



Narratives of beginning Māori teachers: The forces that shape the first year of teaching

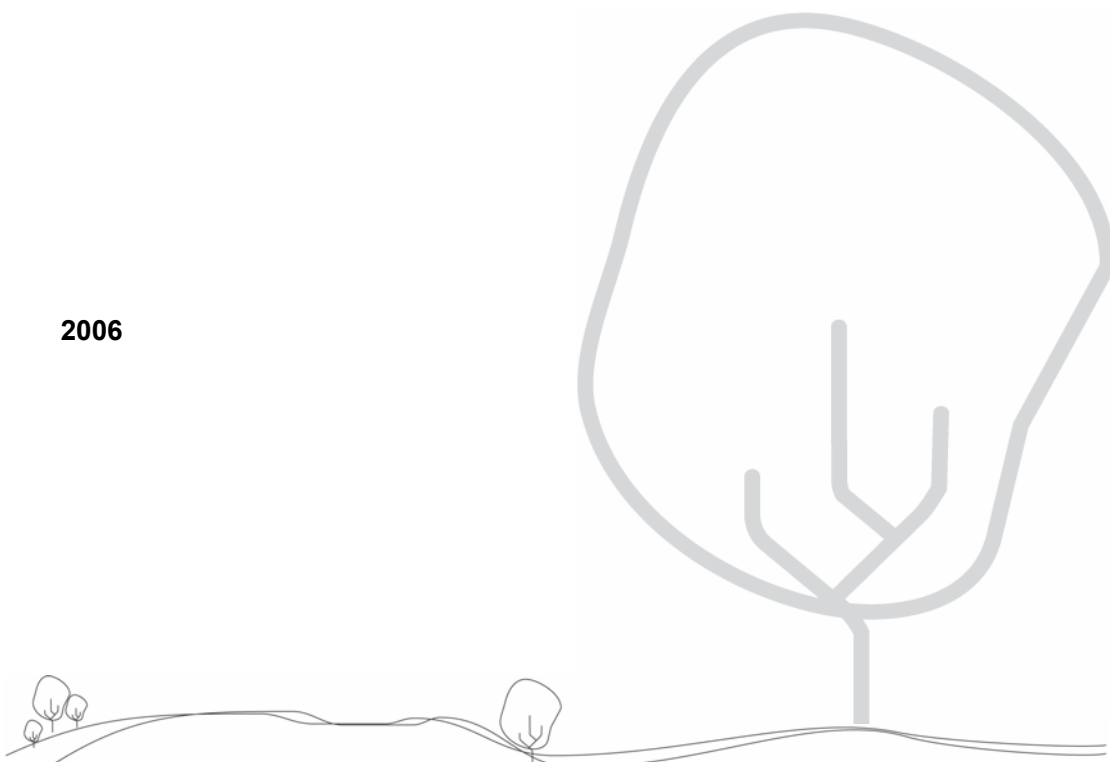
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Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

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He Mihi

Koia tēnei ko te mihi i te tuatahi ki te hunga nā rātou i para te huarahi e whai nei mātou, arā, ko te tini kua ngaro atu i te tirohanga kanohi. Ko te tumanako rā, e tika ana tā mātou whai i te huarahi i whakamomori rā koutou ki te hanga hei painga mō ngā whakatupuranga o muri mai nei.

Koia nei hoki te mihi ki ngā kaiako tau tuatahi mō rātou nei tēnei rangahaunga. Ko te tumanako rā e tika ana tā mātou nei tuhi i tā koutou i kī mai ai, e tika ana tā mātou whakaatu i ngā piki me ngā heke, ngā koanga ngākau me ngā hēmanawatanga, te pēhinga iho me te tautoko ake o ō koutou tau tuatahi hei kaiako mā ā tātou tamariki mokopuna.

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We would also like to acknowledge the beginning teachers, whose highs, lows, joys, frustrations, and experiences of both support and the lack of it we have sought to represent here.

Thirdly, we acknowledge our respective institutions—Te Wānanga o Aotearoa and Massey University—for their support in carrying out this work.

1. Introduction: the project and its context

International research reports that beginning teachers are motivated and confident in their ability to engage in “real” teaching (Loughran, Brown & Doeke, 2001), but the reality of the first year quickly shatters this illusion of adequate preparation. Furthermore, “New Zealand teachers carry a heavier classroom load than almost any other country in the developed world. Our primary school teachers look after 24.7 students each on average ... and the OECD average is 18 students” (*New Zealand Herald*, 16 June 2000, cited in Hemara, 2000, p. 42). Russell and McPherson (2001) suggest that the first-year survival phase is accepted in staffroom folklore as “the way we learn to teach” (p. 3). Yet a significant number of beginning teachers decide within their first two years of teaching to leave the profession. Emerging anecdotal evidence suggests that this is particularly so for Māori teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand—both those in “mainstream” schools and those working in bilingual or total immersion programmes. Mitchell and Mitchell (1993) confirm that “there is no doubt that the workload of a primary bilingual or total immersion teacher is enormous” (p. 60). The inability of the profession to retain new Māori teachers is extremely serious, yet research that examines this crisis beyond the stark presentation of statistics is scarce. Mitchell and Mitchell’s (1993) study suggests that many Māori teachers leave the classroom due to unreasonable expectations on their time and resources, and lack of structured support. One of the participants in the research commented: “I was expected to take Māori Club, be [the] Māori resource person ... and take the singing ... [I was] totally burnt out after one year ... and resigned in the first week of the Christmas holidays” (p. 39). We need to know more about the reality of being a beginning Māori teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 21st century.

The project described in this report examined the experiences of beginning Māori teachers in an effort to better understand how they make the transition from student teacher to teacher. This study is informed by Giroux’s (1992) concept of “border crossing”. “Border pedagogy” and “border crossing” are well-discussed notions within the Critical Theory literature. Border pedagogy acknowledges difference among groups and individuals, while border crossing is the act of moving from one’s own world into another’s. Bell hooks (2003) provides a contextual example:

Often, African Americans are among those students I teach from poor and working class backgrounds who are most vocal about issues of class. They express frustration, anger, and sadness about the tensions and stress they experience trying to conform to acceptable white middle class behaviours in university settings while retaining an ability to ‘deal’ at home. Sharing strategies for coping from my own experience, I encourage students to reject the notion that they must choose between experiences. They must believe they can inhabit comfortably two different worlds, but they must make each space one of comfort. They must creatively invent ways to cross borders [without] assum[ing] a position of passivity ... (p. 145)

Most of the literature that takes an anthropological view of the transition from trainee to beginning teacher does not paint an optimistic picture of people’s success in crossing the border and maintaining a sense of integrity with the culture with which they came to their school. Indeed, Bourdieu (1990, cited in Mulholland & Wallace, 2003) uses the term “symbolic violence” to characterise situations where border crossers find that their current understandings and ways of operating are not viable in the new culture.

Aguilar, MacGillivray, and Walker (2003) looked at three discourses that were pertinent to the lives of three Latino beginning teachers and how the teachers coped with the differing views about these discourses between home and school. The questions the researchers focused on were:

- Who are educated persons?
- With whom do educated persons associate?
- What counts as evidence of education?

They found that the Latino teachers used two strategies to deal with conflicting views. The first, in opposition to a school discourse, was “silencing” or “distancing”, through which they refused to enter the conflict and so supported the ethnic discourse over the school one. Aguilar et al. characterise this as extremely painful for the Latino teachers they studied. The second was “internalisation”, whereby the Latino teachers accepted some school discourses as their own (which put them at odds with the ethnic discourse).

Within New Zealand-based research, Rio, Millward, Stephenson, and Anderson (2004) speak of a sense of “disillusionment” and “frustration” for a Samoan beginning teacher in South Auckland in a school where her beliefs about teaching in a multicultural setting differed from that of the school.

This tension between taking on the culture of the school and remaining true to one’s own is also implied in J. S. Williams’ (2003) study of highly successful teachers. In this study, which concentrated not on what led teachers to leave but on the characteristics of exemplary teachers (as chosen by peers), Williams talks about two things that are significant in the exemplary teachers’ lives—feedback from students, and the tension between the need for “connectedness” with colleagues and support people and the need for the “autonomy” to do what they feel is best, so that administrators view them as experts and allow them to “take it and go with it.”

Negotiating the border will always be problematic. Rio et al. (2004) indicate that the degree of congruence between home, pre-service institutional culture, and the school culture is one form of challenge. Mulholland and Wallace (2003) use the term “hazard” to talk about another aspect, the difficulties people encounter when crossing borders. This study also identifies a number of aspects that assisted the beginning teachers to cross the border. The three aspects of border crossing that we have considered in this study—congruency and incongruency, hazards, and “travelling food”—are discussed more fully in the discussion section of this report.

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa has a history of struggle, from its small beginnings close to the Te Awamutu College rubbish tip to statutory recognition as a Training Establishment Initiative. Rongo Wetere, of Ngāti Maniapoto, conceived the idea of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa in 1983, after a project in which unemployed former students built a marae at Te Awamutu College. The success of this initiative led to the first incarnation of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa as the Waipa Kōkiri Arts Centre (Waitangi Tribunal, n.d.).

