maclellan, "is shaped by the disciplinary discourse, individual identity and experience, and institutional values". This theory would suggest that academic literacy is influenced strongly by the examination system, implying a type of situated literacy, individualized by the exam requirements. As NCEA is unique to New Zealand, overseas teachers would therefore need to adjust their practice in order to help students achieve exam success.

The New Zealand SSLI encouraged schools to develop their own literacy strategy, depending on their student community. Wright (2005) discusses the New Zealand context for the SSLI, revealing the autonomy of schools to develop their own strategy: “Each school approaches literacy differently, based on its immediate context, its student population, and the ethos of the school”. This clearly calls for the delivery of situated literacy and appears to be what is happening in schools. It is also an acknowledgement of the importance of the type of literacy advocated by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2002): “the ability to use and understand those language forms required by society and valued by individuals and communities”.

5.2.4 Literacy across the curriculum

The need for all teachers to include a literacy element in their subject teaching was raised by both of the literacy leaders and seven of the immigrant teachers.

May (2007, p. 388) mentions the need for all “teachers (to) take ownership...” of a school’s literacy policy; his discussion of the obstacles to implementing a successful literacy strategy in the secondary school point to the size and organizational structure, which work against a team approach. The successful approach taken by the US school described by Fisher (2001) altered the school structure in order to prioritize literacy. May views the subject-based approach as blocking change. Freebody (2007) also sees this “fragmented” approach as limiting (see Chapter 2). Grace agreed with this, advocating a more “holistic” approach in her comparison of the secondary school curriculum and the structure of primary schools.

In a decile one school, one of the participants seemed to be unaware of the literacy needs of the students where she was teaching, despite the Literacy Leader’s insistence that “every teacher is a language teacher”. Although new recruits may have relevant expertise and experience in their subject specialism, they may not be aware of the need to integrate literacy strategies in their subject areas. This example supports Lester’s (2000) claim that not all subject teachers will have expertise in literacy teaching.

Although the Bullock Report (Education in England, n.d.) advocated that all teachers should see themselves as teachers of language, it seems that schools in England have been slow to take up this challenge. The Literacy Strategy in England was extended to include

secondary schools in 2001; this directive was government-led with the result that schools have begun to change their approach. The New Zealand ERO (Education Review Office, 1997) produced a report outlining the need for schools to provide literacy teaching across the curriculum (see Chapter 2). However, New Zealand schools enjoy more autonomy and were advised to develop their own literacy initiatives with their school community in mind. In Deb's opinion, "although there is a literacy focus within the Ministry, it needs to be driven more in that it needs to be almost mandated..." Heather also mentioned the fact that many teachers seemed to be focused on the "subject content" in her decile 10 school, assuming that students would already be equipped with the crucial literacy and study skills required in high school. Wright (2007, p. 421) also emphasizes the need for teachers to change the fundamental ways in which they teach, despite the fact that most of today's teaching workforce grew up when "the written and spoken word (were) prime sources of formal learning". The New Zealand curriculum emphasizes learning processes so teachers are hopefully becoming more aware of the need to alter the focus of their teaching. This fundamental change in focus from "content" to "learning processes" will necessitate extensive professional development if teachers are to be equipped with the skills needed to implement this strategy.

5.2.5 Subject specific language

In Auckland schools there seem to be some excellent strategies to help students to access subject-specific language. Two participants mentioned the use of student glossaries – in each subject students make a note in their glossaries of new vocabulary. Many activities designed to help students to learn relevant terms were mentioned. This type of strategy helps to "underpin access to learning" (Wright, 2008).

Academic language which is subject related is particularly difficult for ESL students to access because they may not have come across specific subject-related terms before. Schleppegrel & Oliveira (2006) outline the need for students to be familiar with academic English as opposed to everyday conversational English. A lack of this familiarity with academic terminology can have a limiting effect on a student's progress. Greenleaf et al. (2001, p.7) refer to the "literacy ceiling" which has a detrimental effect on students' educational outcomes, arguing that subject specialists need to explicitly teach the reading skills necessary for their subject to help ESL students to access academic language.

