NEGOTIATING THE NEW ZEALAND ENGLISH CURRICULUM

A QUALITATIVE MODEL OF EIGHT SECONDARY ENGLISH TEACHERS' CLASSROOM PRACTICE AND RESPONSE TO THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

*Negotiating the New Zealand English Curriculum*, opening with a contextualised look at the history and current educational environment surrounding secondary practice under the English Curriculum, describes how secondary English classroom practice in forms 3 to 7 relates to the principles of the English Curriculum set out in the Ministry of Education document, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry, 1994). Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with eight Canterbury teachers were used to provide the basis for a qualitative analysis, and use is also made of current literature, evaluative studies in the area, school documents and key figures in the English Curriculum development process and debate. Because it was found that the English Curriculum does not impact participants' individual pedagogy directly and that, in this context, classroom practice and response to the English Curriculum are intimately connected, the researcher presents a Model of the Factors Influencing Classroom Practice and Response to the English Curriculum. Factors in the Model include Experience, Management Purposes, Consciousness of Professional Environment, Teacher Interests, Context Constraints, Students and Teacher Beliefs. Students and Teacher Beliefs, two of the more significant factors, are examined with more detail in individual chapters. The author concludes with a theoretical discussion of the curriculum-practice relationship, as well as a brief look at implications of the Model for professional development.
CHAPTER 1
CONTEXT, HISTORY AND CURRENT CLASSROOM STATUS OF THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

Negotiating the New Zealand English Curriculum\(^1\) is about how secondary teachers formulate the intimately connected functions of classroom practice and curriculum response. It is about why teachers do what they do. More specifically, it is about eight Canterbury secondary English teachers and the factors that influence their classroom practice and response to the newest national English curriculum statement, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*\(^2\) (Ministry of Education, 1994). In some ways, as I will discuss throughout this presentation, it is also about my high school English teaching practice.

I came to New Zealand in February of 1996 from my teaching background assuming that the English Curriculum was directly influencing classroom practice. This assumption, which eventually turned out to be false, rested on my experience working under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act in the United States. The Model of Factors Influencing Classroom Practice and Response to the English Curriculum,\(^3\) described in Chapter 3 and created from data given by the eight Canterbury secondary English teachers participating in this study, reveals that the relationship between curriculum and practice in this New Zealand context is more of a co-construction than a simple A to B transaction.

“Curriculum” in this study is interpreted variously depending upon the context and whose views are being presented. Because we are discussing a curriculum statement, the traditional, technical view of curriculum is evident: that of curriculum as product. Sometimes, participants discussed curriculum in terms of the content they were supposed to teach, sometimes in terms of how they were supposed to teach it. As the study progressed, Grundy’s (1987, chap. 4) notion of “curriculum as practice,” came to be appropriate. In curriculum as practice, the practical--those things in the realm of human interaction--inform the technical and vice versa. In effect, curriculum is

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\(^1\) *Negotiating the New Zealand English Curriculum* is hereafter referred to as *Negotiating*.

\(^2\) Generally, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* is hereafter referred to as the English Curriculum. Occasionally, it will also be referred to as the Document. Other curriculum statements will generally be referred to by their full names to avoid confusion.

\(^3\) The Model of Factors Influencing Classroom Practice and Response to the English Curriculum described in Chapter 3 is hereafter referred to as the Model.
practice. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of how the Model embodies and extends this notion.

Before beginning, I also need to highlight what I mean by the term, “practice.” Carr (1995) points out that the concept of practice is ambiguous, sometimes referring to activity undertaken to acquire a certain skill and other times referring to an activity demonstrating that skill. I use the term according to Carr’s discussion of an educational practice, where the agent has an ethical disposition to act with an understanding of what it means to act educationally and which regards theorising as a inseparable part of that action. Theorising is simply the thinking that constructs a teacher’s practice.

[An educational practice] is a consciously performed intentional activity which can only be made intelligible by reference to the often tacit and, at best, partially articulated schemes of thought in terms of which practitioners make sense of their practice. Hence, practitioners are only able to engage in educational practices by virtue of their ability to characterize their own practice and construe the practices of others in ways that presuppose, usually implicitly, a set of beliefs about what they are doing, the situation in which they are operating and what it is they are trying to achieve. (p. 41)

The factors influencing classroom practice and response to the English Curriculum described herein effectively represent the theorising aspect of participants’ classroom practice.

This first chapter will set the scene for our central focus, a discussion of the eight participants’ classroom practice and curriculum response. Apple and Weis (1983) remind us that schools always exist within “a larger ideological, economic, and political context” (p. 3). They assert that the dominant research model in education has ignored both the daily life of schools and the larger context within which those schools operate. I will not make that mistake here. As a study about these eight high school teachers and their work, it is also a study about the English departments within which that work takes place, the schools in which those departments exist, the national and historical forces in New Zealand that shape those schools—in part through curriculum statements like English in the New Zealand Curriculum—and even the international monetarist trends that have influenced the rapidly changing political and social structure of the country. This chapter will begin at the international level, and through Strauss and Corbin’s (1990, chap. 10) “Conditional Matrix,” bring us down through the layers of national,

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4 See Chapter 4 of For Education (Carr, 1995) for an excellent discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of this term. Stephen Kemmis’s prologue is also useful as an overview of the philosophical background to the constructed division between practice and theory.  
5 In grounded theory, a significant methodological influence on this project (see Chapter 2), all phenomena are studied in the context of a transactional system; thus a phenomenon—practice and response to the English Curriculum in this case—is expressed in terms of its actions, what teachers do and
community and institutional context surrounding the phenomenon at hand, the Model described in Chapter 3.

_Negotiating_ establishes the connected nature of participants' classroom practice and response to the English Curriculum through the Model by delineating seven factors influencing that classroom practice and response to the English Curriculum. The bulk of the data contained herein is intended to give evidence to that end; thus while there will be some reference to the literature and outside theory in regard to participants' talk, the data is meant to stand on its own. As mentioned, Chapter 3 outlines the Model and describes five factors of that Model: Experience, Management Purposes, Consciousness of Professional Environment, Teacher Interests and Context Constraints. In accordance with the amount of data collected in these areas, Chapters 4 and 5 focus on two of the more primary factors in the Model, Students and Teacher Beliefs. I discuss the qualitative methodology underpinning all aspects of this work in Chapter 2. Chapter 5 ends with a brief theoretical discussion of the curriculum-practice relationship and links into Chapter 6, which explores the implications of this study for teachers' professional development.

**INTERNATIONAL RETURN OF THE RIGHT**

In countries like the United States, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, a neo-classical, monetarist shift has taken place in government away from social responsibility as a whole. The belief underlying this move can be summed up as "big government is bad": bad because it is expensive, bad because it is inefficient and bad because it creates inequality. In contrast, the mechanisms of the market are seen as essentially free, efficient and able to create an economically equal playing field through individual choice. As a result, government spending has down-sized from demand-side economics, where demand determines budget, to supply-side economics, where the limits of the budget determine what can be demanded. In effect, the State is shrinking, leaving in its wake an ever-growing ring of social responsibility and need it theorises

how they respond, and interactions, the factors affecting that action. A phenomenon under study, in effect, is a kind of "action/interaction sequence" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 159; see also p. 104 and chap. 9 for a discussion of process). Appropriately, the authors say that "all phenomena and their related action/interaction are embedded in sets of conditions" (p. 159). Their "Conditional Matrix" is the model of these sets of conditions. It "may be represented as a set of circles, one inside the other, each [layer] corresponding to different aspects of the world around us. In the outer rings stand those conditional features most distant to action/interaction; while the inner rings pertain to those conditional features bearing most closely upon an action/interaction sequence" (p. 161). "Conditional paths" (pp. 166-171), or influence, can be traced both from the outermost rings to the centre and from the centre to the outermost rings.
can and will be filled by the private sector. Education inhabits a large portion of this growing void.

Educational reforms undertaken in response to this ideological shift to the right first involve devolution, where schools are given greater autonomy over the bureaucratic and fiscal aspects of their work; then changes—often cuts—are instituted in central educational agencies lessening the “professional influence” of those bureaucracies. Finally and most ominously, political control of “key elements of the system” increases sharply (Peddie, 1995, p. 140). Key elements include curriculum, accountability measures and assessment. “Changes are rapid and continuous, with the rhetoric of a fast-changing technology, economy and society being used to justify this” (p. 140-141). In turn, these rapid changes are used to manufacture a sense of crisis in society and in education, providing further justification for deeper and faster change.6 Furthermore, the key elements mentioned above, particularly curriculum and assessment qualifications, are redefined in “instrumental terms” (Walsh & Carter, 1995, p. 117), as tools for increasing the economic competitiveness of both the country and the individual citizen. In taking an “activist role,” a term used by Lockwood Smith7 (cited in Peddie, 1995, p. 141), government explicitly politicises education and harnesses it for economic purposes. In the same speech, just as a new draft of the national curriculum was about to be released, the Minister said:

In today’s world, issues of curriculum are no longer just the concern of educators, but a matter of national and governmental interest. In the past, the curriculum has been essentially shaped by teachers, education administrators, and academic and curriculum specialists. Now, and for the first time in countries such as the USA, UK and Australia, we find governments being increasingly prepared to legislate for the curriculum....The change is a result of government’s heightened recognition of education as a significant aspect of national development, its central position in the development of a sound economic strategy. (cited in Peddie, 1995, p. 141)

This fits in with Codd, Gordon and Harker’s (1990, p. 15) observation in New Zealand that “the central role of the state at present is clearly directed towards improving conditions for the accumulation of capital.” They go on to say that “the effects of this, particularly in terms of unemployment and reducing real wages, require the state to legitimize not only capital, but also the effects of its own policies on the production and maintenance of social inequality.” Legitimation is achieved in the

manufactured sense of crisis and with the rationalisation of complex social institutions into technical problems with technical solutions which are owned by “experts” (Habermas,\textsuperscript{8} cited in Codd, Gordon & Harker, 1990, p. 19). In education, participants’ statements indicate that these experts are not teachers.

**TEACHING ENGLISH IN NEW ZEALAND**

A number of the participants expressed a sense of powerlessness in the face of the changes taking place in New Zealand education. In two cases, this expression took the form of referring to, as Margaret\textsuperscript{9} put it, “the powers that be, not the teacher” (21:6-7).\textsuperscript{10} Lisa elaborated:

> We don’t know, you see. We’re out there in the classroom doing the teaching and we’re not really sure what’s going on. But the courses came out at the beginning of this year to schools saying what professional development is happening this year, run by the powers that be around the place. And when you read all the ones to do with English, they said more details will be coming later in the year. So, I have the feeling--well, we have the feeling out in our school anyway—that we’re going to be given more training and understanding, but we’re not quite sure when, and I think that the reason that we’re not quite sure when is that they’re having trouble actually coming up with the stuff that they’re going to be sharing with us, like how to assess. (58:34-48)

Power and the solutions to the technical problems of education framed by the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) are in the hands of that government, not teachers like Lisa or Margaret. This shift in locus of power is deliberately constructed by the government, both by the creation of experts and also by decreasing the time frame for teacher participation in curriculum design and development, as is noted with concern by Rathgen (1991) and stated with dissatisfaction by the English Curriculum developers (Bendall, 1992, 3 August, p. 11 & p. 16).