It was evident that Māori wanted to develop a modern wānanga as a way to address the current underachievement of Māori in tertiary education. Another primary reason was to help revitalise Te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori. By 1987, the centre had plans to apply to become an official tertiary education institute. At the time it had a roll of 212 students, of whom 86 were Pākehā and 126 Māori. The centre experienced such dramatic growth and demand that by 1988 it had opened campuses in Hamilton and Manukau, where it set up a waka-building module. The centre’s expansion into other tribal areas led it to change its name to the Aotearoa Institute, a name that reflected its increasingly pan-tribal nature. In late 1993, the then Minister of Education, Lockwood Smith, granted full wānanga status to the Aotearoa Institute and Te Wānanga o Raukawa. Twenty years later, Rongo Wetere (2004)¹ claimed that Te Wānanga o Aotearoa had enrolled 60 000 students throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, making it the largest tertiary institution in the country.

Graham Smith (1991) observed that indigenous people in New Zealand were exerting greater control over educational resources as a means of restoring their own languages and practices. One of the ways that Te Wānanga o Aotearoa is doing this is through initial teacher education, so that they will then integrate and imbed Māori cultural values into teaching and learning pedagogies and assessments, using Te Reo Māori context and content. The pressure for indigenous cultural input into mainstream curricula has enabled teaching programme initiatives like Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

to become established within what has hitherto been a very closed beginning teacher education environment.

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa offers a three-year initial degree for primary teachers, Te Korowai Ākonga, across four North Island campuses at Manukau, Hamilton, Rotorua, and Gisborne. The first graduates completed their studies in 2003, and embarked on careers as teachers in the following year. Our study followed 27 graduates across two campuses. Bearing in mind the tendency of beginning teachers to experience significant discontinuities in the transition from pre-service teacher education to first year teaching (Loughran et al., 2001), the teaching staff of Te Korowai Ākonga are, through this research project, seeking to extend their support to new graduates by chronicling and understanding their teaching experiences during their first year. It is assumed that beginning teachers will learn from experience in their first years of teaching, yet current attrition rates suggest there is a problem with this notion.

To explore these issues we asked recent graduates to reveal their experiences of being a beginning classroom teacher. This project goes beyond asking why beginning teachers leave teaching. It seeks to chronicle the experience of being a beginning Māori teacher and, through this, to identify the forces that shape the first year of teaching. We also wanted to examine the ways in which teacher education institutions and schools can address the problem of attrition by providing ongoing support to beginning Māori teachers.

The relationship of the project to the strategic priorities of TLRI

Strategic value—nga hua rautaki

This research project addresses a number of the strategic themes identified in the TLRI guidelines.

Reducing inequalities

The departure of newly-qualified Māori teachers from the classroom is of serious concern in light of the critical shortage of qualified Māori teachers within New Zealand. The graduates of Te Korowai Ākonga have the potential to make a real difference for Māori and Pasifika children in schools and it is important that factors that challenge their commitment to stay in the profession be identified early and addressed. This project aims to identify such challenges, while at the same time providing a supportive forum within which the participating beginning teachers can examine critically their own experiences of beginning teaching and draw on the experiences of others.

Improving understanding

In this way the project will contribute to a better understanding of the processes of teaching and learning and the ways in which beginning teachers negotiate pedagogical practices in authentic classroom contexts. Through reporting the narratives of these beginning teachers, this project seeks to shed light on the challenges and achievements of beginning Māori teachers as they are socialised into diverse school cultures.

Research value—nga hua rangahau

Framework of contemporary research

Locating this project within the mode of collaborative narrative inquiry provides a framework of contemporary international and national research within which the proposed study can be tested and validated. This project is informed by the work of international and national researchers who have used forms of narrative inquiry to understand the lived experiences of others. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) write that “the study of experience is the story of life ... [and] stories are the closest

we can come to experience, as we and others tell of our experience ... [therefore] experience ... is the stories people live by” (p. 29). In seeking to understand the meaning beginning teachers construct from their first year experience, we acknowledge that this meaning is embedded in the context of the experience and that “the *connections* between *events* is the *meaning*” (Richardson, 1990, p. 13). The narratives of the beginning teachers are stories of their experience. According to Bishop (1996), narrative inquiry is suitable for use in Māori contexts since it presents truths and enables all participants to talk their truths, rather than the “official”, non-Māori versions that have masked Māori reality. Goodson (1995) suggests that “if we deal with stories as the *starting point* for collaboration, as the *beginning* of a process of coming to know ... we [can] come to understand their meaning: to see them as social constructions which allow us to locate and interrogate the social world in which they are embedded” (p. 98).

There have also been large-scale national studies on the socialisation of beginning teachers into the profession that will inform this project (see, for example, Gray & Renwick, 1998; Renwick, 2001; Te Puni Kōkiri, 2001). This project goes beyond the work done by Renwick (2001) to examine more closely the lived experiences of a small group of graduates as they negotiate the first year of teaching. While not claiming to be representative of all beginning teachers, this project provides access to the richness of lived experience from the perspectives of the teachers themselves. The findings of this study address a current gap in the literature through a specific focus on Māori teachers and their experience of being beginning teachers.

Giving Māori women a voice

The majority of the beginning teacher participants identified as Māori women. The perspectives of women have often been “historically ignored and discounted” (Boler, 1999, cited in Roberts, 1999, p. 68). Te Awekotuku’s (cited in Walker, 1996) statement supports that of Boler. Te Awekotuku states, “What I believe has happened in the last 200 years is the reduction of the female voice” (p. 80). Similarly, L. Smith (1992, cited in Walker, 1996) explains that “Māori women have been written out of history” (p. 80). This project begins to right past wrongs by helping to give Māori women a voice.

Building research capability

A particular strength of this project is its potential for building the research capability of the staff of the teacher education programme of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa by engaging them in a rigorous research project with the support of an experienced researcher. This experience has helped both staff and students to develop their own capacity as teacher researchers. The supportive group of participants in this project may be likened to Bishop’s (1996) “whānau of interest” since it is “an action group of all interested parties constituted within Māori cultural understandings and practices” (p. 67).

Practice value—nga hua ritenga

Opportunities for research

This project provides an opportunity for teacher educators and beginning teachers to engage in research on a critical aspect of their own practice and thereby acknowledges the central role of teacher educators and beginning teachers in the process of learning to teach, so that participating teacher educators develop capability to undertake high-quality research. The project helped the beginning teachers develop dispositions of teacher-researchers while simultaneously gaining a more critical understanding of their own learning process. The ongoing support of experienced research mentors made it possible for teacher educators and beginning teachers to gain experience and develop their expertise as teacher-researchers.

Impact on professional practice

The findings of this project will have an impact almost immediately on the evolving professional practice of the beginning teachers. The teacher educators also gained a critical insight into their own practice as teacher educators by coming to understand the ways in which the beginning teachers experience their first year of teaching. Importantly, in seeking to shed light on the challenges experienced by beginning Māori teachers in their first year of teaching this project also contributes to a greater understanding of the socialisation of beginning teachers. The findings will be used to develop ongoing professional development for beginning teachers that will take account of the ways in which both teacher education institutions and schools can support emerging teachers in their early years of full-time teaching.

2. Aims and objectives of the research

This research project aimed to address directly the lack of evidence-based research within New Zealand focusing on making explicit and theorising the experiences of beginning Māori teachers in primary school classrooms. In doing so it sought to advance and extend the current body of knowledge on the experiences of beginning teachers in schools, and contribute to improvements in initial teacher education programmes generally.

The findings of this project are also intended to enhance the often tenuous relationship between research and teaching within teacher education programmes by contributing to the ongoing review and development of Te Korowai Ākonga (Bachelor of Teaching—Primary) at Te Wānanga Aotearoa. Through a better understanding of the lived experience of first-year Māori teachers, staff at Te Wānanga Aotearoa will be able to revise the degree programme to ensure enhanced pre-service preparation for their students. The project also identifies areas for ongoing professional development of beginning Māori teachers that may signal future opportunities for in-service professional development partnerships between the wānanga and schools. Although it focuses specifically on the experiences of Māori teachers, it provides evidence that has potential to inform the wider policy and practice of in-service professional development priorities within New Zealand, especially with respect to beginning teachers.

This project grows research capability and capacity in the critical areas of teaching and learning to teach. Importantly, it provided an opportunity for staff within Te Wānanga o Aotearoa to engage in critical research in the area of teaching and learning to teach. As the institution is relatively new to degree teaching, it is critical that opportunities and associated resources are provided to support staff to develop research skills and for the School of Education within the wānanga to establish a research culture to support its teaching. This project is part of that endeavour.

Specifically, this project:

- reports on selected beginning Māori teachers' professional experience and developing knowledge-in-action during their first year of teaching; and,
- identifies areas where schools and pre-service teacher education institutions could contribute to the ongoing professional development of the beginning teachers.

The research questions were:

- What are the issues that beginning teachers identify when discussing their experiences during their first year of teaching?
- What impact do these issues have on the success of their first year?

3. Research design and methodology

Underpinning the design of this research project is the belief that learning to teach (which continues after pre-service) is fundamentally situated and socially mediated (Ethell, 1997). Based on these concepts, the project draws on narrative inquiry to reveal and chronicle the lived experience of beginning Māori teachers within the context of those experiences. Narrative inquiry, through being grounded in a participatory design, provides a means to ensure that the authenticity of the beginning teachers' experiences is represented accurately.