Without this knowledge, students will be disadvantaged when compared to the majority of first language speakers. Greenleaf recommends an integrated approach to the teaching of academic literacy, incorporating it into each subject. Valdes' definition (2004, p. 110) of academic literacy reveals the importance of ensuring students are aware of the technical language associated with a particular discipline: "the language used within particular disciplines...follows particular conventions for presenting information specific to the field" (See Chapter 2).

5.2.6 Resources

Interview questions were included about the resources and professional development that participants had received to help support literacy teaching in their subject area.

The Ministry of Education has also provided schools with resources such as the Effective Literacy Strategies handbook (Ministry of Education, 2004) and subject-based DVDs (Ministry of Education, 2007b & 2008a). It became apparent that these were not widely used or even known about.

The lack of resources relating to literacy teaching in subject areas is a cause for concern. There were comments about the lack of literacy related activities available in text books, for instance, and the need to create subject-related resources. However, many participants were unaware of the resources that are available. The lack of literacy activities included in New Zealand textbooks is a pertinent point; inclusion of such activities makes resources easily accessible to busy teachers.

Participants who were aware of the resources made available by the ARBs as part of AsTTle mentioned these favourably and use of these should be encouraged. There was positive input from three of the teachers from England who were sharing their resources with their relevant departments in order to encourage good practice.

5.2.7 Professional development relating to literacy teaching

The targeting of the specific needs of students from low socio-economic areas in New Zealand involves the need for teachers to believe they can make a difference, despite their inability to change other factors in students' lives (Fancy, 2007). Alton-Lee's Best Evidence Synthesis (2003) highlighted the importance of individual classroom teachers,

with their ability to make a difference to student outcomes. Fisher (2001) records the effectiveness of professional development, emphasizing the importance of the classroom teacher.

May (2007), p. 388) notes the importance of teachers adopting “effective literacy practices” in order to meet the needs of all the students in their classrooms. The findings of this small-scale study suggest that not all overseas teachers arrive with the knowledge to do this. The professional development requirements of overseas teachers need to be addressed if they are to adapt their teaching styles to meet the needs of the New Zealand classroom. The immigrant teachers in this group appeared to be self-diagnosing their professional development needs.

In New Zealand, Jhagroo (2004) supports Grace’s view that all teachers would benefit from professional development when they arrive, to help them have an overview of the curriculum and its delivery. These interviews revealed there were some “gaps within their (overseas teachers) teaching practice” (Vohra (2005, p. 21); this needs addressing if these teachers are to effectively meet the needs of the diverse learners in their New Zealand classroom. May (2007) reiterates the need for new staff to adapt their previous experience to the school community in which they are working. The findings of Seah and Bishop (2001) in Australia revealed that immigrant teachers were expected to adjust their teaching styles to fit the Australian school culture, but they were not always sure how to or even aware of the need to do so. Court’s (1999) research in Israel showed that immigrant teachers need time to reflect on their past practice if they are to recognize the different aspects of teaching in a new culture.

School leaders are responsible for the induction and professional development of new staff (Timperley et al., 2007) but the implementation seems to vary from school to school (Cameron, Dingle, & Brooking, 2007). The experience of Grace, revealed in this study, backs up Cameron’s findings. Grace was left to diagnose her own professional training needs and ended up leaving the decile 4 school where she had started teaching work in New Zealand. She is now relieving in higher decile schools and wishes she had received more support when she first arrived, to help her adjust. Timperley et al. (2007) claim that school management teams are responsible for the professional development of staff; a more

consistent approach to the induction of overseas teachers might help to decrease teacher turnover and its associated problems.

Inglis and Philps (1995) found that teachers who benefited from a mentor and a formal induction programme were more likely to stay in Australia. A mentoring system would help overseas teachers to bridge the gap between the two cultures and adapt more quickly. A smooth transition is more likely to lead to teachers who will stay longer which would be beneficial to both parties, the school and the teacher concerned. Timperley et al. (2007, p. 223) warn that high “teacher turnover” threatens school improvement.