New Zealand has had a national curriculum including English since the 1877 Education Act (Ministry of Education, 1996, see Appendix 1, pp. 231-236, for an

\textsuperscript{7} Smith, L. (1991, 14 May). Speech notes prepared by Dr the Hon. Lockwood Smith, the Minister of Education (pp. 2-3). Address to PPTA Curriculum Conference, Christchurch, New Zealand.


\textsuperscript{9} All study participants are referred to by pseudonyms. In this and all aspects of the work, *Negotiating* has been approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

\textsuperscript{10} In citations like this where no reference is included, I am indicating the page and line numbers of the study transcripts where participants’ talk is found. I have included these citations for two reasons: first, because I believe they point to the fact that *Negotiating* is heavily grounded in the actual data of the study; and second because if readers have questions in regard to specific portions of the data, I can locate those portions efficiently in developing my response. References to the Project Log are included in the following form: (Log, pp. 25-27).
overview of history of grammar teaching in New Zealand). The Thomas Report,\textsuperscript{11} which took effect in 1945, established an official syllabus for the teaching of School Certificate English, forms 3 to 5, defining the subject and good teaching practice in functionalist terms (Gordon, 1985). This syllabus was in line with New Zealand's system of prescribing broad national curriculum guidelines meant to be interpreted at the local level (Catherwood, Rathgen & Aitken, 1990). Later, in response to the 1966 international Dartmouth Conference,\textsuperscript{12} a Department of Education reference group recommended that the secondary school English syllabus emphasise more creative writing, utilise the media as a resource, and include oral and listening skills in addition to reading and writing. To this end, the Department of Education set up the National English Syllabus Committee (NESC), whose charge it was to revise the 1945 syllabus for forms 3 to 5. After over ten years of consultation and work with secondary teachers through background papers, newsletters and in-service discussion courses, as well as reviews of three drafts of the \textit{Statement of Aims} and drafts of pamphlets for the \textit{Resource Book, English: Forms 3 to 5}, the NESC’s work culminated in the publication of a new national English syllabus, \textit{English, Forms 3 to 5: Statement of Aims}, in 1983 (Catherwood, Rathgen & Aitken, 1990).

New Zealand's shift to the right began in the late 1980s. In April 1987, after almost two years of public consultation and debate, the Labour government-sponsored Committee to Review the Curriculum for Schools published a progressive report on education, \textit{The Curriculum Review}.\textsuperscript{13} Soon after, Treasury released a critical brief\textsuperscript{14} on \textit{The Curriculum Review}, damning it for mainly fiscal reasons, particularly for its lack of addressing the relationship between education and the economy. Treasury's powerful influence on state policy making at this time involved what Jesson\textsuperscript{15} has called a "policy coup" where monetarist solutions are presented as the only viable solutions to social and economic problems (cited in Codd, 1991, p. 179). Two months later, just before the 1987 general election, the government set up the Taskforce to Review

\textsuperscript{11} New Zealand Department of Education. (1944). \textit{The Post-Primary School Curriculum} (the Thomas Report). Wellington, New Zealand: Government Printer.

\textsuperscript{12} See Dixon (1967) and Muller (1967) for reports on the conference. Dixon (1967) provides the foundation of the Personal Growth Model underlying the English Curriculum. Personal Growth is a model of English based on communication and the student's individual growth in a rapidly changing technological/media environment. Interestingly, Dixon now questions this model because of its limited scope in dealing with interaction and dialogue (Dixon, 1996).


Education Administration whose focal points were to be devotion and efficiency. Following the 1987 election, the Prime Minister assumed the education portfolio, announcing that reform of education was to be a priority. *The Curriculum Review* and its liberal recommendations were quickly swept under the carpet. Government's, particularly Treasury's, active role was beginning. The Picot Report,16 encouraging radical devotion of school administrative responsibility, was released in May of 1988. After only six to seven weeks given for submissions, the Minister released *Tomorrow's Schools*,17 which was to be implemented by October 1989. While no mention of curriculum is contained in the Picot Report, *Tomorrow's Schools* states that control of the curriculum is invested in the Ministry of Education and the Educational Review Office (ERO), to be acted upon in the form of “tightly circumscribed limits” of a national curriculum and “constant surveillance” by the ERO (p. 180). Codd, Gordon and Harker (1990, p. 23) warn that the Picot Report and *Tomorrow's Schools* will “fragment existing structures and patterns of interest representation.”

*The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education), published in 1993 in accordance with the government's achievement initiative under *Tomorrow's Schools*, outlines the eight essential skills and the eight essential learning areas, including “Language and Languages,” which are intended to provide “a balance between the interests of the individual students and the requirements of society and the economy” (p. 1). The English Curriculum implements English in the essential learning area, “Language and Languages” (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 6). Also as part of *Tomorrow's Schools*, NZQA was charged with the task of rationalising New Zealand's system of post-school (form 6 to university) qualifications, which it did in developing a competency-based system of unit standards, which was beginning its implementation in early 1996 when I arrived in New Zealand. Unit standards have created a storm of resistance and conflict in the education sector. Elley (1996) points out the inappropriateness of skills-based assessment for complex academic learning, the sure failure of promised consistency and standards, and the inability of unit standards to show excellence. Although not all participants in this study were as vehemently negative toward unit standards as Elley (Annette, for instance, saw potential benefits in its flexibility toward student ability, 205:40-47), he echoes their concerns. In addition, participants like Lisa are wary of the potential workload:

The ones who are doing unit standards already in other subjects are overloaded...at our school we have some brilliant Maths teachers who I really respect and admire as being creative, almost as good as English teachers you know, who are saying in seriousness, “Either unit standards go or we do,” because it’s a matter of moderation between schools that’s not happening. They’ve got to duplicate everything, they’ve got to let kids resit everything two or three times. It’s a matter of fitting them all in, and the paperwork is absolutely phenomenal. [The teachers have] got to design tasks, get them approved [by NZQA], get them brought back, give them to the kids, get [the kids] to resit them several times. The kids have got to pay for every single thing they’re sitting. Financially, it’s crippling. Photocopying at our school is just ridiculous. The pressure that those teachers are under—they’re standing up at union meetings saying, crying, crying while they try and tell people what it’s like—the kind of hours that they’re working you know. To me, you get to that point and teachers are going to leave, and I’m hoping they’re going to look at English and say, “We’ve bitten off something that’s impossible.” (77:1-26)

Sarney’s (1996) article in the New Zealand Listener heralds Lisa’s fear of teachers leaving the profession. Combined with a population bulge beginning to come through New Zealand’s schools, the increased number of teachers leaving their classrooms because of new curriculum and assessment requirements contributed significantly to a teacher shortage which was just beginning to be felt in 1996 (though more in rural and impoverished urban areas than in Christchurch). 1996 was also a time when educational academics, teachers and university students alike were coming to understand and voice their opposition to the effects of New Right policies like school choice, bulk funding, voucher proposals, devolution, cuts in educational expenditure and performance pay which had been advancing so rapidly since the Picot Report (see Snook, 1996). All this contributed to secondary teachers’ feelings of confusion and loss of control, as well as their attempts to regain that control, or at least compensation, through Post Primary Teachers’ Association (PPTA) industrial action. Teacher strikes began in March and continued with rolling stoppages and refusal to participate in new work on the curriculum and assessment frameworks until August when a settlement was reached (see New Zealand Education Review, 1996, for an overview of events during the year).

**THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN SCHOOLS**

The English Curriculum was gazetted in December 1995 for implementation beginning in 1996 (New Zealand Qualifications Authority & Ministry of Education, 1995). It is divided into three strands of English—oral language (listening and speaking), written language (reading and writing) and visual language (viewing and
presenting)—which are then laid out in terms of achievement objectives across eight levels.

Generally, participants were issued with a copy of the English Curriculum by their HOD\(^{18}\) during a regular departmental meeting sometime in 1995. While teachers like Susanne were given the English Curriculum without discussion (239:23-30), the distribution with others like Margaret was accompanied by a rough discussion of the levels (2:3-6, 4:48-51). Lisa said she actually went and asked her HOD for one of the copies that were sitting undistributed in her office (67:8-19). The expectation seemed to be that the teachers would take the documents away, read and absorb them. Later that year, motivated by accountability to outside organisations like the ERO (Lisa, 60:32-36) as well as a sense of professionalism (Peter, 150:33-35), departments began to look at the English Curriculum more closely in their regular meetings or, in Annette’s case, an extra all-day meeting during the weekend (191:21-32). Perhaps one reason for this slow beginning is that the draft version of English Curriculum\(^{19}\) had already been dealt with and discussed in departments as part of the development response process since 1993. Both Annette (191:17-19) and Laura (267:4-6) mentioned this. In a similar vein, Lisa commented that she rarely uses the English Curriculum because of her familiarity with the Draft (57:10-14). While other participants have noted differences between the Draft and final English Curriculum in wording or emphasis, Peter maintains that every final or draft English syllabus from the *Statement of Aims* on is a draft to the current English Curriculum (Log, p. 337). Another reason for the English Curriculum’s slow implementation might be the time constraints under which English departments operate. Christopher (167:13-18), Annette (214:15-20), Peter (149:29), Lisa (57:2-4) and Laura (293:23-25) all mentioned this as a factor in their department’s implementation of the English Curriculum.

In the later departmental meetings where the English Curriculum was deconstructed, participants typically said their departments took an approach which started from what they were already doing. Annette gave a good example. During her department’s Saturday meeting on the English Curriculum, three senior teachers, including Annette, each presented one of the English Curriculum strands.

Then, having done that, what we then looked at was, “Okay, what are you presently [doing]?” We got people to brainstorm for each of the strands. We didn’t do it all at once, so when we were doing the oral language strand, we got them to brainstorm, “Okay, what things are you currently doing with third,

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\(^{18}\) HOD refers to the Head of Department, in this case the Head of a school’s English department. 