Narrative has become increasingly accepted in educational research, both as a form of inquiry and as a way of knowing (Bruner, 1986). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) have presented strong cases for narrative as a mode of inquiry and there are numerous examples of practitioners using narrative to document their teaching experiences (see, for example, Carter, 1993; LaBoskey, 1994; Witherall & Noddings, 1991). Narrative inquiry involves several important characteristics that make it particularly suited to the goals of this project. Narrative:

- involves intentional reflection on human action;
- is socially and contextually situated;
- engages participants in interrogating aspects of teaching and learning by “storying” the experience;
- allows personal and professional identities to be discovered, redirected, and/or affected;
- involves the construction of meaning and knowledge.

(Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002)

There is also precedence for the use of narrative inquiry in Māori research. Bishop and Glynn (1999) are strong proponents of this research method and have defined a form of narrative enquiry they call “spiral discourse” (p.177). According to Bishop (1998), narrative inquiry is suitable for use in Māori contexts since it presents truths and enables all participants to talk their truths, rather than repeat the “official” versions that have masked Māori reality.

This project draws on the work of narrative scholars to present and analyse the experiences of graduates of the Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) programme.

Participants

Twenty-seven graduates of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Korowai Ākonga in 2003 were invited to participate in this research project during 2004 (a fall in participation during the second half of the year meant that this report represents the narratives of 12 participants). As we anticipated that most of the graduates would seek teaching positions in their local areas, the project worked with two cohorts organised regionally in Manukau and Rotorua. Staff from the wānanga worked as a team to facilitate the project under the leadership of Paora Stucki, Director of the School of Education, and with the assistance and mentorship of Ruth Kane, Professor of Secondary Education, Massey University. Ruth Kane is the external monitor for Te Korowai Ākonga (BTeach (Primary)) and has a strong commitment to supporting Te Wānanga o Aotearoa in its quest to establish a research culture within the School of Education. In addition, ongoing internal research support was available from Dr Pip Bruce-Ferguson, of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa's Research Support Centre. This project provided a collaborative means across institutions and schools to mentor both tertiary and primary teachers as practitioner researchers, and thereby build capacity in the critical area of research on learning to teach.

Procedure

In recognition of the need to build capability and capacity for research within the wānanga, Ruth Kane facilitated two initial full-day workshops (December 2003 and February 2004) with BTeach (Primary) staff of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa to enhance understandings of the theory and practice relevant to narrative inquiry and to ensure that participating staff developed ownership of and confidence with the practice of gathering narrative research data through interviews, focus groups, and email correspondence.

An initial hui on each campus brought together researchers and beginning teachers to facilitate the co-development of the project and allow for discussion of protocols, shared understandings, and responsibilities. A vital part of this hui was that beginning teachers and researchers began the collaborative process of mutual and shared contribution. Regional cohort groups came together during their first year of teaching (2004) to share, interrogate, and reflect upon their experiences as first year teachers. In Manukau, four full cohort meetings were held during the first half of the year. During the second half of the year meeting attendance fell off dramatically because of workload issues. The kaiako researcher in this area followed up teachers individually during the second half of the year, visiting them in their schools. Three beginning teachers were followed up in this way. The pattern was similar in Rotorua. Two full cohort meetings were held during the first half of the year. After May only one beginning teacher attended the cohort meeting. Others communicated with the kaiako researcher via email.

The audiotaped focus group conversations and interview transcripts, together with notes made *in situ* and the email communications, have been used by the research staff to begin to construct narratives of beginning teachers' experiences.

From the evolving narratives the participants identified the ways in which the beginning teachers make meaning from their experience of first-year teaching. The final narratives enable the research team to identify areas where schools and the wānanga can contribute to the ongoing professional development of the beginning teachers, with a special focus on Māori teachers.

Ethical considerations

The wānanga's research ethics committee approved the project before it began. A major ethical consideration developed early on in the project, when one beginning teacher group decided that they did not want their school principals informed of the project.

This was because they were concerned that the principals would view the project negatively and participation would compromise their chances of gaining permanent employment. For the same reason they did not want cohort meetings to be held during school time, despite the fact that the project budget included funding for teacher relief.

It was decided to go ahead with the cohort on the following basis:

1. While the original intention was to inform the schools of the project, this was a matter of courtesy only—they were not going to be asked to participate in the research. It was the beginning teachers who were the focus of the project, not their individual contexts.
2. The anonymity of all participants in the project was guaranteed. No individuals or schools would be identified.
3. All cohort meetings were planned for out-of-school hours.

4. Contribution to building capability and capacity

Project team

The members of the project team were:

Areta Kahu, Head of Department, Te Korowai Ākonga/BTeach (Primary), Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

Heeni Jenkins, Lecturer, Te Korowai Ākonga/BTeach (Primary), Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

Paora Stucki, Director, Korowai Manukura/School of Education, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

Dr Pip Bruce-Ferguson, Head of the Research Support Centre, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

Professor Ruth Kane, Professor of Secondary Education, Massey University

Capacity building

This project has contributed directly to the research culture of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa's School of Education by involving the researchers from that institution in a rigorous research project guided by two experienced mentors, one from within the organisation and one outside it.

Principle Six of the TLRI states:

The research projects within TLRI will be undertaken as a partnership between researchers and practitioners.

In our view, Principle Six has two main elements:

- the partnership between researchers and practitioners;
- the imperative for the research projects to make a difference to practice.

The kaiako researchers and the beginning teachers working within this project did reflect some elements of partnership. However, an ongoing collaboration between them in the interpretation and synthesis of research data did not eventuate. While the participating beginning teachers were willing to share their experiences, their workload (or, in some cases, lack of full-time positions) meant they did not have enough time to engage with the data in a critically reflective way. As the project proceeded, it developed into one where kaiako researchers were interpreting data from beginning teachers without the teachers' specific input into the analysis phase.

While the project has not involved a true partnership between the beginning teachers and the kaiako researchers, there has been a collaborative partnership between these kaiako researchers as kaiako in a pre-service teacher education programme and an experienced researcher. In this way, the project meets the objectives set for it in terms of partnership because it has given these kaiako the opportunity to research their own practice and have it informed by that research.

It has met the imperative to make a difference, particularly to pre-service teacher education. One of its main aims has been to "identify areas where schools and pre-service teacher education institutions can contribute to the ongoing professional development of the beginning teachers".

The findings are set out in the next section.

5. Findings

This section is divided into two stages. The first presents three narratives constructed from research data. These are presented as illustrative of the students who attend and graduate from Te Korowai Ākonga. The kaiako researchers draw on the demographic data, the conversations in cohort meetings, individual interviews, and email correspondence to present three illustrative profiles that highlight some of the characteristics displayed by students within Te Korowai Ākonga. In particular, these narratives present students' reasons for becoming teachers and the influences on professional decisions.

The second section of the findings gives a thematic analysis of the research data, highlighting the predominant patterns evident in the beginning teachers' experiences of the first year of teaching.

Student narratives

Narrative 1—Kura

Hi, my name is Kura, I'm a fifty-year-old kuia who's ready to go back to school and teach my mokopuna. I remember when I was at school as a young girl, I hated it! I remember having prayers, scrubbing the floor constantly because I spoke Māori out in the playground. Aue Ka mau te wehi! To make it worse, it was an expected from my priest, my mother and father that I should marry and have my family.

I've had an interesting life. I've worked on the marae, making bread, doing the karanga, arranging the mattresses for the manuhiri, and generally organised any hui at the marae. I've answered the late-night calls, and made the bookings for the marae. Juggled the car run to the local schools, taking my mokopuna off to school. Organised the bookings from local schools for their noho marae experiences.

I came to learn about Te Korowai Ākonga through meeting teachers on the Mahi Ora programme. Like most of the Te Wānanga teachers, I meet them all down at the marae. But the first course I enrolled in was the Mahi Ora course. I loved the package. After a while, we started up Te Ara Reo classes at the marae. I loved those programmes. It was wonderful learning te reo Māori—fancy that! Me, an old kuia! Not knowing your own language. My mokopuna taught me the value of my language. My moko said to me, 'Korero Māori I nga wa katoa, Nanna, speak Māori all the time.'

My children are all grown up now—oh, but they still expect me to pick up my mokopuna from kōhanga. I got two mokopuna at the kōhanga. One at kura kaupapa. Then the other mokopuna are at whare kura. I'm kept really busy picking up all my mokos. It was when I was doing the rounds, picking up my mokopuna, that I saw what my moko's teacher was teaching him. I thought to myself, I can teach my mokopuna that! I even think, I could do it a little bit better than that teacher. Oh, he's got such lovely dimples!

My mokos keep me busy. I'm full of beans, I have to be to keep up with them. That's why I joined Te Korowai Ākonga, because it keeps me in touch with them.

Now I've won a job now! The funny thing is, I feel that the marae has shifted to the school. I'm doing all the same things I did while I was working on the marae. Aue! I do love teaching.

Narrative 2—Ariana

Kia ora! My name is Ariana and I am a 33-year-old graduate of the primary teaching programme with Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. I left school early and had my first child early as well. I wasn't married but I did have a partner. I reiterate 'did'. I have four beautiful tamariki. The oldest is at college and the rest are at primary school. I followed my children through their schooling from kōhanga through to kura and really got hooked on this thing called education. I began to see what I had missed in my own schooling. I began to see a reason to all this madness. I followed my children because I was determined that, unlike myself, my children were going to succeed.