As Cruickshank (2004) established in Australia, overseas teachers need a flexible professional development programme since they bring a wide variety of experiences. Cruickshank recommends a more concerted effort to plan for the needs of overseas teachers; he points out that the global movement of teachers is likely to increase. This study highlighted the need for professional development designed to bridge the gap when teachers arrive in New Zealand, particularly since many of these immigrants will be employed in low decile schools.

Johnson et al.’s research (2004, see Chapter 2) revealed a “support gap” for new teachers in low decile schools in the US. There has been very little research in this area in New Zealand despite the reliance on overseas teachers to fill a certain number of teaching vacancies every year.

According to Limbrick & Ladbrook (2002), teacher shortages in New Zealand led to an increased recruitment drive overseas during the 1990s - “often these teachers were appointed to schools in low decile areas, who traditionally find it harder to recruit staff”. Dewar and Vissar (2000) also found that immigrant teachers were more likely to be employed in low decile schools. As Limbrick et al. point out (ibid), these schools have the greatest ethnic diversity, which requires specific teaching approaches to help students overcome language and cultural differences. This research provides evidence of immigrant teachers experiencing a range of literacy practices in their home countries, which do not always transfer successfully into the New Zealand classroom. Teachers who seemed to need the most help were found in the lowest decile schools.

Limbrick (2001, p. 12) drew attention to the “differing philosoph(ies) on literacy education” held by overseas teachers. Wright et al. (2003) also note the variety of beliefs surrounding literacy teaching which teachers hold depending on their background, culture and education. There are examples of differing approaches to improving literacy in these interviews, such as the teaching of grammar, and students moving up in age groups rather than according to ability and/or exam success.

May (2007) sees ongoing professional development as a priority if schools are to sustain a literacy focus. This issue was also raised by teachers in the Wanganui research project (Watson et al., 2007), who foresaw the problem of sustaining a school wide literacy policy because of the nature of short term funding for new initiatives. The structure of funding professional development seems to hamper long term change, according to May (2007) and Knight (2005). Short term funding could affect the success of a school’s literacy policy, if new teachers are not effectively integrated into a school’s ‘literacy community of practice’ (Wright, 2007).

In Chapter 2, the well resourced schools of Finland were revealed as a contributing factor to the high scores Finland consistently achieves in the PISA tests (Malaty, 2006). It seemed from the responses of the ten participants that the decile 10 schools were providing teachers with the relevant training which helped to ensure all students could achieve their potential. Students also seemed to receive more support in these schools. Unfortunately it seems that the students with the highest literacy needs attend the lowest decile schools, as Limbrick (2001) suggests.

In New Zealand the Ministry of Education has been partially funding teachers in all subject areas to qualify as GradDipTESOL teachers. Deb (a South African teacher) and Hannah (a Literacy Leader) had taken this course and both seemed to have found it both practical and useful in their teaching roles.

Immigrant teachers may have received relevant professional development in their previous teaching role. However, Reid (2005) found that immigrant teachers in Australia often felt that their previous experience was undervalued in their new teaching situation. Santoro et al.. (2001) also found in Australia that despite the fact that overseas teachers bring with them a wealth of teaching experience, it is largely ignored in their new country. There has

been little research carried out in New Zealand in this area. However, this study seems to suggest that immigrants who have taught recently in England may well be a resource in themselves when it comes to sharing literacy strategies in their subject specialism. This potential resource could be explored.

5.2.8 Initiatives to raise literacy achievement

There was a variety of school initiatives taking place, many of which included literacy as a school improvement strategy which involved extra funding. These initiatives were commented on positively by the teachers interviewed.

In schools which were implementing AsTTle, teachers saw it as a very useful diagnostic testing tool because of its specific help with relevant subject related resources for literacy activities.