\(^{19}\) The draft document *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* was distributed to schools for response in September 1993 (Donn, 1994). Hereafter, this document is referred to as the Draft.
fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh form?"...and so everybody put down all of their ideas of what they are currently doing just on, you know, sort of large pieces of paper. Then we went through [the achievement objectives for each of the strands], and then we took those lists that they had come up with, and said, "Okay, where do each of these things fit?" We didn’t do it for every level of the school, although we’d got them to write about that. We decided to focus on third form. So we thought we would just take one level, because we thought that if we could show how it could be done at third form level, then [the other teachers] would be able to see that it could also be done right through the rest of the school. So, we took—I think we worked at level 5--5 or 4? Level 4 is the third form. I can’t remember now. Level 5, I think—and [we] looked at what things we were doing at the third form now that were going to cover each of the various things that should be being covered like interpersonal listening and listening to texts. And then we tried to identify where the gaps were that we were not, in fact, covering. And the major area where that was happening was with listening. (213:5-34)

Other participants like Lisa and Christopher (185:25-33) reinforced the notion that participants and their departments were using the English Curriculum more as a check on what they were already doing, as a means perhaps of finding the “gaps,” rather than as a guide for building their practice or curriculum content anew. “We’re not like saying, ‘Here is a whole lot of new stuff we need to know,’ but we’re basically getting together and saying, ‘Are we covering these strands? This is how we can go about it’” (Lisa, 60:26-29).

As a result of this examination during departmental work in implementing the English Curriculum, participants said that their schools’ English curricula are changing, albeit minutely. As Peter pointed out, “There’s a slight refocusing. The viewing and listening parts you would have found. [Now] there’s more emphasis on those. I think some people in the past could have ignored them completely if they wished and no one would really have known” (133:33-37). Other areas and approaches participants found themselves having to give a “new emphasis,” using Margaret’s term (154:35), included presenting for several participants and formal language teaching for Theresa (337:23-29), as well as the idea of text as a construct (271:24-33) and focusing more intently on skills (270:34-36) for Laura. Viewing, however, was an area of new emphasis mentioned by six of the eight participants. This supports Franken and Watson’s (1996, pp. 54-55) expectation that the structure of the English Curriculum, in the content organisation of its three strands, would have a washback effect into the classroom. Washback of the English Curriculum has occurred mainly through assessment requirements dictated by the alteration of departmental English schemes in response to the English Curriculum.
Typically, it is the English schemes developed for each class level by the department that determine the content requirements and corresponding common assessment for forms 3 through 5 (sixth and seventh form schemes are generally determined by their respective external exam prescriptions). With the introduction of the English Curriculum, internal assessments in listening and viewing have been added; therefore teachers are required to cover this material in order for their students to succeed in these assessments. Viewing, listening and presenting are given more emphasis because they are given more emphasis in the departmental schemes. For example, Margaret’s 1996 fifth form English scheme outlines the common tests and class work required of each form 5 student. The four common tests include one on the close reading of a film. Common class work designated by the scheme requires 10 specific projects divided among the three English Curriculum strands: oral language, visual language and written language (p. 42). Most of the school documents I saw, like Margaret’s form 5 scheme or the student report forms used by Lisa’s department (82-85 versus 124-126), had changed to reflect the three-strand structure of the English Curriculum.

More superficial departmental changes were also in evidence. These were changes instituted during department implementation as part of accountability to outside organisations like the ERO. Peter called this kind of change the “dressing of things” (150:11). One instance of dressing involved keeping poster charts of the English Curriculum in each English classroom, as in Theresa’s school, where in reality they are probably referenced infrequently (334:3-16). In another example, Peter talked about lifting language from the English Curriculum and slotting it into material he gave to students. In reference to a form 6 common viewing test where this was done, he said, “we’ve stolen the preamble from level 7…but that’s mostly just to play games, to get the right terminology” (150:1-5).

THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN CLASSROOMS

Generally, while having criticisms of its use and practicality, participants seemed quite positive about the existence of the English Curriculum. At the same time, they gave me the decided impression that the content and methods of the English Curriculum are not new; the Document simply promotes new emphases on areas like viewing and listening. For that reason, Lisa said she finds the English Curriculum to be an effective “check on yourself from time to time, to think maybe you’ve overlooked poetic thinking or something. It’s good--like a net…to stop you [from] letting things
just disappear and drop through” (56:10-18). Participants also saw other benefits: Theresa sees it as being something “sufficiently progressive” to work toward in English teaching as well as giving English teachers more clarity on the national level (339:20-25), Lisa feels it is useful to have a document that “actually defines good teaching practice” (53:21-24), Peter likes the developers’ aim in widening and documenting the scope of English (154:12-17), and Annette appreciates the fact that the Document bridges the gap between primary and secondary systems (194:35-38). However, participants stressed that what it says about teaching is not new. Lisa went on to say:

In my experience, this is how you teach English. I mean, I have to say we’re all pretty agreed on this....in my department of about twelve or fourteen English teachers, I’d say we would have accepted [the ideas in the English Curriculum] before the [English] Curriculum ever came out. I don’t think the [English] Curriculum actually says anything new. This is why I’m quite happy to talk about it. To me, it’s just common sense. (52:34-36, 53:3-8)

Lisa (56:27-28) agreed with Peter (138:41-44) that the change, if anything, is more in terminology. Seven of the eight participants said, in some form or another, that what they found in the English Curriculum was essentially what they were already doing. The introduction to Lisa’s English department scheme states, “The Department’s aim for this year and the next is to access units of work which have been planned in accordance with the [English Curriculum]. In many cases, this will mean only a minor reworking of what teachers already do in the classroom” (95). As Peter said, “Anyone who’s wanting to give a quality education to the kids in front of them...is doing these things” (135:18-19).

Wylie (1994) concurs with the participants that there has been little change in curriculum since Tomorrow’s Schools, of which the English Curriculum is a part. Writing during a time when the Draft was in schools, she says:

There are few signs of radical change in curriculum or assessment emerging from school initiatives. Most of the change reported is due to previous or current developments or resourcing from government....The emphasis on school initiatives and projects reported by 1993 principals and trustees was on the development of the school’s physical plant, not curriculum. (p. 4)

Interestingly, Feist\(^{20}\) and Massey,\(^{21}\) while researching the effects of curriculum change on classroom practice during the era of the NESC, also found that little change in practice was taking place (cited in Gordon, 1985, p. 4). Feist’s research indicated, just as the above passages suggest, that change involved modification of existing


programmes rather than the total abandonment of them. During her interview, Margaret explained that teachers adapt new curricula to the old because of the time constraints, adding that "it's not as if everything's going to be new...and you're doing some good things already....Hang on to what's valuable and look at it again in terms of how you can better it" (40:13-22). Margaret's talk also suggested that teachers might understand new curricula in terms of the old. She referred to transactional writing as "your old formal writing" (11:34-35) and when discussing unit standards said, "there's going to be a few teething problems for a year or two while people sort out what level makes a pass enough to equate it to the old system" (17:19-21). Clearly, she sees change as a form of modification. Theresa offered a possible explanation for this when she said she insists that the teachers in her department use the new jargon, but pointed out to them that "all you've done is change the name of what you're doing" (335:40-41) because that allowed those teachers to be more comfortable with the changes. "People got so worried about the jargon that it was immobilising them sometimes in their teaching" (335:41-43). Modification in this case is for the purpose of maintaining one's comfort level so that the daily processes of teaching can continue to happen smoothly. In the business of schooling, that is important. Because it is important, this kind of modification was emphasised by the teacher development programme facilitators for Mathematics in the New Zealand Curriculum and Science in the National Curriculum. Reports of the cluster meetings (Gilmore, 1994, see Appendices 3-6 for reports) show that facilitators were expressing that teachers need only modify their current practice in response to the new curricula. For example, one facilitator told attending teachers, "Remember that a lot of the new curriculum content is not [emphasis in text] new; teachers need to take slow steps, develop confidence about what they are taking on board and move when something works for them" (p. 153).

Exposure and expression in the classroom, on the other hand, has changed the nature and meaning of the English Curriculum levels. While the eight achievement levels have approximate parallels in school class and student age, they are not meant to be interpreted according to class or student age. The level statements are meant to "assist teachers to identify a student's progressive development, and therefore to provide the most appropriate programmes" (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 20). That development from level to level is a progression in the student's ability to perform increasingly complex tasks and engage with an widening range of texts (Franken & Watson, 1996). As can be seen in some of the participants' comments above, particularly Annette's assignment of level 4 to third form during the description of her
department’s deconstruction of the English Curriculum, the levels are being reinterpreted literally in practice.

The fear that the English Curriculum levels and corresponding achievement objectives would be interpreted as expected outcomes at certain class and age levels was expressed in working papers submitted to the Ministry of Education throughout the development process by Margaret Bendall, the contracted co-ordinating developer of the English Curriculum (1992, 3 August, p. 20). In these papers, Bendall acknowledges the artificiality of matching the draft outcomes to the model of eight levels determined by the Ministry (1993, June 11, p. 1) and the senior levels required by NZQA’s qualifications framework (1993, 11 August, p. 6; see also 1992, 3 August, p. 30) as well as the fragmentation of the curriculum resulting from the Document’s layout (1993, 11 August, p. 2). Early on, Bendall suggests:

The use of the words “level descriptors” rather than “objectives” seemed to make greater sense in a curriculum statement for language learning because the level indicators have to be generalised to avoid too many specifics, which fragment language learning...making them more general means they can no longer be defined as objectives which are tight enough to be measurable in themselves. (1992, October 2, p. 2)

Unfortunately, from participants’ talk, the English Curriculum levels are being interpreted as chronological, measurable outcomes for classes. For example, Peter shared a form 6 viewing test with me which stated explicitly that it was assessing at level 7 (157, 148:13-19). Other participants expressed their frustration with the levels. Teachers like Susanne believe that the English Curriculum levels are intended to be used as chronological guides to class achievement, but disagree with this use of them.

What we should be able to do is write out our teaching units based on [the achievement objectives]. It’s kind of a matter of looking at partly [the achievement objectives] and partly what you do in your teaching program, and then saying, if I’m going to cover speaking and I want to do, I suppose, level 6, what exercise can I do in my classroom? Or what exercise am I doing already in my classroom that would mean I was teaching and then be able to assess speaking at that sort of level?...That’s a hard thing. I mean, the general guide, which I don’t know if I agree with at all, is set for fifth form. Fourth form, you’re really at level 5. Okay? And at sixth form, you’re at a level 7 or 8. Ideally, it shouldn’t be like that at all. Ideally, you should be able to have a class that ranges from maybe a 3 to maybe 7 if you’ve got a mixed ability group. And that means you should be able to identify where these kids are at all these levels. I think as far as teaching goes, the [English] Curriculum is really good, but as far as assessment goes, I don’t think that any English teacher I’ve met has got their head around the assessment part of it, to the levels, because we haven’t had to do that before. (240: 3-32)
It seems that the participants, even if they are opposed to using the eight level system for assessment by class, are using it as such because that kind of thinking is being reinforced by the format and wording of the English Curriculum, their departments' attempts to make the English Curriculum concrete, textbook companies (Susanne, 258:27-37), and in fact, by outside organisations like the English Certificate Society of New Zealand Inc. which defines the requirements for School Certificate English according to the achievement objectives in level 6 of the English Curriculum (Lisa's department handbook, 122-A). Locke (1996, p. 31), quoting Assessment: Policy to Practice published by the Ministry of Education, says she was pointed out to him as HOD of his school's English department that he was "legally bound" to teach the English Curriculum and thus "assess students against its levels."