I did a lot of voluntary work at the schools. I started off transporting my children to the various school functions, their netball and rugby activities in the weekend. Washing my son's rugby jerseys and my daughter's netball uniforms. Their teachers twisted my arm to actually get involved in the day-to-day running of the school.

I was having difficulty with my third child—his transition from kōhanga reo to school was difficult. He wouldn't leave the kōhanga reo, he loved the place. It didn't help that he loved his kōhanga teacher as much as me, so I ended up spending long hours, staying in the classroom helping to make resources for the teacher. One thing led to another. I ended up on the board of trustees and organising all of the fundraising events for the school. The cake stalls, BBQ stalls, and mid-year reports were busy times for me. I was just as busy as the teachers.

I had been a teacher aide in my daughter's class at our local primary school when I was asked by the teacher if I would ever consider training to be a teacher. I thought she was crazy! She said that I would make a pretty good teacher and started to describe some awesome stuff that I didn't think was all that important, like being able to relate to kids, and how well they are able to work with me. I didn't think that that was special. Things like that just came naturally, 'cause it's the way I get on with my own kids.

I was so rapt when I finally found a primary teaching programme that fit in with my life. I always wanted to be a teacher but was not able to apply because I couldn't really afford it and I have a big whānau. I guess the main reason, though, was because I didn't believe that I had it in me to be a teacher. I'm talking about the academic stuff. Anyway, I wasn't sure, but I finally gave it a go and applied. I keep reminding my daughter's teacher how her pushiness has changed my life.

But thanks to my daughter's teacher and the school principal who encouraged me to apply for Te Korowai Ākongā, I am fulfilling a lifelong dream to be a primary school teacher.

Narrative 3—Meremia

My name is Meremia and I am a graduate of the primary teaching programme with Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. I left college when I was 17 years of age and decided, after continually being hassled by my mum and aunties, to apply for the teaching programme. I suppose there was nothing else to do. My cousin, who is much older than me, is in her thirties and joined the programme two years before me. She was going to be the first in her whānau to get a degree. I would be the first in my whānau. It's a big thing, you know, to get a tohu like this. You had to be 18 years old to get on the course. By the time the course started I had just celebrated my 18th birthday.

I grew up in a big whānau. I have three brothers and two sisters. Two brothers and one of my sisters are younger than me. When my older brother and sister left home I pretty much had to look after my siblings. I didn't mind. Mum and Dad were always at land hui. We were always at the marae. Our life centred around what was happening there. When I got older I began to attend wānanga at our marae. They were choice! I enjoyed kapa haka the most. At college I joined the kapa haka group there as well. I looked after my youngest brother and sister at the local kōhanga. One of my brothers left the kōhanga to attend the local primary school and I coached their kapa haka group as well. I really loved working with the kids there. I get on really well with kids. It was really fulfilling knowing that I could teach them and they could learn things from me. Our house was always noisy

with the cuddles. I loved looking after the littlies. I used to organise the games for the whānau just to help out. On Saturdays I played netball and was asked by my brother's primary school principal if I could coach their team. We did really well in the local competitions. I coached for a couple of years and had to give it up when I began the course.

I still remember my interview to get into Te Korowai Ākonga. Whāea asked me what experiences I came to the teaching profession with. I didn't get enough units for university entrance, but I was pretty good at maths and English, so I had no problems with the maths and literacy tests. The final decision rested on whether or not I had enough life experiences for teaching. I couldn't see any problem. I had just finished school so I knew a lot about teaching—or so I thought.

Mum was so proud of me for getting accepted onto the programme. She brought me a computer and a cellphone. I loved my cellphone. I kept in touch with my mates. I used to get really annoyed in class 'cause I had to turn my cellphone off. I wasn't used to that, so I used to just keep the vibrate mode on. My cellphone went off all the time, mainly texts, and I hated missing calls. I was always busy answering my texts in class and always got the eye from the whāea.

There were about five others who had just finished school, like myself. I guess that there was a huge difference between us and the older students. I had a lot more knowledge about technology. Sometimes I wondered, 'where have these people been?' Some didn't even know how to turn a computer on! I wondered at first whether I was going to see this through—some of my classmates were a bit older, and way out of touch with the real world.

But I made some lifelong friends in my first year, and most of those were mature students. It took a while for me to realise how much they had to offer. I really felt for some of the stories that they shared with us. Some of them had certainly been through the wringer. I felt for those who had been through some wicked relationships. I don't have any children and that was really hard when we had to find children to practise our new knowledge on. Some of those mothers certainly knew lots about child development, even before opening their books, and were able to give some interesting stories. They made some of those HD [Human Development] lectures a lot more interesting.

I enjoyed most of my course, but I thought that there was too much theory. Why did we have to learn so much theory? I couldn't see the point. We didn't need to learn all of that Piaget guff. What's that got to do with being a good teacher? All we needed to learn was how to teach the stuff. We didn't have enough sports or art. I tended to avoid those professional studies classes. I had to be monitored because of my lack of attendance, and my aunty and others really got on my case. I know that I really needed it, and if the whāea didn't care I would have fallen by the way. My assessments were nothing spectacular. I know that I only handed in what was required.

I still recall my first practicum. I really enjoyed it. I had heaps of fun. My associate was the bomb. My whāea gave me glowing reports for my observations. I was so proud of those reports. Even my associate gave me awesome reports. The main comments focused on how well I could relate to the children and how bubbly I was in the class.

I certainly learnt a lot over the past three years and I believe that I grew to be a much more mature student by the time I had finished my training. I don't think I would have stuck at it without the older students in the class and my kaiako keeping an eye on me and making me work at it. I am so glad that they did—without them I would have walked away, and yet here I am, a first year teacher at an intermediate school and I often get confused with being a student. Our school is so big that it took a while for teachers to get to know me. Sometimes when I took my class out for PE, teachers would come over and growl the class for being out without their teacher. We would all crack up. Some saw the funny side, but one or two looked somewhat embarrassed. I love it.

Discussion

While these three profiles do not reflect any one specific graduate of the wānanga, they do illustrate the range of participants in this study and the range of students enrolled in Te Korowai Ākonga. School leavers, 30-something-year-olds, and mature grandmothers all worked together with the one aim of being teachers. Each of them brought varying levels of ability, confidence, and life experience.

What is evident from the profiles is that, for most of the graduates, their identity as Māori is central to their lives and their life experiences, and this was influential in their decisions to study through Te Wānanga. In Te Korowai Ākonga, students found a whānau-based approach to study that was supportive and did not allow students to avoid participating.

It is this context from which the participants in our study emerge. Transcripts of cohort meetings and interviews have been analysed thematically and are presented below.

Thematic analysis

The thematic data analysis is reported under six key themes:

- the experience of being a teacher in my own class;
- development as a reflective teacher;
- relationships;
- induction and support;
- personal agency; and
- employment issues

Verbatim excerpts from the transcripts of group discussions are used to illustrate the identified themes. These are referenced to the transcripts—for example, D.6 means Transcript D, page 6.

The experience of being the teacher of my own class

Many of the participants described the powerful effect of having their own class for the first time. The impact of this was simultaneously both overwhelming and exciting as the participants came to live their new situation.

It is kind of, like, you know, how you go into a cave and you are anxious and you wonder what is going to be happening inside, you have just got no idea. (A.3)

You know the first time when you're a beginning teacher you want everything to be so perfect and you feel that nothing is perfect. (G.5)

These quotations are taken from initial interviews with groups of beginning teachers who had each secured full-time positions early in 2004. While these teachers were enjoying their positions as classroom teachers and had received significant support from colleagues and management in their schools, the descriptions above reflect the anxiety and frustration typically associated with the role transition from student teacher to classroom teacher.

Participants who had secured teaching positions, either full time or fixed term, reported both rewards and challenges associated with being real teachers operating in their own classrooms. In general, participants reported a very positive sense of satisfaction with having their own class, with finally being a “real teacher”. The data reveal numerous instances of participants speaking with a sense of pride in their classroom and their children:

I walked into that class knowing that was my classroom. I knew that class was going to be mine. It's not an ego thing. I just knew that, oh yeah, I'm going to teach here. And sure

enough, they said, ‘We have got one more interview but you are in the up there category, the number one pick’. [In] the next a couple of days, I got that job. (C.5)

The enthusiasm associated with having their own classrooms was evident in how the participants set about establishing the classroom as their own learning space by decorating walls and ensuring the room reflected their own wairua, even when their positions were fixed-term contracts and they knew they were there for only a limited time:

Because I wanted to decorate things and really make it my class. When you take off their things and start ripping things off the wall and you start placing things of yours on the wall and putting up things of your own, you feel as if that is your classroom ... It is always nice to feel that it is your class. So even though it is a fixed [term] position. I thought, well, I am just going to give it my all because it’s for the tamariki. (C.7)

When speaking about the children in their classes, participants’ language reflected a sense of ownership, an ethic of care, love, and a real sense of responsibility. Children were typically referred to as “my tamariki” or “my children”. Participants felt very protective towards them:

I started off fresh. It was like it was my classroom. I felt as if I was finicky with my children. I love my students and my children. I think my colleagues know that. (C.7)

There was a sense, expressed clearly in the excerpt below, that as the kaiako the beginning teacher was responsible for ensuring the quality of educational experience for the children in the class:

I feel that my tamariki have too much on their shoulders because everybody comes to my class and they want to borrow my kids to be messengers—the gardeners, the rubbish collectors—so I turned around this week and said, ‘Kāo. My tamariki are learning right now and they are my tamariki’. So now I have turned it around, so when people have said to me, ‘You know, that tamariki needs to do more of this social skills’, and I said, ‘Kāo, you’re not taking that student ‘cause you know he’s not going to be a rubbish tip worker’ ... That’s what my tamariki were being used for, so I sort of stood my ground, said ‘No’. I want better for my students. (D.9) *(This excerpt is repeated on p. 21, to clarify a slightly different context.)*

In this case, the teacher resisted typical patterns of behaviour that he viewed as undermining the children’s learning and achievement. Through modelling the importance of learning over and above what could be considered menial tasks, this teacher asserted the importance of high aspirations for the children in his class.