5.2.9 Literacy Leaders

The appointment of a Literacy Leader within the school shows the support of the school's leadership. According to Wright (2007), this appointment is critical for the implementation of a successful literacy strategy. Wright's research highlighted the need for an allocation of free time so the Literacy Leader can help individual classroom teachers and liaise with outside agencies. The most successful literacy initiatives are those supported by the principal and the school management team, according to Wright. Two Literacy Leaders discussed their position in the school and the school's ongoing focus on literacy. One of the Literacy Leaders interviewed seemed to enjoy greater support from the school's management than the other. The Literacy Leader from a decile 4 school was not given any time allocation to carry out her Literacy Leader responsibilities, which limited the amount she could actually achieve. She was less positive about her experience of Literacy Leadership than the Literacy Leader of a decile 1 school, who received allocated time to carry out her duties.

Both of the Literacy Leaders mentioned how effective AsTTle has been in helping to convince staff of the need to teach the language content of their lessons more overtly. One of the Literacy Leaders had noticed how motivational eAsTTle was proving with her students. Clarke (2006) advocates this "transparent" approach in his work in a Rhode Island school. In his experience the students were motivated because they knew their

reading test results and were keen to set themselves goals to improve. It raised the profile of reading and students became competitive, wanting to improve because they began to realize the importance of reading for accessing the content of different subjects.

5.3 Summary

The interviews with overseas teachers have also been considered using a theme approach, although at times these themes overlapped. The main results which emerged as themes have been summarized in this chapter and discussed with reference to relevant previous literature.

These were the research questions posed:

- What are the perceptions of overseas teachers of the literacy demands of the New Zealand high school curriculum?

The interviews with overseas teachers clearly confirmed that the literacy demands of the New Zealand high school curriculum are greater than those experienced by most of these teachers overseas. This is partly attributed to the high numbers of ESL students in Auckland schools who have specific literacy needs and also to the distinct literacy demands of NCEA, the New Zealand school-leaving certificate. Some of the participants seemed less aware of the literacy element of the New Zealand curriculum, which was a cause for concern.

- What professional support would be useful as they adapt their teaching styles and experiences to meet the New Zealand literacy requirement?

The participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some will be able to deliver the literacy curriculum effectively without further professional development. These teachers are also in a position to share their literacy resources with their New Zealand colleagues. However, it cannot be assumed that all newly arrived teachers will be in this position. Many will be in need of extensive professional development if they are to deliver effective literacy teaching in their subject area. They lack experience of contextual literacy teaching. Professional development should be tailored according to a teacher's individual needs. A mentoring programme using trained mentors would be one way of helping newly arrived

teachers to bridge the gap between their previous teaching experience and the New Zealand situation. Ministry of Education resources should be promoted more extensively if they are to be used as part of the professional development of this group of teachers.

At present, each school is responsible for the professional development of its new staff. Some schools prepare their newly arrived teachers well, ensuring an understanding of the New Zealand curriculum. However, it seems that some teachers are left to diagnose their own professional development needs and are not always aware of the gaps in their knowledge. As overseas teachers are needed in New Zealand in order to fill all the teaching positions, a more consistent approach is needed. It is also likely to reduce teacher turnover, which is a constant problem in some schools. Further research into the causes of teacher turnover would be useful. Students would then reap the benefits of a more uniform approach to literacy, among other things. There may be an impact too on student outcomes if the teaching profession was more stable, particularly in lower decile schools.

- What can be learnt from their experiences of literacy teaching overseas?

Teachers who have experience of teaching in England in the last five years should be equipped to teach literacy in their subject area and should be able to adapt their materials to suit the needs of ESL students in Auckland.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the findings of this study:

Recognition of the needs of newly arrived teachers from overseas seems to vary from school to school. Although the needs of these teachers are not all the same, it seems that some teachers are not offered relevant professional development when they first arrive, although it might help them to adjust to teaching in a new culture. A more consistent approach which includes a bridging course could be considered. Induction could include the challenges of teaching ESL students and the literacy requirements of NCEA. Although the influx of overseas teachers in New Zealand has risen to meet the needs of the expanding high school population, there is no evidence that this group of teachers have been planned

for, or any consideration given to the reasons for high teacher turnover in some Auckland schools.