Perhaps teachers are confused by what the levels are supposed to be versus how they come to be used in school reality because of the concurrent implementation of unit standards and subsequent emphasis on accountability and assessment. Even the ERO acknowledges the confusion generated by the interface of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework, of which the English Curriculum is a part, and NZQA's National Qualifications Framework (Educational Review Office, 1995, p. 18).

Assessment is an important factor in the formulation of classroom practice and response to curricula simply because it is one of a teacher's primary responsibilities in the function of schooling. In fact, because of this, Sharon Ellis of the ERO pointed out to me that the actual use of the English Curriculum and unit standards will in part be determined by the washback effect of assessment (Log, p. 185). In other words, teachers will implement the English Curriculum because they must assess according to it. In light of this, to expect that teachers could see the levels simply in terms of a loose guide is naïve. Theresa called this "dodging the issue" (323:7-16). How to assess the English Curriculum was one of the primary questions teachers brought to teacher development programmes associated with the English Curriculum.

Gilmore's (1994) evaluation of the Advisory Service teacher development programme, which was designed in part to familiarise teachers with the curriculum statements Mathematics in the New Zealand Curriculum and Science in the National Curriculum, gives overwhelming evidence that participating teachers wanted more information about and guidance on evaluating and assessing under their respective curriculum statements. While many Negotiating participants liked the opportunity to revisit their teaching and find some new ideas to use in their classrooms during the

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Advisory Service teacher development programme for *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*, other participants such as Peter (140:2-16, 23-24) and Lisa, like those teachers in Gilmore’s study, felt frustrated about the lack of approach to assessment.

For example, Lisa said:

> What I wanted to learn was not how to teach which I felt that I already knew how to teach English, but how the [English] Curriculum was going to affect my reporting and my assessment. And I felt very frustrated. I had my hand up a lot of the time saying, “Excuse me, that’s all very well but how are you supposed to record all this stuff and that kind of thing?” (55:4-10)

Participants like Annette also wanted specific assessment information in the English Curriculum document. She said she wanted more explanation of what would constitute a student’s achievement of the English Curriculum objectives (221:38-42) and offered the recently developed Australian English curriculum statement as an example of the specificity she preferred (195:40-48). While many of the criticisms participants identified in the English Curriculum had to do with the Model factors, one criticism that resurfaced in almost every interview or meeting, particularly in regard to assessment, was the fact that the English Curriculum does not provide enough “guidance” (Peter, 151:19-20) for actual day-to-day practice, that it is according to Susanne, “a wee bit vague” (262:18-20). As Annette put it, “I sort of felt it didn’t really give you a really strong lead into what was being required here” (222:41-44). Donn’s (1994, p. 53) survey of teacher opinion in regard to the Draft predicted Annette and other study participants’ reaction—the majority of secondary teachers in her study saw assessment in the Draft as needing additional support in the final Document.

A strong lead was what Annette wanted and what she tried to construct from the English Curriculum by breaking down the achievement objectives into key actions and objects of action in a series of charts she showed me (235-237). The English Curriculum developers (Bendall, 1992, 2 October, p. 3), however, made a point of keeping the language and objectives of the Document vague both to promote continuity between levels and recognise the “recursive nature of language learning.” Apparently, this is at odds with what teachers wanted and expected. Theresa said:

> I looked at those achievement objectives and I thought, “What a load of shit. How on earth do you work with them?”...I thought, “They look good. They are good.” But assessment went out the window when they were writing these. It’s all very well to rave on about the accountability of teachers for progress…but,
how the hell can you ever know those moves if you haven’t got clarity yourself? 
(322:37-49).

Her comment reflects the pressure teachers like the participants in this study are currently feeling to be accountable, especially when regulated and evaluated by organisations which redefine the “belief in high levels of individual autonomy and self-regulation of professional work performance” traditional in the teaching profession as “a very weak culture of performance management in schools” (Educational Review Office, 1996, p. 21). To a certain extent, teachers like Annette are taking this technical view of accountability on board, testifying to the fact that hegemony rests on the acceptance of the dominated majority (Apple & Weis, 1983, p. 19). Teachers, in their acceptance, are allowing their status and power to be dissolved in the current political environment. Also following Apple, Murfitt (1995, p. 4) agrees, pointing out that it has been the altruism and effort of teachers (and governing boards) which has made the logistics of recent reforms work, to the detriment of teachers’ status.

Hegemony, however, as Apple and Weis (p. 19) assert, is a “constant struggle,” and in the case of practice under the English Curriculum, the participants in this study are neither unwilling victims nor unaffected classroom hermits. Seven complex and interrelated factors play into this continuous process: Experience, Management Purposes, Consciousness of Professional Environment, Teacher Interests, Context Constraints, Students and Teacher Beliefs. Apple and Weis’s term is struggle; but because it allows for trade-off and selection, the one I choose to use in this study is negotiation. In formulating their classroom practice and responding to the English Curriculum, the eight participants here negotiate between the needs, rules, expectations and visions that make up each of these internal and external factors. This negotiation is the English Curriculum.

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CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

I came to New Zealand and this project knowing only that I wanted to talk with
teachers about how their classroom practice related to the English Curriculum. In
casting about for an appropriate way to do this, I soon found that qualitative
methodology spoke both to the topic and to my teaching and personality. Strauss and
Corbin (1990) point out that researchers come to the field with particular orientations
toward methodology because of personal background, conviction and training, and as
both Eisner (1991) and the contributors to Ely (1991, chap. 2 & 3) suggest, there is
much in teaching that speaks to a qualitative outlook and imagination. We are specialist
participants in human interaction, with training in observation and mediation between
the often competing perspectives of parents, students and the school. While Bogdan
and Biklen (1992, pp. 43-44) caution that there are important differences between
teachers and researchers, particularly in their purposes, Eisner asserts that “teaching is a
form of qualitative inquiry” (p. 6). As I continued to work with participants, gathering
and analysing data, my interest in qualitative methodology grew.

The qualitative perspective both felt natural to who I am--a teacher, woman and
researcher interested in person-centred, mutual becoming in my relationships with other
people--and heeded Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) warning that one’s research methods
be appropriate and true to the problem at hand, in this case understanding teachers’
points-of-view. I wanted to conduct the project from their perspectives, first because as
an American I was reticent to pass evaluative judgements on a group of teachers
functioning in a very different culture from my own, secondly because I felt it was not
my place to determine what more experienced colleagues should be doing in their
particular contexts, and finally because from my own experience being evaluated in the
classroom, I knew how arbitrary and damaging an uninformed outsider’s evaluation can
be. I felt like and wanted to engage in the research through more of a student or
apprentice learning role (Agar, 1980) rather than as a typical university researcher. This

25 Long before entering the research field, I had been interested in Carl Rogers’ theories of client-centred
therapy and their implications for teaching, learning and daily interaction (see Rogers, 1961, 1983). His
ideas on becoming, self and the realness requirements for effective helping relationships align well with
the qualitative perspective. I was not surprised to find that he had written about the application of his
psychoanalytic methods to social research (see Rogers, 1945).
entered into my eventual choice not to observe the research participants, as will be discussed later in this chapter.  

I found my methodological label in symbolic interactionism, a research perspective based on the assumption that human experience is constructed through the meanings we assign events and situations as we interact with and interpret them. As Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 36) put it, “meaning is conferred on” objects and events through a kind of meaning manufacturing process.

Where the educational technologist, for instance, will define a sixteen-millimeter projector as a device to be used by the teacher to show instructional films relevant to educational objectives, the teacher may define it as an object to entertain students when she runs out of work for them or when she is tired. . . . The meaning people give to their experience and their process of interpretation are essential and constitutive, not accidental or secondary to what the experience is. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 36)

WHO AM I?
MY GOALS, LENSES AND ROLE IN THE RESEARCH

My own experience and the meanings I make as a researcher are equally constructed through my interpretation of the participants’ language, actions and context. Because in qualitative methodology the researcher is the research instrument and research is seen as an interpretative act, I remain in the text throughout its presentation as an interpreter, sometime participant and learner (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

With the participants, I was both a fellow teacher and a foreigner, and as such, I was privileged to have simultaneous insider and outsider roles, which allowed teachers to open up with me as they would with another teacher while still having to explain basic things about New Zealand school culture and structure, for example the function of departmental schemes in the overall school curriculum and the workings of national and school-wide assessment programs. This position was useful, but also fraught with potential for me as a teacher to make assumptions about what I heard and saw based on my own classroom experience. For example, when Lisa sent me the grade-level book lists in her department handbook, I assumed those were a kind of constraint on her teaching. In my teaching experience, book lists defined exactly what books were

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26 Following Dewey, Eisner (1990, chap. 5) suggests that, as educational researchers, we function as critics and therefore can and must evaluate the value of what we see. “If we do not know what we have, there is no way of knowing what direction we ought to take. If we can’t tell if we are moving ahead or backward, we are without both a rudder and a compass. In short, we are paralyzed” (p. 100). My research stance is that of a learner. Learners make judgements, but those judgements are at all times context-bound and provisional. They are judgements more for reflection than for evaluation. It is important to keep this idea in mind, though I think Eisner would agree that this does not diverge so radically from his conception of an educational critic. The distinction was and is made for myself and the purposes of my work.
allowed to be taught at each grade level and they were strictly enforced because my school district did not want the books students encountered in different classes to overlap. I had always felt constrained by those lists and I assumed Lisa would as well. However, during our second meeting, when she saw that I had coded the book lists as a kind of contextual constraint, she pointed out that this was inappropriate. The lists she had given me were general guides and teachers were accustomed and allowed to pull from other class level lists, depending on what was available (Log, p. 285).

Carr (1995, p. 43) says that "just as educational practice cannot be undertaken without practitioners thinking about (and hence theorising about) what they are doing, so it cannot be observed by educational theorists in a theory-neutral way." I would expand Carr's observation in pointing out that this is probably even more true when it is a secondary teacher, a practitioner, observing or listening to another teacher. Throughout the research process, I was constantly reminded of my own assumptions as I talked about my work with University colleagues, other postgraduate students and project participants. Ely (1991) suggests that a log, including analytic memos, develops as a source of data, meta-data and inspiration, but also helps researchers become more objective by forcing them to become more aware of the "eyeglasses" through which they view the world. The Negotiating Project Log grew to over four hundred pages in the process of doing this. Per Ely's suggestion, the goal was not to become completely objective, as that is not really possible, but simply more objective (pp. 53-54).

While every detail of the information and analysis contained in this thesis cannot possibly align exactly with the participants' thoughts and interpretations, feedback through informal conversations and the final check-back meetings helped me make certain that I was not imposing my own view over their perspectives. At the same time, my goal is not to present participants' words without interpretation or inference (which even in the selection of excerpts would be impossible), but to build theory based on accurate description (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, pp. 20-22). The participants' experience is reconstructed in both my interpretation and presentation, just as it was reconstructed in their own minds as they spoke about it.