Protective feelings towards their children were evident also when participants were discussing the preparation required to leave work for relieving teachers. One participant reported: “I want my reliever to do what I want them to do, they’re my children ... They are my children, it is a personal thing” (A.7).

In some cases the commitment to their children meant that the teachers were reluctant to take time off class as part of their 0.2 advice and guidance programme:

I found that I don’t like being out of my classroom because the reliever’s work that comes in is not really very good work, this lady growls at the kids all the time ... So between my tutor and me, if I want the whole day she will give me the whole day, but I rarely do. I’ll take half a day and just catch up on what I need to do. (A.8)

Everything I don’t like I have pushed it to the side and I try and stay positive just for the tamariki. In the end I feel that I’m to blame if those tamariki don’t quite succeed, because I should be able to manage that classroom, because my philosophy says that. If you live by your philosophy, then everything should fit in. That’s my whakaaro. (C.8) *(This excerpt is repeated on p. 21, to clarify a different context.)*

I talk a lot about where I come from and I wear this T-shirt [with the wānanga logo] ... The children say, ‘Well, my Mum goes to that place and she’s in Te Ara reo Māori.’ That’s what

brings out their Māoriness out of the tamariki, because I have something in common with their parents. (C.7)

Some participants held unrealistic expectations of what full-time teaching would involve. They had assumed that what was to be taught, and the resources to support the curriculum, would be predetermined by the school or by their syndicate and that, as beginning teachers, they would “just go in and have everything set up” and would just do the same curriculum and activities as other teachers in the school:

I think, I expected them to hand me everything on a silver platter and they wouldn't leave you struggling for anything that you needed and you would have all the answers right there—all the lesson plans, all the unit plans would be given to you, because you are only new, but they don't, they chuck you right in the deep end and make you start from there. That was hard. (A.3)

While the independence afforded them was clearly a surprise to some, they enjoyed their new roles as beginning teachers. All the participants acknowledged that with the heavy workload they had to be realistic and devise ways to ensure a balance in their daily lives:

In my first week, when the babies started, I had 33 kids on my first day and that was so strenuous for me—it was really strenuous. I'd go home my first week and moe, sleep. Running around after them, 20 sitting down on the floor and 13 trying to run out the ... it was like every day ... (D.3)

You know, sometimes if you have had a hard week, you're at school all week, you know, and Saturdays you're at school yourself all day, you know, and Sundays you can't hardly do anything at the school, but nah, it's choice. (D.6)

Although there were times that clearly frustrated these beginning teachers, the relationships they built with children eclipsed the challenging demands of the role:

For me, it has been a big challenge. I am not scared of challenges, but at the same time I want to do my best and I always want to put my best foot forward. I love it. I haven't had any sick days off because I really love it. The children give me joy, they enjoy my company and I enjoy their company, we just really bond together. That just overrides any negativity—I go into my classroom with a positive attitude, and they see that and we really have a pretty good day. It's hard, but it is worth it, a lot of benefits out of it. (A.16)

But I enjoy it. I could stay there all night half of the time, but then I remember I have got children and I remember I have to go home. I enjoy it even though it is really hard, the planning part of it, and trying to get my head around it. It is hard, but I have got good support. (A.9)

Participants reported that the rewards for the time and effort spent are significant and are directly related to the children's achievement in class:

That is the enjoyment, of seeing something that you have been teaching and it's actually accomplished, you get the satisfaction out of it. (A.10)

I have seen the kids' faces when they have finished something. I have got a couple of kids in my classroom who are lower level and yesterday I thought, 'Gosh, they are so far behind!' I sat down with them and pencilled out what tasks needed to be finished, headed it up for them, boxed them in, whatever, and he was quite thrilled. He didn't do anything again today. So I thought, okay, and I sat with him again—started drawing a picture of this less angry faces and within half an hour he had finished it. I said, 'That is so cool, you have finished.' He said, 'You helped me, Miss.' I said, 'That is okay, you have got it finished.' He had a big grin on his face. I thought, that is why you teach—to see these big grins on their faces at the end of the day. (A.11)

Development as a reflective teacher

Participants reported numerous instances of classroom activity that demonstrated their commitment to reflecting critically on their work as teachers. They often referred to work they had been introduced to in the wānanga and how this informed their interactions with the children in their classes, but there also examples of teachers considering carefully their own practice and how that was affecting the children's learning:

I like all the challenges, I thrive on them, and I enjoy all the learning that takes place with the kids, and me for me as a learner as well, with the mistakes I make. The questions that they ask sometimes—they ask you these really dumb questions and I am sitting there thinking, 'That is so dumb'. At the same time, the thought is going through me that they didn't understand that properly, or 'What part of it didn't you understand?' I look at them and some of them are laughing, but at the same time I laugh with them. (A.15)

One particular case illustrated how the participant had made the transition from student teacher to beginning teacher. She recognised how she had shifted from what would in the past have been an automatic reaction to children's misbehaviour to a considered response that gave children time to settle and adjust to her new expectations:

It wasn't until I walked into the class, I went, 'Umm...'. The children were throwing things and they didn't want to do work because you are a new teacher. I stop at the door and pause and I think, 'What am I going to do?' I say 'Good morning', and nobody wants to hear me. 'Good morning', and the hairs on my neck are starting to stand up and I wonder ... I turn the radio off. And bang, I've got this kid saying, 'I'm not going to fucking doing it. I'm not going to listen to you'. And I'm thinking, 'Okay—am I going to get rude?' I feel good because I didn't rebel or retaliate. That's why I feel good.

In the end I got them to listen to me and I looked at the time—10 minutes it took me to settle them down. They didn't want me. I had already been warned that they do not like new teachers.

You know, when that child swore at me, I wanted to cry. I felt like crying, not because he swore at me, but because I wanted to kick his arse. I was so angry. But the glory and the achievement of it is, I didn't do any of that, and I learnt something—that you can just go outside the square. Remember what [name] always said, 'From the known to the unknown'. In those few seconds I'm standing at that door, I'm thinking of everything that I did here [at the wānanga].

The buzz and the achievement is, I actually got the kids to sit down. I actually got those kids to put that rubbish away; I actually got their respect. I didn't have to say and do much—it was how to do it. (C.9)

Relationships

Relationships that have impacted on the graduates, as evidenced by their transcriptions, include relationships with management, with colleagues, with ex-classmates, and with parents and the wider community.

Relationships with colleagues

Little comment was made by the graduates about collegial support within the school/s. What was apparent was how important relationships were in terms of fitting into the school culture and environment, and how it sometimes takes time to adapt to the ways in which colleagues operate and interact:

I'm still trying to pick up a lot of the language, but I feel at this school everybody speaks the same ... it's all about teaching and whatever language comes out, it comes out ... it's not an

academic sort of environment, it's an environment about getting these children to learn and they don't care what sort of language is put out. (G.6)

For another of the teachers it was very important that she set the tone for relationships based on inclusion within her classroom. She was first attracted to the school due to the predominance of Māori children with whom she was very confident she could relate. However, she came to recognise that it was important to include all children and to demonstrate, through her own relationships with the children and the wider school community, a commitment to inclusive practices:

You know, the thing with this school is that I just saw a whole lot of Māori kids and that's what attracted me to this place, but now I see what the school as a whole, what it can do, like if you get out there with the other children, not just Māori, and get out there, like I've been on the camps, that's really how I've got to know all the Pacific Island children, and you get in there with the whole school, then you can show the tamariki in your Māori class that you're not just Māori, you like all children no matter what, you know, what race they are, and for that I set a good tone so somebody from the outside, they know who I am and they know that I'm the Māori teacher, but they know that I can see, that I like Islander children too, and I can sing Islander songs and I'm not just part of the Māori world. I'm not just the Māori teacher. I'm just one of the teachers, you know, I think you've got to do a lot, you've got to get out there. One thing I have noticed is that it's not just about teaching, you've got to let a few things slide, you know. (G.2)

Relationships with ex-classmates

At the beginning of the year students talked about how to support those who had not yet won positions in schools. Some offered to help with CVs and interview techniques, and or gave advice on how money for clothing and other needs was available from WINZ. This support was offered because "we are whānau" (C.3).

For some reason, perhaps because of embarrassment, those who had not experienced immediate success in gaining employment were reluctant to take up offers of support from those of their classmates who were already employed.