A mentoring programme for newly arrived teachers could be designed to help overseas teachers adjust to teaching in Auckland. Teachers who successfully adapt are more likely to stay, which would reduce teacher turnover in schools. Mentors could be given training to prepare them for the role; they would need to be rewarded for their work. Immigrant teachers who have been in Auckland for a number of years would be in a good position to take up this role. A programme such as this would help immigrant teachers to feel welcomed and valued for the role they play in Auckland schools.

The New Zealand Ministry of Education could produce a leaflet for schools similar to the Queensland resource (1998), providing guidance regarding the integration of immigrant teachers.

The Ministry of Education funding which has encouraged teachers to undertake the GradDipTESOL course run by the University of Auckland seems to be very beneficial according to two participants in this study. It is hoped that this funding will be continued.

Strategies to encourage teachers to stay in decile one schools could also be considered. This might involve rewarding teachers in these schools after a certain period of employment, which would discourage teacher turnover. The high turnover of staff in these schools presumably places greater strain on the teachers who do stay long term. (In 2009, the National government announced a new teacher bonding scheme which would reward teachers of decile one schools for staying in a school three years or more (National, 2009).

Ministry of Education resources, such as the Making Language and Learning Work DVDs and Effective Literacy Strategies manual, would benefit from wider publicity. These are excellent resources but, according to this study, they are not being widely used.

Textbooks designed to be used as NCEA course books could include a literacy element with activities. This would help teachers to have an accessible subject-specific literacy activity that supports learning. Textbooks should be designed to cover all aspects of the updated New Zealand curriculum.

Teachers who have taught in England in the past six years should be aware of a variety of literacy strategies to use in their subject area. These teachers could be used as a resource in themselves as they could be encouraged to share their knowledge and their resources.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The most obvious limitation of this research was that of a small sample size, a limitation that prevents generalization. The number of participants was too small to adequately reflect the experiences of all immigrant teachers in Auckland. It was difficult to recruit teachers for this research due to teacher workload. There was also the problem of the research topic – it is possible that some subject teachers were unmotivated to volunteer because of having a lack of interest in literacy teaching themselves. Three of the participants were particularly interested in the benefits of teaching literacy in all subject areas, which is why they volunteered to take part.

A further limitation might be the fact that only interviews were used and a triangulated approach might yield richer results. A survey of a wider number of teachers was considered, but it was decided that teacher workload would dictate the response and so it was unlikely to yield a substantial reply rate. Focus groups were also considered, but the interview technique was preferred because it tends to yield richer data and does not involve meeting at a certain time and place, a deterrent to participation for busy teachers.

5.6 Suggestions for further research

This study has raised a variety of issues, which have not been pursued as they were not the primary focus. In addition, the study was limited by the small number of participants, making it difficult to generalize its findings. A larger scale study in Auckland could determine the reliability of these findings. A study with a larger sample size could investigate the perceptions of overseas teachers regarding professional development to help them adjust to teaching in New Zealand. However, it would be necessary to bear in mind that this study has revealed that some teachers are not aware of either their own or their students' needs, particularly with regard to literacy teaching. A more comprehensive study could be used to help interested parties plan more comprehensively for the arrival of new recruits from overseas.

The methodology employed in this study helped to establish rich data on ten interviewees, although this approach is time-consuming. A larger study might employ a multi-faceted approach using focus groups, surveys and interviews.

Although this study did not investigate the reasons for high teacher turnover in some Auckland schools, further research in this area is recommended. High teacher turnover would be detrimental to the sustainability of a literacy policy in a school.

Further research could focus on other areas of the New Zealand education system that could be included in a bridging course; this study has focused on literacy in high schools, but other topics would need to be included, such as numeracy and NCEA.

5.7 Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was:

To examine the perceptions of immigrant teachers of the literacy demands of the New Zealand high school curriculum.