Not only did I approach participants and the research field as a symbolic interactionist, a teacher and an outsider, I came as a classroom-oriented educationalist like Eisner (1991, p. 2) with the ultimate aim of positively influencing the teaching/learning environment. I wanted this project to be for them, the teacher participants, rather than for my own academic ends (Log, p. 8), though in the beginning I could not have defined how it was theirs or what they could have gained from the
project. Trust is an important issue in this regard. I chose to believe that the participants presented their reality as they saw it. At academic conferences, especially those in the United States, I have noticed that educational researchers seem to have an excess of scepticism, to the point that they seem to choose to disbelieve what the teachers they study say. In search of non-existent "ontological and procedural objectivity" (Newell’s terms,\(^\text{27}\) cited in Eisner, 1991, see pp. 43-47 for discussion), triangulation is used because it is felt that teachers cannot represent their reality accurately. Therefore, what they say must be verified in some way, preferably it seems through the researcher observing the teacher's practice. For instance, in a symposium on professional development at the 1997 Ethnography in Education Conference, Shaw (1997) asserted that his teacher respondent, Deborah, did not tell him the truth about the effects of a professional development course on her teaching. This was because when Shaw observed her teaching, he did not see Deborah enacting what he said she had been taught, though he acknowledged Deborah probably believed she was enacting what she thought she had been taught. Other elements, like administration and testing pressure, that may have entered into the supposed discrepancy between Deborah’s espoused and actual practice were barely noted. Shaw saw what he wanted to see. In one example of what he termed the difference between “rhetoric” and “reality,” he pointed out that Deborah told him she has her students write about personal feelings. However, when Shaw observed Deborah teaching, he observed that the reality was “students are encouraged to write fictional stories apart from personal feelings.” The example he gave was a situation in which one of Deborah’s students, Corey, was upset about a story written by another student in which some girls beat boys during a baseball game, and Deborah told Corey that the story was fictional. Shaw said this was an instance where Deborah did not follow her rhetoric of supporting student writing about personal feelings. His analysis, however, was simplistic. Deborah may believe that students should be encouraged to write about personal feelings directly rather than through fiction, but that in Corey’s case, other factors than this espoused belief were important. In his classroom observation, Shaw described his own reality more than he did Deborah’s.

In my experience, the need to verify what teachers say they do and believe does not seem to be questioned. During the same symposium, Laub (1997) presented a study in which he talked with three teachers about changes in their beliefs and practices after participation in a summer writing institute, and ended his study by saying that it was

critical that he find out if the beliefs they espoused would actually translate into classroom practice. My paper (Morrison, 1997b) was questioned for the same reason. How did I know my participants were telling the truth?

Following Rorty’s28 idea that correspondence between the world and those who study it is dependent upon the inquirers’ perceptions, the idea of one objective truth is unacceptable. A researcher’s representation is only “a mirror to nature” (cited in Eisner, 1991, p. 44). Popper’s29 “fallibilist” position supports this as well. His “view is that we can never verify the truth of a claim, we can only refute it, and even then, never completely” (cited in Eisner, 1991, p. 45). I have already pointed out how a researcher’s observations are problematic. Researchers (and teachers) see what they know through their existent “structures of appropriation” (Eisner, 1991, p. 46).30

Lofland and Lofland (1984, p. 37) say that if one is researching people who want to talk about the issue at hand and who seem to have little reason to lie, then disbelieving one’s participants unnecessarily complicates the research process. While there were incidents where the participants, like anyone, worked to present themselves in the best light (Log, p. 194, p. 276) and resolve inconsistencies in what they said, I had no reason to assume they would purposely present themselves falsely. My position was one of trust and faith combined with the self-conscious scepticism of a new researcher.

As a classroom-oriented educationalist and a teacher, I am interested in supporting teachers and do not intend to use teachers as a scapegoat for the ills of society, government or the school system. Teachers are an easy target, as demonstrated by Christopher Woodhead, Great Britain’s Chief Inspector of Schools, when while discussing the educational problems experienced by his country’s primary school children, he blames their failure entirely on the failure of teachers to teach (1995, p. 19). I wanted to be sure that my work did not inadvertently become fodder for political entities whose interests and concerns obviously do not include the welfare and support of teachers (Log, p. 219). Tripp (1988) warns that educational researchers often inadvertently contribute to the stigmatisation of teachers in the current hostile environment surrounding the profession, as a result acting as limiting agents of the professional status of the teachers they study. While I do not think teachers are without blame or immune from responsibility for mistakes and poor action, as I conducted this research and communicated with participants, even as I write up the

research findings, I am aware of the political implications of the information I present (Log, p. 226). Rather than blaming and punishing, I think we can understand teachers' actions and beliefs in more constructive ways. In the end, this will lead to better and, in human terms, less costly interventions than stricter teacher registration requirements, dismissal for perceived incompetence or performance pay.

METHODOLOGICAL INFLUENCES, GENERALISABILITY AND THE LITERATURE

This project was structured and considered in light of a symbolic interactionist framework with the goal of positive action and participant ownership. At the same time and appropriately, Negotiating also aligns with grounded theory as set forth by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967; see also Strauss and Corbin, 1990). “A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). I use the word “aligns” because while the study was not designed according to Glaser and Strauss’s detailed and fairly exact research prescription, their work was a major influence as I set about data collection and analysis. Negotiating deviates from grounded theory in two ways. First, I did not use their notion of “theoretical sampling,” in which data situations (documents to be read, people to be interviewed and contexts to be observed) are sampled according to the continual emergence of theory from data gathered previously. Secondly, because of its condensed time frame, the phases of the research behind this study were conducted in more discrete units than the interwoven process of data gathering, category creation and analysis (grounded theory is often called the “constant comparative method”) required in grounded theory.

At the same time and perhaps more important than how it deviates, the work behind Negotiating was built upon the idea derived from grounded theory that, while the researcher enters the field with a certain amount of “theoretical sensitivity” (knowledge of, interest in, awareness of and/or questions about meaning generated from professional background, personal experience, reading or previous research analysis) (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, chap. 3), a theory or research question is not imposed upon the field, but emerges from and is grounded in what is examined. In addition, this study aligns with grounded theory in its ends, application of the theory produced to the situation studied. For Glaser and Strauss, successful application is a theory’s “further test and validation” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 244) and gives participants a “broader guide” for their everyday, common sense actions, perhaps helping them to navigate
those actions more effectively (p. 248). Eisner offers a caveat on this idea of a guide--generalisations are a guide, but at the same time, generalisations from any type of research in education can only be a guide because "the conditional quality of educational life, its high degree of context specificity, is formidable. What this means for practice and for the uses of research is that in most settings generalisations derived from research are not likely to be taken as gospel" (Eisner, 1991, p. 204).

"Generalisations in education, whether produced through statistical studies or through case studies, need to be treated as tentative guides, as ideas to be considered, not as prescriptions to be followed" (p. 209). Indeed, it is the reader who ultimately determines the generalisability of a theory or description to her own context (p. 204). I cannot say for certain that the Model presented here will be generalisable to every teacher in every teaching situation. However, unless I generalise (recognising that it is not a statistical generalisation based on random sampling), unless I say this probably will apply--thereby asking each reader "does it apply to you?"--then the work offers nothing more than a description. In any event, Eisner points out that the tendency to generalise, to make connections, is basic to the human make-up. Generalisation cannot be prevented. Negotiating offers its generalisations for thought and reflection, with the warning that this was a study conducted with nine teachers, including myself, in one area during one year.

Ultimately, Glaser and Strauss's principles of grounded theory made me aware of the criteria or canons of "good" science as they are seen and redefined in qualitative research, including significance, compatibility between theory and observation (in this case between theory and what is heard), generalisability, precision, rigor and verification (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Negotiating observes each of these criteria, in a way appropriate to the complexities and realities of qualitative research, through the rigorous analysis and theory-building procedures, check-back meetings with participants and triangulation described in this chapter.

Strauss and Corbin include the canon "reproducibility" in their list of requirements for good science. Though they deny the possibility of experimental replicability, they say that "given the same theoretical perspective of the original researcher and following the same general rules for data gathering and analysis, plus a similar set of conditions, another investigator should be able to come up with the same theoretical explanation about the given phenomenon" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In light of my own experience and Eisner's comments above, I disagree with this concept
of reproducibility and argue that it is not even worth mentioning in light of the transitory nature of qualitative work in a complex social/psychological environment like education.

THE LITERATURE

I would like to end this section with a brief note on uses of the literature within this study. *Negotiating* was not founded on theories or questions derived from the literature, though in the course of the work, the literature has played a number of roles: stimulating my own theoretical sensitivity, often providing suggestions for approaching the data and field, and helping in the generation of questions and reflection (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, chap. 4). Appropriately, most of the literature cited in this study fulfils these roles by serving as contextual and methodological background to the project. For a researcher new both to the setting and methodology involved in *Negotiating the New Zealand English Curriculum*, this function was vital. I was not concerned as much with using the literature as a source of validation for the data, although researchers like Cuban (1986, 1984), Borg (1996), Munby (1986, 1983, 1982) and others provided an important source for reflection. Most importantly, the data embodied in these pages are primary. Because of this priority and because it was not used as a source of secondary validation, I will not present a traditional literature review as part of my methodology. The literature cited in this study is left appropriately contextualised in the body of the work.

THE PARTICIPANTS

Ten potential Canterbury participants were suggested by my supervisor, Elody Rathgen, an established Christchurch-based teacher educator, to provide the study with a variety of viewpoints and contexts, based on her knowledge of the possible participating teachers through contact at the Christchurch College of Education and her work in local high schools through on-site professional development programs. We did not talk about why she suggested the participants she did until several months later after the initial interviews had been completed, at which time I discovered that I saw these teachers very differently than she (Log, pp. 87-89). I also interpreted their words and actions very differently. For example, after reading Margaret and Lisa’s transcripts and noting how they seemed unwilling or unable to articulate a coherent philosophy, Elody posited that this might be a result of teacher insecurity. My other supervisor, Alison

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31 The authors base their discussion on the scientific “canons” presented by S. Gortner and P. Schultz in their 1988 article, “Approaches to Nursing Science Methods” (*Image*, 20, 22-23).
Gilmore, suggested that perhaps this was because they were too busy living and teaching their philosophies to articulate them. Though I had noted their hesitation, my opinion was that Margaret and Lisa seemed as articulate as most of the teachers I've known, and perhaps as articulate as I would be myself under the same circumstances (Log, p. 72). Each of us, Elody, Alison and myself, were evaluating the participants from our own professional and personal backgrounds and with particular ways of “seeing.” The dialogue and subsequent reflection on assumptions this produced became a part of the study’s triangulation.