It's not so much of our time, it's hard to contact us, about whether they want to talk [or] contact us. Sometimes I get the feeling that I don't want to sound overbearing. Because of our success, they don't sort [of] want our help. It's like, 'I've got a job and you don't'. (C.3)

Relationships with parents and the wider community

Establishing relationships with parents and the wider community appeared to be a positive experience for most. Some dealt with it in unique ways. For one of the participants, his opportunity to engage with people through kapa haka performances at school and away was instrumental in his establishing respectful relationships with the wider school community.

You know, I've met a lot of people, I go to hui and now I'm sitting with people like [name of internationally recognised kapa haka composer and tutor] and that and things I would never ever thought I would be doing—sitting with them at hui, discussing outcomes for kapa haka and, you know, not just that—going to hui and even in city council now. I know a lot of people there now and it's just working with [name of city mayor] and stuff, so I don't know. I think by doing all this you know there are good outcomes and there you get to know a lot of people and that's where you start and you got resources, people you can tap into, I suppose. (D.8)

Being part of a unit is awesome—so much support—and I couldn't believe how much whānau support we've got, these trips. All these trips, we've had our whānau turn up, and batons up, man, whānau turn up, they are always there—kai! Get back from festivals or something like that, they've got a kai ready in the kitchen, awesome! (D.8)

Another participant was teaching in a school within a suburb outside of her own experience. She acknowledged that she needed to be proactive in her goal of understanding the school community. She achieved this through taking the initiative to venture “out and about” where would be opportunities for her to talk with students and whānau in a variety of contexts:

You know how I’m a [name of suburb] girl inside, so I’ve been going around the neighbourhood ‘cause I don’t know much about [name of suburb in which school is located]. I go out with my students and learn about where they live and most of them live in walking distance, but in paru areas. (D.10)

Yet another participant built relationships with parents carefully, feeling her way until she could ascertain the parent’s level of te reo Māori and comfort with Māori phrases. Once this was established she built a relationship with the children’s parents that positioned them as partners in the learning process. She also provided support in the form of access to books and learning materials so parents could, if they wished, further help the children’s learning in the home:

It depends what kind of point I want to get across to parents, like some I’ll talk in te reo Māori and then find out that some aren’t very comfortable with te reo, and I keep forgetting that some don’t understand, but often I’ll chuck in Māori phrases, so long as I stick to the main points or what I want to get across to them or ... some, a lot of the families, I have to use a lot of examples and so I use the board a lot, you know, when I’m speaking to the parents, how I want them to do things ... you know, how they can set up routines with their tamariki and where their tamariki are actually at, so all my interviews have been like learning lessons for the parents, because I teach them games, you know, that’s at the interview, and so we have all these games set up for the parents to learn—the cards, you know, the games for early numeracy, and having a selection of books the parents can get for their children, you know, show them what they get out of the Duffy books, and show them how they can teach their children to read and ask a lot of questions, you know. Basically the interview always turns into a lesson, but I do try and speak effectively and make it effective so that they do understand. (G.5)

Relationships with management

Relationships with management within the schools were generally described as positive and supportive:

My salary scale was done the week I started at [name of school], and they saw the tohu, that I had the units accredited and everything else, and the principal there and the DP told me straight away that I was on a 35–36 salary scale, which they had put down and now is in the Ministry of Education Multiserve system, which is good to know. (E.1)

I have got a good tutor teacher and a good team leader who come in and just watch all the time and give me some really good advice. I am just grateful that I had a section there at the beginning of the year. (A.1)

One of our backbones to our unit is our deputy principal, [name of DP], engari, he tangata Pākehā, engari kei roto ra he Pākehā—Māori, you know, without him we wouldn’t have been able to do many things in the kura, he’s like our backbone, he’s a Pākehā but he understands, you know, tikanga Māori, and those sorts of things, and he’s my senior teacher. He’s awesome, if I need anything and stuff, he tries his best to get it. (D.8)

Through [name] I’ve met a Māori principal. There’s a bit of conflict between himself and his staff. He wants to change their way of thinking in terms of the Treaty of Waitangi. They don’t have that in the school charter, so he’s suppose to make changes next year, so I’m looking forward to that, and hopefully I’ll get a job there. (F.11)

Induction and support

Beginning teachers reported varying degrees of support, both informal and formal. There was a range of ways that they went about learning the procedures and expectations of their school contexts. One thing that all the teachers reported was a realisation that, regardless of the level of support and assistance available from colleagues and others, the responsibility for seeking assistance rested primarily with them:

But it was just getting used to the fact that no one was going to come in and say, ‘Well, you shouldn’t actually have that there’, or assess you for some reason, and to think, ‘Gosh, this is all mine, I can do what I want with it’, and that was kind of new. (A.4)

It feels like I am hinting all the time. I am the one who is going to have to do all the extra mileage to go out and try and find these things out. No one is going to, or ... some do help out but you are on your own to find these things, if you want these things to happen for your class. (A.4)

Some of the teachers were located in schools with well articulated and structured advice and guidance programmes and were assigned mentor or tutor teachers responsible for providing guidance and support and assisting with professional areas that required further development:

Every two weeks, because I am senior school I have to hand in my planning for the two weeks, and what he [the principal] does is, he goes through it. Which is really kind of neat, because the first time I did the planning for the first two weeks I was really nervous ... it was like being back here, at the wānanga—we are going to get marked for this. I was really nervous as I handed it in Monday morning and I got it back in my cubbyhole and it had this really big stamp and it said ‘Fantastic’. I was like, ‘Wow, it made my day’. (A.9)

Not all tutor teacher arrangements were as successful as the one described above. One teacher, for example, reported that:

I think within the time I have been there so far, apart from the whānau hui, our talk has been relatively small. The DP told him [mentor teacher] that he was to at least be with me for one afternoon a week for about half an hour to check on my planning and my welfare overall in general within the school, which I found he was quite slack at. Even asking me if I was okay doesn’t happen often. (E.2)

Informal support networks were most commonly identified as peers from the wānanga programme, or family and whānau.

I really like it at the moment, and it is good, ‘cause the support is there, not with just school but home as well. I don’t have to worry about my kids, they are all right to take care of themselves. I am happy to stay there and clean and write, then I go home and do the same thing, type it all up and send it back to school to print it all off. I enjoy doing that, that’s me. (A.9)

One teacher working in an immersion unit within a secondary school reported a very supportive, collegial environment where colleagues would be proactive in ensuring colleagues did not get overburdened with work demands. Their unit and the relationships between staff and with students were grounded in whānau:

But it’s been awesome, because I believe we’ve got an awesome team ... besides [name] and I, the rest are all female and it’s just awesome. If I need a hand they come and help me, if they need a hand I just go and help them, so it’s like, if she’s a bit down we send her for a coffee and I go and take her class and we can afford to do that at a high school. I have down time, like certain periods of the day I don’t have to teach, I don’t teach, then I’ll just tell her that I’ll cover her for that one so really got an awesome team we cover each other with someone has to go away for a tangi—we cover each other. We don’t get relievers in, we believe that relievers don’t understand our kids. Who better to take them but [one] of their own, but I mean it creates

a bit more work for you, but I don't mind doing it because we know what our kids are getting out of it. (D.7)

Personal agency

The stress of transition from student teacher to teacher

Several of the participants reflected that the transition from being a student to a teacher often involved a great deal of stress. At the beginning of the year, one of the participants reported that:

I knew then that I had to pull myself together and find a way of getting round it. So I wasn't frightened to ask but I felt like a real ninny asking all the time and they were all really helpful, they were really good.

I have struggled without guesswork so far, up to now, going into other people's classrooms and looking at all the different things they had, even though they were last year's visual arts and my classroom didn't have much in it, I felt really inadequate again. So I spoke to my tutor teacher and saw the different things that can be done to start the classroom off with visual displays and that was really good. (A.2)

Another had similar feelings of anxiety when she was delayed in her goals of setting up her classroom as a learning environment by a school decision to complete some structural work on her building (which caused major disarray at the beginning of the year):

For the first four weeks it was a bit hard. We would settle down, then we would have to move out of our class, re-arrange furniture, I couldn't put up displays, and it was really hard—and I accept that, it's fine, I really do, that is just part of it. I felt like I was lagging behind everyone else, you would go into his or her classroom and everything is already done, and I was getting really down about it. (A.2)

The beginning teachers in this study reported a number of wider issues that added to their levels of anxiety and stress. There was conflict between the demands of personal lives and the professional demands of being a full-time teacher. Trying to satisfy both aspects of their lives led to lack of confidence and further stress.

[I got] very anxious, I spent a lot of time going in through the holidays and I tried not to go in before Christmas, so I went in on the 28th or 29th [of] December and took some stuff in and I would just sit there in an empty room with the desks and chairs and I would just sit there, looking round saying, 'Oh, no'. (A.3)

Some report that their lack of confidence led them to avoid full-time positions, only undertaking relieving positions or short-term contracts. For some, this was acknowledged as a lack of confidence:

I think maybe if I had a full-time class there would be a difference, but I chose to go and relieve because I didn't feel comfortable having a full-time class. I wasn't quite confident in myself. (D.11)

Others acknowledged a level of insecurity. In discussion, one of the beginning teachers admitted that she could not drive and chose not to seek full employment because of this.