To establish what professional support would be useful as these teachers adapt their teaching styles and experiences to meet the New Zealand literacy requirements.

To find out what can be learnt from the experiences these teachers bring of literacy teaching overseas.

There is very little research on the experiences of immigrant teachers in New Zealand, so this study has helped to clarify the issues which these teachers face, particularly with regard to the dual challenges of teaching students with ESL and the expectations that all teachers will include literacy in their approach to teaching. Although this was only a small study, it has begun to explore these issues. The cultural adjustment facing the participants in this study seemed to be similar to that explored in Australia by researchers such as Cruickshank (2004), Santoro et al. (2001), Reid (2005), Inglis and Philps (1995), Peeler and Jane (2005), Seah and Bishop (2001) and Kostogriz and Peeler (2007).

This study revealed that some teachers arrive in New Zealand already equipped to teach literacy in their subject area. Many, however, do not arrive with this expertise and need professional development in this area if they are to fulfill the criteria of the New Zealand Curriculum.

Although New Zealand has developed a relevant Literacy Strategy for implementation in secondary schools, there are areas where there is still cause for concern. This research has confirmed Wright's (2007, p. 431) claim that "the development of literacy across the curriculum in New Zealand secondary schools is a work in progress" and that schools in New Zealand are at vastly different stages regarding their implementation of effective literacy teaching (May, 2007). This thesis has attempted to pinpoint areas which need further improvement, for instance, the professional development and integration of overseas teachers in order to ensure the effective delivery of literacy teaching in all subject areas.

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GLOSSARY

AIMHI	Achievement in Multicultural High Schools
A level	Advanced level
ARBs	Assessment Resource Banks
AsTTle	Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning
AUTEC	Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
BES	Best Evidence Synthesis
eAsTTle	web-based version of Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning
EHSAS	Extending High Standards Across Schools
ERO	Education Review Office
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
GradDipTESOL	Graduate Diploma of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education

IT	Information Technology
NCEA	National Certificate for Educational Achievement
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NCTE	National Council of Teachers of English
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Professional Development
PE	Physical Education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPTA	New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association
SATS	Standards Assessment Tasks
SSLI	Secondary Schools Literacy Initiative
UE	University Entrance
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW

Demographic questions

Country of teacher training.....

Countries taught in overseas

Number of years of overseas teaching experience

Number of years teaching in New Zealand

Number of New Zealand schools taught in

Subject specialism

School decile

Interview questions

- 1 Can you tell me about your teaching experience before you came to New Zealand, for instance, what subjects did you teach and what age groups.
- 2
 - a) What age group did you teach overseas?
 - b) Would you describe the school you taught in previously as urban or rural?
 - c) Would you describe the school's intake as multicultural or monocultural?
 - d) What languages did the students speak?
- 3 What was the national school qualification in the country in which you taught? What age group was the qualification intended for?

- 4 Did the way the subject was taught include attention to the language requirements? If so, how did the school approach this?
- 5 What route did you take to get a teaching job in New Zealand? Did you need to undertake any further training, for instance?
- 6 What subject do you teach now?
What age range do you teach now?
Are you teaching in your area of specialization?
- 7 What are your impressions of the literacy needs of Years 9 & 10 New Zealand students in your subject area?
- 8 Tell me about the literacy skills students need for NCEA in your subject area.
- 9 Are these similar to the kinds of literacy skills you needed to teach previously?
- 10 What did you find the major challenge in teaching literacy in your subject in New Zealand?
How do/did you deal with it?
- 11 What would your advice be to new teachers from overseas about literacy in your subject area?
- 12 What do you think could be done to improve the literacy skills of New Zealand students?
- 13 What can be learnt from your overseas experience about teaching literacy?
- 14 What professional development have you received in literacy teaching either here or overseas?
- 15 Talk to me about how you use this literacy pd in your classroom.
- 16 What resources are available to support ongoing professional development for literacy teaching in your support area?
- 17 Is there anything else you would like to comment on?