After the initial contact by mail, two of the ten teachers, both HODs, declined to participate because of time pressure, one stating in regard to his department, “we feel we haven’t sufficiently got our heads around the new curriculum statement to be of help” (Log, opening records). One of the teachers contacted never responded. Margaret was not contacted by mail. I met her informally before the research got underway, and she agreed to act as a guinea pig for my first interview of the study.

All of the teachers who eventually participated came to the study with a relatively positive perspective on the English Curriculum. Thus, this is not a study about those who disagree with the principles of the English Curriculum. It describes the relationship between the English Curriculum and classroom practice in a group of teachers who are open to its student-centred philosophy. In other work, I examine the Model as it relates to a group of American teachers working under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STW). One of the teachers in this American group did disagree with the STW curriculum, but this negative example worked to support and extend the Model rather than refute it (Morrison, 1997a & 1997b).

All of the participants are Pakeha, though not all teach in predominantly Pakeha schools. I would have liked to have included one or preferably more Maori perspectives in the study and worked to that end, but was not successful. There are two possible reasons for this. First, while Maori make up approximately 13% of the entire population, only 5.5% of all secondary teachers in New Zealand are Maori (Ministry of Education Research & Statistics Division, 1992). On the South Island, that percentage becomes even smaller, and in Christchurch, it becomes minuscule. Secondly, beyond these kinds of statistics, Hillary and Maui Mitchell’s (1993) study of Maori teachers documents the many resource, advocacy and disciplinary roles they are expected and forced to play in their schools and communities, as well as the pressure those roles generate, often causing Maori teachers to leave the profession. In Christchurch, where Maori teachers are fewer, these types of pressures would be even more intense. It is
telling, perhaps, that the one teacher who did not respond to my initial inquiry was a Maori teacher of English.

Brief profiles of each participant follow. Unless otherwise noted, participants do not hold PR positions.\footnote{PR positions are Positions of Responsibility. Each school organises this system differently, but generally the range of administrative responsibility runs from a PR1 to HOD, which would be like a PR4. Typically, teachers with PR positions will receive an extra planning period or two, depending on the school and amount of responsibility their position requires.} Class sizes for all participants, except Margaret who for all but two class periods teaches Reading to students on a more individual basis, generally range from twenty-five to thirty students (although seventh form classes tend to have from ten to twenty students). Most participants trained in Christchurch and all, except Margaret, were full-time teachers at the time of the study. Margaret was considered a part-time teacher because she did not carry a full class load; however, she worked the same number of hours as a full-time teacher and participated in all departmental meetings and projects.

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

At the time of the study, ANNETTE had been teaching fourteen years. She started teaching in 1976 at her current school, a public girls’ secondary school where the approximately 920 students are drawn from a moderate to high-income population. After four years, Annette left to have children. Ten years ago she returned and has worked up to a PR2 position which encompasses assessment responsibilities in her department; thus she is very aware of and knowledgeable about unit standards and concerned about assessment of the English Curriculum. Her experience is primarily with academically motivated female students. In recent years, she has had increasing experience with ESOL\footnote{ESOL refers students who are English Speakers of Other Languages. Another term used by participants in this regard was NESB, which refers to students of Non-English Speaking Backgrounds. I have not attempted to make use of these terms consistent throughout the thesis. Instead, I present the terms as they were used by each individual participant.} students. Annette trained with The Statement of Aims and returned to teaching with the Draft and the English Curriculum. She has not undergone the Advisory Service English Curriculum training. Two teachers in her Department received the training and their reports were so negative that no one else was sent. Annette feels this is unfortunate and that those teachers were negative toward the training because they were negative toward the English Curriculum.

CHRISTOPHER is a relatively new teacher with two years’ experience in the classroom. He has a PhD in English and lectured at University for a year (in addition to spending a year as a community centre worker) before entering Teachers’ College.
After his training, he joined the staff of his current high school, a large public co-ed institution of approximately 1000 students, of which about 20% are Maori and 20% are Polynesian, mainly Samoan. Most students at his school have lower socio-economic backgrounds. Christopher's high school experience is with these students, students who "are generally not academic and not interested in academics" (Log, p. 340), although he also worked with academically-motivated university undergraduates during his term as lecturer at University. He underwent his teacher training with the English Curriculum and attended the Advisory Service English Curriculum training.

**LAURA** entered the teaching profession in 1978. She has been an English teacher with her current school for seven years. Laura's school is a large, co-ed public secondary school (800 students) where approximately 20% of the entire student population is ESOL, and each of her classes contains two to four of these ESOL students. She started teaching at a very large rural secondary school of approximately 1600 students, moved to a small North Canterbury country school which included kindergarten to seventh form and eventually came to her current school. She has had experience with "tough, country kids," middle-class conservative students, working class students and ESOL students. Laura went through her teacher education with *The Statement of Aims* and has had experience with both the Draft and the English Curriculum. She did attend the Advisory Service English Curriculum training.

**LISA** started teaching in 1989 and holds a PR1 position as Dean of the Third Form at her current school, a large co-ed secondary school of 1150 students with predominantly middle-class Pakeha backgrounds. "People regard [my school] as having pretty good kids, though not the cream kids academically" (Log, p. 339). She has had some experience with ESOL students, and started out in Teachers' College with *The Statement of Aims*. She participated in a discussion course on the Draft and has not received the Advisory Service English Curriculum training, though through three teachers in her Department who were sent, she learned and decided that "it was a waste of time" (Log, p. 339). Two years ago, however, she attended a development course on the Draft.

**MARGARET** began teaching in 1968. She is currently the Reading teacher at Laura's school. Other teachers in her department refer students with reading difficulties to her and she works and assesses them on an individual basis. She also teaches one fifth form English class and one ESOL class. During her twenty-nine year career, between periods of having children and being a mother, she has taught in a variety of schools, from single-sex rural girls' schools of about 450 students to larger, co-ed,
suburban public schools like the one where she currently teaches. In all, she has worked in six schools which draw from a variety of socio-economic areas, and has worked with students in a range of abilities, from “able” to “not able” (Log, p. 335). She has a significant amount of experience with ESOL students, especially in her current situation, but does not teach many Maori or Polynesian students. During her career, she has experienced work with The Statement of Aims, the Draft and the English Curriculum, but has not participated in the Advisory Service English Curriculum training.

At the time of the study, PETER had been teaching for fourteen years. He spent three years at a large, public co-ed secondary school where the student population was “a mixture of working class and kids from the hill suburbs” (Log, p. 337), then moved to a small, private girls’ school in London, and after coming back to New Zealand, settled at his current school, a public co-ed secondary institution with a student population of approximately 2100 that draws its students from “state housing to affluent areas” (Log, p. 337). At the time of this writing, Peter just accepted a PR2 position as assistant to the HOD at another school. He has had experience with Polynesian students and the “demanding” student/parent clientele of an affluent, private school. Peter began his teacher training with The Statement of Aims and has received the Advisory Service English Curriculum training.

SUSANNE has been teaching for six years. She started at a large co-ed, public school of 2100 students and then moved to her current situation, a smaller private girls’ school where she has a PR1 acting as the head of junior English. She went through her teacher training with the Draft and has received the Advisory Service English Curriculum training.

THERESA entered the profession after a number of years working in social welfare as a child support maintenance prosecutor for the Crown. Though she has only been teaching for seven years, she is HOD of a mid-size public school of about 550 that draws its students from a lower socio-economic area. “We tap into some very poor and Polynesian areas, but have a steady core of working and middle class parents” (Log, p. 338). She began her teaching career at a large, progressive public school with alternative programs for older students who were unsuccessful in traditional educational contexts. Therefore, she has experience teaching both adults and adolescents, as well as
NESB\textsuperscript{34} students. Theresa has experience with the Draft and has received the Advisory Service English Curriculum training.

All participants were interviewed for one to two hours each at their schools, except Theresa whose interview was conducted in her home because she was ill on the scheduled day. Interviews were conducted during the period from 15 May to 19 June, 1996 (the New Zealand public school year generally runs from February to November in four terms; consequently, interviews were conducted during the middle of the school year).

THE INTERVIEWS

As I’ve already suggested, verification by observation seems to be a kind of automatic knee jerk response in educational research. Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that qualitative researchers who seek that kind of “compulsive scientism” simply do not trust themselves (p. 227). Perhaps researchers like Shaw (1997) and Laub (1997) give in to observation as a supposed objective verification because they are thinking in a positivistic, quantitative manner while using qualitative methods and espousing a qualitative perspective. This is the same split between rhetoric and reality that Shaw observes in his teacher respondent, yet he is completely unaware of it in his own work. That in itself is a blow to the credibility and coherence of his work. I do consider triangulation important, however, and achieved it by a variety of means, as I will discuss in a moment. In this study, in-class observation was simply not appropriate for the goals or nature of the research.

Never having interviewed in a university research context, I embarked on the first interview, Margaret’s, with an extensive interview schedule of twenty-nine rather complex questions (Log, pp. 259-260), but soon abandoned it in favour of a simple interview guide (Lofland & Lofland, 1984) which evolved from interview to interview.

The guide acted as a kind of reminder sheet for me as we progressed during the interviews. Evolution of the guide usually centred around issues that would come up with one interview that I wanted to ask about in the next interview. For example, during her interview Annette mentioned what she thought the English Curriculum developers wanted to see happen with the English Curriculum, so by the next interview with Laura, I had added “implementation expectations” to my guide (Log, p. 42-Z1). In this way, I

\textsuperscript{34} NESB refers to students of Non-English Speaking Backgrounds. Another term used by participants in this regard was ESOL, which refers students who are English Speakers of Other Languages. I have not attempted to make use of these terms consistent throughout the thesis. Instead, I present the terms as they were used by each individual participant.
pursued what Lofland and Lofland (1984, p. 53) call “puzzlements,” suggestions, comments or situations I found problematic or interesting. Because I wanted to gain insight into the participants’ perspectives and saw myself more as a learner, I wanted to keep my intrusion in their talk to a minimum. However, because my questions and comments kept the participants’ talk focused on the topics outlined on the interview guide—the what and why of their practice, the English Curriculum, the English Curriculum training, their teacher training and so on—the interviews were never completely unstructured. In addition, I brought and used “The Characteristics of Learning and Teaching in English” (Ministry of Education, 1994, pp. 10-12) as a focal point for discussing the principles of the English Curriculum. Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 97) say that with semi-structured interviews the researcher is able to access comparable data across subjects, but loses the opportunity to observe how the subjects themselves would structure the material at hand. How would the participants have structured their talk about the English Curriculum? Better yet, would they have talked about the English Curriculum at all?