Don't you think it's insecurity? The older you get. Choosiness is a form of insecurity. It's not a conscious thing, you know. (C.3)

Confidence and initiative

Notwithstanding the levels of stress and anxiety experienced by all the beginning teachers in this study, some report purposeful ways of rising above their anxiety and feelings of inadequacy to reveal high levels of confidence. For one of the participants, this was part of his nature: "I like the

challenges—I thrive on them” (A.9). But for others, confidence came from being able to talk confidently about their own development as teachers and their initial teacher education.

When I went for my interview, when they questioned me, I gave them full answers. Also, I extended into the fact that the Te Wānanga provided me ... that this is a curriculum, and how you go through all the plans that they showed us step by step, baby steps. We talked about how ... you start off as a baby and then you weaned and that was my pitch. ‘Going from the known to the unknown’. And that opened it all up, then they wanted to know about along the lines how Te Wānanga works because they thought it was like Takiura and that we would ever only go into kura kaupapa and bilingual classes. I said it was a proper teaching programme. We can teach in the primary level up to intermediate, many of us have our Tohu Māori and that will enable us to teach in kura Māori. I think when I answered my questions in full they liked it and it was an ongoing thing. I just didn’t stop there. You’ve got to keep them guessing all the time and let them listen to you rather than you listen to them. They just sat back. (D.4)

I try and stay positive just for the tamariki. In the end I feel that I’m to blame if those tamariki don’t quite succeed, because I should be able to manage that classroom, because my philosophy says that. If you live by your philosophy, then everything should fit in. That’s my whakaaro. (C.8)

Within the school context, one of the beginning teachers reported a situation that clearly demonstrates her confidence to assert her sense of ownership for her class when she was faced with an entrenched practice of using children from her class as school monitors. She realised that the children’s academic programme was being interfered with:

I feel that my tamariki have too much on their shoulders because everybody comes to my class and they want to borrow my kids to be messengers—the gardeners, the rubbish collectors—so I turned around this week and said, ‘Kāo. My tamariki are learning right now and they are my tamariki’. So now I have turned it around, so when people have said to me, ‘You know, that tamariki needs to do more of this social skills’, and I said, ‘Kāo, you’re not taking that student ‘cause you know he’s not going to be a rubbish tip worker’ ... That’s what my tamariki were being used for, so I sort of stood my ground, said ‘No’. (D.9)

Employment issues

The following table describes the pattern of employment for the 27 graduates who initially participated in the study. (It was noted earlier, and again in the “Limitations” section, that participation decreased significantly in Term 2, with only 12 of the original participants maintaining ongoing contact.)

Kind of employment	Number of graduates
Full-time permanent teaching position in a school	10
Fixed-term position in a school	6
Casual relieving in schools	8
Employed outside the school sector	2
Not in paid employment	1

Of the 16 in full-time permanent or fixed-term roles, all had won their positions within a month of beginning the application process. Graduates reported facing a number of challenges in seeking and gaining employment.

Age of graduates

When age data are added to the employment status of the graduates, a relationship is apparent between age and success in gaining employment.

Kind of employment	Number of graduates	Age of graduates
Full-time permanent teaching position in a school	10	All 30 years or under
Fixed-term position in a school	6	
Casual relieving in schools	8	All in 40–49 age group
Employed outside the school sector	2	1 = 30–39, 1 = 40–49
Not in paid employment	1	40–49

In contrast to this, however, 7 of the 9 students in the 40–49 age bracket who graduated from one of the centres in the following year (2004) gained permanent full-time positions by January 2005.

Credibility of Te Wānanga

An important recurring issue was the tenuous credibility of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa as a provider of initial teacher education. One of the graduates (who eventually won a position in a kura kaupapa Māori school) described an interview she had in a mainstream school:

But like I'm saying, if they are going out into mainstream, they say, 'Where's this place [Te Wānanga o Aotearoa]?' Sometimes in your interview you drop in confidence. They ask how long it's been open for, and I can't answer this. So I had a question like that and guessed off the top of my head and hope and pray that I guessed the right answer. (G.4)

Another graduate understood himself and his peers as the foundational graduates of Te Wānanga and, as such, recognised his responsibility for contributing to the wānanga's credibility:

With no educational history, we are the history. You ask how long, we lasted three years, we are the beginning of it [Te Wānanga o Aotearoa]. (C.4)

Having to be the face of the wānanga was a continual burden for the beginning teachers and was often the subject of informal conversations during the research project. Participants accepted, as they had for the three years of their degree programme, that their performance in the classroom was being used as a barometer of the wānanga's quality in respect of initial teacher education. There was a sense that the public, as represented by teachers, principals, and school communities, was waiting to see how initial graduates would perform.

Frustration at lack of success

Those graduates who struggled to secure teaching positions were frustrated by what they perceived as unfairness in appointing foreign-trained teachers (often with experience elsewhere) to positions ahead of New Zealand graduates. This was particularly frustrating when positions were in bilingual classrooms:

I was ask[ing] for bilingual classes, but as a matter of fact they have South Africans and the like relieving in the Māori bilingual classes, which I think is pretty far out—especially when I was already applying for that position. I approached another school for a job and was turned down. It was given to an American. Now, what is that telling you? I mean, you do this course, a 3-year course, and get qualifications to teach within New Zealand and they give it to outsiders, non-New Zealanders I should say, and that can be frustrating and can make you very anti. (F.11)

There was a feeling that, in appointing the more experienced international teachers, schools could be choosing to avoid providing the necessary support to beginning teachers:

You know, I think it depends on where you go to apply, because if it's Term 4 coming up they have jobs coming up, but they don't want to use unnecessary time to help a beginning teacher—I think that's what it boils down to, really. (F.12)

Sense of readiness for full employment

For a small number of graduates, there was an awareness that they were not ready to embark on full-time employment. One graduate described this as feeling not adequately prepared by the wānanga:

... even though I have graduated, I have only taken on part-time work because I don't feel confident that Te Wānanga taught me everything I needed to know. I think that these sessions will still be good for me. (B.2)

Another described it as his own sense of immaturity and his unwillingness to take on the workload that he saw his ex-student colleagues engaged in:

I wasn't quite sure last year when I finished if it was where I wanted to be. Now I was thinking, jeez I have got this bit of paper and I am a Scale A teacher now, and you know, I don't think I want the responsibility of these little tamarikis coming up to me, and all the rest of it is something I am still quite unsure of, 'cause I'm not sure how this Scale A teacher fits above me, it's something I'm not quite sure of. (A.6)

In two cases, extended family members had a large role to play in getting graduates started on their career path and into full employment as beginning teachers:

I have an aunty who works up at [name of school] who knows I have been avoiding the plunge, as you can put it, which I suppose I have ... So I have just been doing other things and then she goes, 'You can come in and just try it out. Where do you prefer?' 'I prefer mainstream Years 5, 6, 7 and 8.' She goes, 'Well, come in, we have got a class for you.' She rings at 8 o'clock and says, 'Come in at 8.30, we have got a class for you to jump into. We need a reliever.' (A.6)

In the other case, the graduate took on a teacher aide position in the school until a full-time teaching position became available, because the uncle who was the head of the unit he was employed in had a strategic vision for the unit that he needed his nephew to help him fulfil. While this may on the face of it seem like nepotism, it is unlikely in fact that there were any other applicants for the position that this graduate eventually won.

Underemployment

It was not uncommon for students in this small group of graduates to accept a teacher aide position, especially as an initial position. The graduates appeared to face some structural barriers in being employed as fully qualified, provisionally registered, Scale A teachers. Some employers assumed that despite their Bachelor of Teaching degree the graduates were not in fact qualified until the degree had been conferred upon them through the graduation ceremony. Te Wānanga's graduation ceremonies were held in May 2004, the year after the students completed their degrees, and so many of the beginning teachers were paid as teacher aides or unqualified teachers in the initial months of the year. While this issue affects all graduates of initial teacher programmes, the effect was a little worse for these graduates because Te Wānanga graduations tend to be held later in the year than those of other institutions.

Discussion

Border crossings

The concept of border crossing (Giroux, 1992) and its importance to the project was raised in the introduction to this report.

Congruencies and incongruencies

Bourdieu (1993) contends that the level of congruence between home and school is a big determinant of how successfully children and students will make the transition from one to the other. We have looked at incongruencies and congruencies between the beginning teachers and the schools into which they have gone, primarily in terms of values, beliefs, and world views about teaching and learning. Within the context of this study we expected that this issue would take the form of comments such as: “What they told me I had to do at school is different than what I had to do while I was at the wānanga”, but this was not a major theme in the transcripts.

Many participants reported high levels of satisfaction and ownership, despite the anxiety and frustration typically associated with the transition from student teacher to classroom teacher. In two cases, however, beginning teachers reported instances where the school discourse ran counter to their own. One (quoted under the heading “Confidence and initiative” above) involved a beginning teacher in a bilingual unit who considered that the children in her class were being used more often than was good for their learning for the tasks of gardening, running messages, and picking up rubbish. In the other, a beginning teacher was questioned about her practice of beginning each day with a prayer (after a while of doing this she noticed that some of the other Māori teachers in the school were doing the same). Whether these two small stories among many are symptomatic of a wider reality that did not come through in the transcripts is unknown, as is the level to which such incidents were problematic for the beginning teachers.

Hazards encountered by beginning teachers

Mulholland and Wallace (2003) use the term “hazard” to talk about difficulties encountered in crossing borders. In contrast to congruencies and incongruencies, hazards do not necessarily derive from clashes in values and beliefs. They do, however, make the border crossing problematic.