As the interviews progressed and culminated after data analysis in the check-back meetings, my relationship with participants and the nature of our research contact changed. Although in the beginning I had defined myself as a learner and a fellow teacher, I was not necessarily conducting myself as another teacher would. Because of my research purposes and because I was being careful not to lead or coerce the opinions expressed by participants, I was keeping myself out of the conversation as much as possible (Log, p. 29, p. 35), even at those times when I wanted to challenge practices and assumptions I heard articulated by participants (Log, p. 36). If I were actually being a teacher, I would have challenged those assumptions. In addition, if I did not challenge or contribute or make the interviews into something more than simply one of my many data-feeds, what could the participants possibly get out of the research process? Eventually, I decided to let myself into the interviews, not aggressively, but enough to stimulate participants to unpack mental baggage and reflect on their teaching (Log, p. 36). In the process, I found myself doing the same. The interviews became “interactive” (Ellis, Kiesinger & Tillman-Healy, 1997) and thus transformative (Log, p. 246).

I was acting as what Goetz and LeCompte (1984, p. 99) term a “cultural broker,” someone who acts as an intermediary between several groups, “each of whose actions or motivations need to be explained to the other.” Schensul, Schensul, Gonzales and
Caro\textsuperscript{35} call this “boundary spanning” (cited in Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 99). In boundary spanning, the researcher must actively participate in many cultures while maintaining both the recognition of legitimate membership in one group as well as the ability to operate at the margins of other groups without losing credibility (p. 100). I achieved this kind of boundary spanning by making my intentions and role explicit to participants, opening my Log to them when appropriate, sharing my theorising, and reflecting on my own learning with them; thus I was able to span my roles as teacher, student/apprentice, American, and university researcher. At all times, however, I was a researcher, constantly standing outside myself and outside the participants—comparing, noticing, questioning, reflecting and theorising with the Project Log and my conversations with colleagues in the university setting.

**CREDIBILITY REVISITED: TRIANGULATION**

Observation as a form of triangulation was unjustifiable and inappropriate to this study, first because it is a study conducted from the participants’ perspectives and secondly because the notion of an objective truth is a myth. Further, triangulation of any form for the purposes of pinpointing an objective truth is absurd if what is targeted does not exist. Denzin’s idea of methodological triangulation,\textsuperscript{36} a common form of triangulation in educational studies, is based on the assumption that the bias inherent in any one individual or method will be cancelled out in convergence upon an objective truth with other individuals or methods (cited in Mathison, 1988, p. 14). Mathison asserts that this is ungrounded.

Triangulation is the methodological counterpart to intersubjective agreement and, just as with individuals, reliability is confused with validity. The evidence produced by different methods might be different because of bias in the measures but it is also possible that different methods tap different domains of knowing. Until the argument that bias cancels itself out in a multi-method design is more fully explicated, there seems little reason to pursue a triangulation strategy based on this assumption. (Mathison, 1988, p. 14)

Suffice to say that triangulation in this study was not used for the purposes of converging upon some kind of ontological reality. Triangulation is important for other reasons. Mathison suggests that it can be a tool used by the researcher to make sense of the phenomenon studied; it is constitutive. Eisner (1991, p. 53) suggests that triangulation is important in research design for internal coherence. In experience


where there is no pure objectivity or subjectivity, coherence, along with consensus and instrumental utility, determine the believability of a qualitative account. Triangulation, or "structural corroborations," through "multiple sources of evidence or recurrence of instances that support a conclusion" (p. 55), contribute to the reader's sense of coherence, or feeling that the research is consistent and without flaws. Eisner likens this sense to what Nelson Goodman\(^{37}\) has called "rightness," a kind of fit with experience that makes it right whether or not it is actually true by scientific definition (cited in Eisner, 1991, p. 54). For Goodman, truth is actually only one category of rightness. Ely (1991, p. 93) talks about this kind of rightness or sense of coherence in terms of establishing "trustworthiness," which involves the researcher's personal belief system and how that system shapes the research procedures. I hope to generate trustworthiness in the presentation of Negotiating in part by spending the time and space here making my thinking, beliefs and methodology apparent to readers.

For me, the notions of coherence, rightness and trustworthiness make sense in light of the absence of absolute objectivity. If a researcher self-consciously questions the data, verifying hypotheses and hunches, triangulation in one form or another will be built into the data gathering process. As Miles and Huberman\(^{38}\) suggest, "triangulation is a state of mind" (cited in Mathison, 1988, p. 16). Negotiating incorporated a number of self-conscious triangulation methods.

First, data triangulation over time was used (see Ely, 1991, p. 97; Denzin as cited by Mathison, 1988, p. 14). Because we met for fairly brief periods of time, the participants related their experiences in a temporal context. In effect, they presented slices of their experience when I talked with them. In the time between those slices, some meanings would have changed while others stabilised. For example, Margaret had mentioned a number of context constraints in our initial interview, but she did not talk about other department members as a kind of constraint on her teaching. In fact, she seemed to go out of her way to point out the co-operation and collegiality that existed within her department. In contrast, when I mentioned context constraints while explaining the developing Model eight months later, her response was "Oh, I suppose you'll be looking at how some teachers cause problems in departments" (Log, p. 332). Perhaps other teachers who cause problems are a continual kind of constraint for Margaret, but I suspect that she may have mentioned it because she experienced


problems with other staff during the latter part of the school year and it was in the forefront of her mind when we spoke the second time.

Because of change over time, a number of qualitative specialists, especially those involved in ethnographic fieldwork, note the importance of spending a significant amount of time in the field with their subject for establishing credibility. This is one of the claims used to privilege fieldwork as a methodology over intensive interviewing (Kleinman, Stenrose & McMahon, 1994). Even so, I do not consider it a weakness in Negotiating, given its time constraints, that I spent between two and ten hours with each participant, formally and/or informally, in face-to-face situations. I sought to bridge the time gap, not only by basing the check-back meetings on previously submitted data, but by writing up and sending each participant their own comprehensive belief statement generated from the data I collected. I asked them to make appropriate changes and return them, and while every participant returned their statement, few were marked or changed significantly. The participants seemed to feel that the statements represented them well...at the time of the initial data collection as well as seven months later when they read the statements.

Secondly, data triangulation was achieved by using several data sources in the study: interviews with participants, school documents like departmental schemes and syllabi, as well as interviews with key figures in the English Curriculum process and debate. The key figures I worked with included Mike Fowler, an English professional development facilitator with the Advisory Service, Ewen Holstein and Elizabeth Gordon, two of the original English Curriculum developers, and Sharon Ellis (ERO). Results of the data analysis were checked with Ellis and Fowler. In most cases, school documents were coded along with the participant interview transcripts, but interviews with key figures, due to time constraints, were used as a form of reflection, suggestion or negation in the development of the Model from project data.

Finally, investigator triangulation was used in two ways. Interview transcripts were read and commented upon by my supervisors, Alison Gilmore, a quantitative specialist in school assessment, and Elody Rathgen, an established teacher educator philosophically grounded in feminist poststructuralism. Just as Grant (1991) and Gudmundsdottir (1991; see also Shulman, 1991; Hall & Grant, 1991; Clark, 1991) interpreted and portrayed the same teacher respondent, Susan Hall, in different ways according to their researcher lenses, so Elody, Alison and I interpreted these participants differently. We each found different puzzles and drew different conclusions through our individual educational lenses, leading to significant reflection on the data
and in effect harnessing each other for triangulation. In addition, investigator triangulation was achieved with the help of the Qualitative Research Support Group (QRSG), a university-wide group of postgraduate students at the University of Canterbury concurrently working on qualitative research projects. In one instance, I brought the categories I developed during my initial data analysis and asked my colleagues to divide into groups and arrange the categories into frameworks for analysis. Each group developed a different kind of framework, which we then discussed, compared and contrasted with the others, including my own. The QRSG provided an invaluable source of feedback and constructive criticism for the project.

DATA ANALYSIS

STEP 1: FAMILIES

I started the data analysis phase with Margaret’s transcript. Initial break-down of her transcript was completed using Bogdan and Biklen’s “coding families” (1991, pp. 166-172), general groups focused on certain symbolic interactionist types of meaning, such as Setting/Context, Definition of the Situation, Subjects’ Ways of Thinking About People and Objects, Process and Activity. Bogdan and Biklen offer these families as a way for their readers to begin considering categories, but I used the families as a way of breaking the data out of Margaret’s transcript into “analysable chunks” (Log, p. 75) while focusing on the meaning she created rather than just on the superficial events, terminology and reality she described (Log, p. 75). Though it may not have been absolutely necessary, I modified Bogdan and Biklen’s families to fit this study. My families included Strategies, School/Department, Students, Teaching, Change, Context, Curriculum, Implementation, Position and Methods (see Appendix A for a description of each family). At least 90% of the transcript contents were broken out and distributed among the families, and the same sections of data were often placed in different families.

Using this families strategy was also an effective way for me to slow down the process of analysis and keep myself from narrowing down too quickly, thereby allowing the meaning to emerge and take shape slowly and deeply (Log, p. 59).

39 Before beginning analysis, I thought that perhaps I would work with the transcripts in pairs. I was thinking of the data as one, large neutral entity that I could slice up any way I pleased, but that was not the case. Each participant is an individual in an individual context; therefore during analysis I worked to honour their individuality by treating each participant’s data set separately, to the greatest degree allowed by my time constraints.
STEP 2: CREATING CATEGORIES FROM FAMILIES

Once Margaret’s transcript was broken into the ten families, it was as if for Margaret I had ten separate transcripts, each focused around a kind of meaning theme. I read each of the family documents, noting possible categories, or conceptual labels for the information I saw. This stage of data analysis was similar to what Strauss and Corbin (1990, chap. 5) call “open coding” where the data is broken down and conceptualisation begins. I found that the initial use of families was important during this stage because as I developed categories, I might “name” the same section of data differently depending on how meaning was construed in the family where I found it (Log, p. 85). Also, the boundaries of data sections changed during this time. A section dissected from the original transcript and placed in a family would then probably be dissected again as parts of it were labelled as categories. At the end of this stage, I had a list of 74 categories for Margaret (Log, pp. 79-82) (see Appendix B). I then applied the family/category break-down strategy separately to Annette and Peter’s interview transcripts. Annette emerged with 69 categories (Log, pp. 188-190) and Peter with 37 categories (Log, pp. 191-192). The diminishing number of categories may have had to do with the fact that as I moved from Margaret to Annette I began to treat the categories as labels for a related group of concepts instead of seeing each concept as a discrete category. For example, instead of treating the concepts “Inconsistency of English Curriculum,” “Not a Strong Lead” and “Problems with English Curriculum Assessment” as separate categories as I would have with Margaret, I grouped them all under the single category “Problems with English Curriculum/Document” while categorising Annette. As I moved through the process, I became more focused and could see more of the connections in the data (Log, p. 194). In any case, as I categorised the data from the families, I was paying particular attention to what participants assumed and took for granted, the inner dynamics of their thinking, models and negative cases of how things do or do not work, continuums, ideas with list-able properties or dimensions, special vocabulary, repetitions, patterns and common-sense knowledge (Log, p. 79).