A number of the areas identified in the findings of this study can be characterised as hazards. The first of these can be described as socio-political and economic, and relates to the difficulties encountered by beginning teachers in finding employment. There is evidence to support the contention that these mainly Māori beginning teachers from an identifiably Māori provider who was also new in the sector had more difficulty than most in successfully finding employment on the basis of age and the unknown nature of the wānanga. This is supported by anecdotal evidence from outside the study that some people within the sector and the profession regard the wānanga as a second-class provider.

Another potential hazard for beginning teachers that has been extensively reported in the national and international literature is the formation of successful relationships within the school community. This includes relationships with school management, colleagues, children, and the wider school community. The reports on induction and support in this study are typical, in that they report both strong and weak formal programmes within schools. The same may be said of less formal support networks among peers, family, and whānau. There are two—possibly uniquely Māori—instances of whānau support operating for beginning teachers (one was the already quoted experience—A.6, on page 23—of the graduate whose aunty impelled him into getting started against his own will; in the other, a beginning teacher first took a job as a teacher aide in order to progress to a teaching position in his uncle’s bilingual unit, as part of his uncle’s long-term strategic plan for the unit and the unique set of skills required for the job).

Significant qualities for beginning teachers

To extend the concept of the border crosser a little, we would like to characterise some of the other aspects of this study as “o”, or travelling food that either helps or hinders beginning teachers in dealing with the incongruencies and hazards of transition. These are the ability to reflect and their own personal agency.

The ability to reflect

Reflection has long been seen as central to the development of a successful teacher. In an article on student teachers in the primary sector in the US, Beattie (2000) emphasised how the use of reflection in teacher training takes it from being a simple training exercise in which the priority is to master a set of skills, strategies, or techniques, and theory is externally produced, to a source of professional learning based on the education and development of the whole person. The findings of this study provide some powerful examples of beginning teachers’ ability to reflect having a major part in the successful negotiation of a challenging situation.

Beattie (1997) puts the case for the teaching of reflection as one of the most important skills that can be given to teachers in pre service training. In another article (Beattie, 2003) she describes the development of a pre-service teacher and how she grew by integrate her own values into her identity as a teacher. Beattie stresses the importance of reflection in this process. A. Williams (2003) describes a similar concept as “reactive learning”, and suggests that formal induction programmes seldom acknowledge the importance of this “informal” type of learning for beginning teachers.

Personal agency

While many sociolinguistic theorists (such as Fitzhugh & Leckie, 2001) question both the existence of the subject and the agency of the subject, many do acknowledge it in some form (Palti, 2004). Agency is a philosophic concept that emerges from notions of subjectivity and objectivity. It means the ability of a person to be more than just a docile body—an object of the power relations, institutions, and discourses within which he or she lives. Agency is increased by our ability as individuals to identify and name these institutions, discourses, and power relations, and to identify and name ourselves in terms of our thoughts and the rules of society, and the extent to our thoughts and feelings correspond to reality (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). Agency is related to concepts such as autonomy, independence, empowerment, and “being in control of one’s life”—but also to resistance and rebellion. Depending on the cultural context, agency can be either individual or collective (Wray, 2004). The Freirean concept of conscientisation (Freire, 1970) is related in that it seeks greater freedom and happiness for the individual through transformation of imprisoning and oppressive structures as much as an interior focus on the individual.

We prefer the term “agency” to Bandura’s (1994) “self-efficacy”, which is similar. As a psychological construct, self-efficacy tends to minimise the focus on external power relations and their effect on the individual and maximise the individual’s contribution to their own empowerment. The concept of agency, however, also includes the individual as Subject, located culturally and structurally within a society. Agency, therefore, is constructed both through societal technologies of classification and naming—the mother, the son, the drunk, the insane—and through the internal drive to perfection, happiness, purity, and wisdom.

Many of the studies in the beginning teacher literature point to the agency of the individual teacher or the personal characteristics that are prerequisites for it.

Attributes and attitudes of successful beginning teachers

When summarising the literature, Eldar, Nabel, Schechter, Talmor and Mazin (2003) talk about teachers who “begin easily” and those who “begin painfully” (p. 32). They give a number of reasons for this, including “individual differences in the ability to cope with stressful situations” (p. 32).

Eldar et al. quote Gold (1996): “the beginning teacher’s transition from student to teacher often involves a great deal of stress. Lack of self confidence, conflicts between personal life and professional requirements, and an inability to handle stress have undermined many otherwise promising teachers” (Eldar et al., 2003, p. 32).

Rust (2002) describes those teachers who had a “good” first year as being possessive about their children, often talking about “my children” and “my class.” They “took charge” and “sought support”. They were proactive and self-efficacious. Rust characterises those teachers who had a harder first year as more rigid and reactionary in their behaviour.

Zimmerman (2003) uses the word “stubbornness” to describe the same sort of attribute that helped her through her own first year. There is a link here with the personal attribute of “mental toughness”, given by the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) in Form TC1, Application for Teacher Registration and Practising Certificate, as one of the elements to be taken into account when assessing whether a beginning teacher should be recommended for registration in New Zealand. The other attributes NZTC requires in teachers (see the application forms on the NZTC website: <http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/registration/how/forms.stm>) include: trustworthiness; honesty; reliability; sensitivity and compassion; respect for others; imagination, enthusiasm and dedication; communication; and physical and mental health.

J S. Williams (2003) described the personal attributes of the exemplary teachers she interviewed as: “They like to laugh and have fun; they are ravenous learners whose minds are seldom idle; and they are determined, courageous and resilient, caring so deeply about their work that they swing from exhilaration to despair, depending on the success of their efforts” (p.72)

When summarising the views of the exemplary teachers she interviewed, J. S. Williams (2003) said: “The rewards of teaching go far beyond witnessing the daily progress of their students. These educators say that the personal bonds that they form with young people are a kind of spiritual connection that often lasts for years. One teacher says, ‘Yes, it’s spiritual. It touches my soul—like believing in God and the love of a friend ... That’s part of being a fulfilled, whole, spiritual person. Teaching certainly satisfies that for me” (p. 72). Others in the study also referred to teaching “as a kind of vocation” (p. 72).

In our own study, a personal sense of agency appears to have been a powerful factor in overcoming a number of challenges for the beginning teachers. For one, it meant the difference between getting a job and not getting one; for others, it was an ability to handle stress, anxiety and lack of confidence; and for others still, it was the ability to say: “I won’t put myself in a situation I don’t feel ready for”. Those who had no sense of agency stumbled over factors that did not impede others—not having a car, being too old, and questions about the wānanga and the quality of their qualification.

6. Limitations of the project

A number of limitations were discussed by the project team.

Inclusion

At the beginning of the study all the graduates of the programme at the two sites attended the information meetings. However, only those beginning teachers who had found employment participated in the cohort meetings. This meant that a significant amount of valuable data was lacking in terms of identifying the forces that affect the beginning teachers and are as much external as internal to the school context.

The big drop in attendance at cohort meetings was a major issue for the research team during the second half of the year. It meant that we were not able to get as full a picture as we had hoped of the whole of the first year of teaching.

Despite strategies such as reimbursement for transport and childcare, and the strong personal relationships between kaiako researcher and beginning teachers brought about by three years of teaching and learning together on a small pre-service programme, the beginning teachers were so overwhelmed by the burden of work that most were unable to continue to support the project.

Perspectives

The lack of a comprehensive body of literature articulating Māori education theory and practice has meant that we have been limited in our analysis of the transcripts to mainly Western lenses.

7. Conclusion

The aims of this study were to report on selected beginning Māori teachers' professional experience and developing knowledge-in-action during their first year of teaching by asking them what their issues were and observing what impact these had on their success in their first year. The second aim was to inform schools and pre-service teacher education institutions on how they might modify their programmes to enhance the potential for success of their graduates.

These beginning teachers did not report any significant lack of congruence between the values, beliefs, and philosophies of the pre-service institution and the schools where they found employment. They did, however, engage with other potential hazards, such as developing and maintaining successful relationships (both within and outside the school) and the effectiveness of the school's induction programme.

Perhaps the most important hazard for this particular study is the wānanga's status as a new provider of teacher education, its identity as a Māori provider, and the potential negative impact these two realities have on graduates seeking employment. This problem should be alleviated as time goes on and the wānanga establishes a more familiar presence in teacher education. In the meantime, it needs to prepare its graduates to answer questions during employment interviews such as: what is Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, what is its history, is its degree a "real" degree, with the same status as those awarded by other providers, and so on.

The fact that prospective employers of teachers were not familiar with the wānanga helped to identify the other major finding of this study—the extent to which initial teacher education is able to develop a sense of personal agency in its graduates. Two of the participating beginning teachers faced challenges from appointments panels over the identity of the wānanga and whether its qualification had the same status as that of other institutions. For one graduate, it was a negative experience that lowered her confidence; for the other, it became a positive experience that she was able to turn to her benefit. Debate beyond the scope of this study signals that this may be of particular importance for Māori students, given the subordinate status of Māori culture in Aotearoa New Zealand. Māori students need to be aware of the wider political forces that affect them as they attempt to engage as teachers. Pre-service teacher education providers need to be cognizant of this when they are preparing beginning teachers.

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Notes

¹ “Word from the Tumuaki desk”, in the newsletter of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, issue 12, April 2004.