STEP 3: COMPREHENSIVE CATEGORY GROUPS

I deliberately chose to analyse Margaret, Annette and Peter’s transcripts first: Margaret because she was the first in the interview process and perhaps the most
unfocused, Peter because his interview fell in the middle of data collection phase and because he gave more negative examples than other participants, and Annette because her interview fell toward the end and she was probably the most articulate and knowledgeable person I met in regard to teaching under the English Curriculum (Log, p. 193). After each of the three participant’s data sets had undergone the categorisation stage, I combined their individual categories into the eighteen comprehensive category groups listed below (Log, p. 195-197), being careful not to group them back into the families. This stage of analysis was similar to what Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 96, see chap. 7) call “axial coding” where “data are put back together in new ways after coding, by making connections between the categories.” This process involved cutting up each of Margaret, Annette and Peter’s category lists and moving them around on a flat surface until the eighteen category groups came together. Only duplicates of the original categories or category properties were discarded, but a special point was made to keep the problematic categories, the ones that did not seem to fit (Log, p. 209).

**CATEGORY GROUPS**

Developed from Margaret, Annette and Peter’s Categories and Subcategories

- Department Implementation/Use of the English Curriculum
- Teaching the New Content
- Feelings/Opinions on New English Curriculum
- English Curriculum Problem Areas
- Teacher Resistance/Acceptance
- Schemes/Common Tests
- When Teachers Have Changed Their Practice or Thinking
- Limitations on Departmental Implementation and Classroom Practice
- “Inside Determiners” of Practice
- Experts
- Speaking for Self/Teacher Autonomy
- Unit Standards
- The English Curriculum is Not New/Practice Has Not Changed
- “Dressing”/Adapting New to Old
- Current Feelings and Frustrations
- Draft
- Teachers’ College and Early Experiences
- Methodology

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40 Compared with the rest of the participants, Margaret’s interview lacked intensity and focus. However, I found that Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 92) are correct in saying that “even a bad interview contributes something” when Margaret’s data set generated 74 categories.
"Inside Determiners of Practice" was the largest group by far and contained those categories and subcategories about elements located within participants that seemed to influence and determine practice--attitudes about students, awareness and definitions of student needs, personal beliefs, etc. (Log, p. 196).

STEP 4: BUILDING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

At this point, I felt I needed a direction and wanted to see how all the category groups fit together, so I developed a simple flow chart connecting the category groups in a way that I felt made sense (see Appendix C). Using the flow chart, possible theoretical frameworks were discussed with a number of colleagues and, as mentioned above, the QRSG was pulled into the process both as a form of triangulation and reflection on my own organisation and assumptions (Log, p. 202-208). Because so many of the categories and subcategories had to do with what determines participants' classroom practice, I came to see that classroom practice was at the heart of the data and almost everything, including problems and feelings about the English Curriculum, related to that practice. Based on this idea, I began building a detailed theoretical framework with all of Margaret, Annette and Peter's categories and subcategories. This was done by fitting all the hundreds of bits of paper (categories and subcategories) together one at a time. Where with a jigsaw puzzle, one often begins at the edges, I started at the centre around classroom practice. Again, no categories or subcategories were discarded during the process. I wanted to see it all put together after I was done, complete and without holes. Going back to Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 116, see chap. 8), this phase was like constructing the central "story" about the phenomenon studied. They call this part of analysis--defining the core category (in this case classroom practice) and relating all other categories and subcategories to it--"selective coding."

During this process I discovered that the same factors, inside and outside, that influence participants' classroom practice also influence their response to and use of the English Curriculum (Log, p. 210). The Model was the eventual distillation of this portion of the theoretical framework. While the Model was taking shape, for the first time I was able to see the entire picture and take the next step, theorising from conceptualised data. At this point, a problematic subcategory I had been shifting around--"No Philosophy But Should"--finally made sense. It had never quite fit with its category, "Teacher Philosophy," because it did not seem to impact classroom practice in the way that other subcategories in that category did. This subcategory was derived
from Annette’s data set. She had said that she did not have an overall teaching
philosophy, but that she probably should. Of course, she did have a philosophy, many
philosophies in truth (see Annette’s belief statement in Chapter 5), but I thought at that
point that perhaps it is simply the nature of classroom practice that teachers cannot
speak about a general philosophy (or hesitate to use the word “philosophy” at all).
There are too many factors involved in classroom practice; consequently, teachers are
forced to talk in specifics. In addition, perhaps there are too many factors that impinge
upon and affect a teacher’s philosophy to speak about it in a general way.\footnote{Interestingly, Carr (1995) discuss the split between theory and practice as an artificial construct created, in part, to disempower practitioners. As I have mentioned previously, Stephen Kemmis’s prologue is useful as an overview of the philosophical background to the division between practice and theory.} From this
realisation, observations on the nature of classroom practice, described fully in Chapter
3, came about (Log, p. 211).

Lastly, categories and subcategories in the category groups, “Department
Implementation/Use of the English Curriculum,” “Limitations on Departmental
Implementation and Classroom Practice,” “Experts,” “Dressing Up/Adapting New to
Old,” “Unit Standards” and “Current Feelings and Frustrations,” fed into the Model
through the departmental schemes developed as a result of English Curriculum
implementation. Much of this material provides the background for what participants
are actually doing in their classrooms and is handled as such in Chapter 1. Interestingly,
some categories and subcategories in “Limitations on Departmental Implementation and
Classroom Practice” broke out and entered the Model as “Context Constraints.”

STEP 5: GOING BACK AND CODING THE DATA

From the developing Model, I devised a list of new coding categories and
subcategories, which I then, approximately five months later, went back and applied to
the transcripts themselves, thus finally dividing the original transcripts into “codes.”
Codes are the discrete bits of data—quotes from transcripts, examples in school
documents, comments in the Project Log—that are organised (by category and
subcategory) and used in writing.\footnote{While Bogdan and Biklen (1992, pp. 165-183) provide a good overview and explanation of coding categories, their discussion of how those coding categories come about is vague. More importantly, they do not address how rigor can be built into the process of category creation and coding from those categories. In this, grounded theory provides an effective model (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss &
Corbin, 1990), though not one that should or even can be followed explicitly. As I see it, rigor,
credibility-validity and the stimulation of researcher reflection, often created by what I have called the} Margaret, Peter and Annette’s transcripts were
coded first, in the same order that categories had originally been elicited from them.
Then, all other participants’ transcripts were coded. As I moved from transcript to transcript, over a process of weeks, a number of new categories came to light, which were then incorporated into the Model. A list of the final categories and subcategories is given in Appendix D. It shows the categories and subcategories that were added during the final coding process. The resulting codes were stored in large envelopes by category for use in later stages of writing.43

STEP 6: CHECKING BACK

After the theoretical model had solidified, one to two-hour meetings were conducted with Lisa, Peter and Annette to make certain that the Model and situation as I was understanding and would present them were in line with participants’ views. This was done as a form of what Lincoln and Guba44 call “member checking” to ensure the validity and credibility of the results (cited in Ely, 1991, p. 165). I would have liked to have checked back with all participants, as this second meeting proved to be a significant and engaging form of reflection for both myself and the teachers participating in the project, but due to the time constraints of the project and participants’ busy schedules, that was not possible. Annette and Peter were chosen for the same reasons I coded their transcripts first and I asked Lisa for a second meeting because she represented one of the two youngest teachers, both of whom had trained under the English Curriculum at the Christchurch College of Education. At that point in time, I had not really had a chance to concentrate the research structure on their difference from the other participants and I wanted to do that to make certain any negative case or variation they might produce would come to light.

Interested in Michael Agar’s (1980, chap. 7) ideas about making informal ethnographic research more systematic, I formulated a short exercise designed to both test the validity of the Model and give me a chance to see how participants prioritised and thought about teaching in a hypothetical situation. First, I asked each check-back participant to describe a class they planned to teach the following day. I then asked them to read through a list of the seven Model factors (broken down into approximately 30 subfactors), interpreting the wording for themselves, and mark in the first column

“slowing” of the process and structured reflexivity, should determine the construction of a research design. Goetz and LeCompte (1984, chap. 6) offer a good discussion of data analysis in this light.43 I used Bogdan and Biklen’s (1992, pp. 177-179) “Cut-Up-and-Put-in-Folders-Approach” in the mechanics of working with the project data. The limited scope of this project made use of a computer analysis program unnecessary, though I may not have used one anyway. As with physical systems for sorting data, the ways in which computer programs access and define research data in part determine how the data is analysed and eventually theorised and presented.

which ones would apply to their teaching of that class. Then, in the second column I asked them to rank the factors they checked in order of importance. This was not done in silence. I recorded their comments and observations as they completed the exercise. None thought of factors that were not on the list; therefore I feel safe to assume that the Model presented in Chapter 3 is comprehensive and valid. The ranking portion elicited the most interesting responses--check-back participants noted that they would have ranked the factors differently for a different class, but that they also would have ranked them differently if they were looking at their teaching in general or in reference to a particular student. When we speak about teaching in general, we speak about it ideally. From the results of the check-back ranking exercise, perhaps one begins to see the reason behind the difference between rhetoric and reality Shaw (1997) and so many other educational researchers fixate upon: the specifics of reality change teachers’ priorities.

In addition to the factors exercise, I presented the Model and my interpretation of the function and implementation of the English Curriculum (discussed in Chapter 1). All three agreed that this was an adequate interpretation. Peter’s reaction, in fact, was blasé—the analysis results were common sense to him. The other five participants were contacted by telephone and a brief check-back conversation was conducted. All participants felt that the Model and my interpretation of the function and implementation of the English Curriculum were legitimate.
CHAPTER 3

FACTORS INFLUENCING CLASSROOM PRACTICE AND RESPONSE TO THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

This chapter introduces the project data as they relate to the central phenomenon of the study—the Model of Factors Influencing Classroom Practice and Response to the English Curriculum—presented in Figure 1.

While the English Curriculum has had some influence on the priority of viewing and listening in department schemes, typically participants said that it is not new and influences their practice minimally. In light of this, it was not surprising that, while each of the participants brought their copies of the English Curriculum to our initial interview, all but one of the copies I saw looked untouched (Log, p. 70). In response to this development, the initial guiding research question, “What is the relationship between the English Curriculum and classroom practice for these teachers?”, became “If the English Curriculum is not affecting classroom practice significantly, why are participants practising in the manner that they are?” During their interviews, participants talked a lot about the kinds of factors that influence their practice. These factors were not so different from factors that influence my own teaching and are echoed by teachers and researchers in the literature. Reins (1996), a veteran English teacher with sixteen years’ experience teaching junior high school in the United States, says that his practice is determined by his experiences as a student, work as a teacher trainee, university courses, personal philosophy and what practice has worked in his classroom, while Barbara Perry-Sheldon (Perry-Sheldon & Anselmini, 1987), a researcher of Whole Language teaching in elementary schools, maintains that the practices of teachers are based primarily on their background interests and classroom experience. From participants’ talk, all of these came to be included in the Model presented here.

During data collection and analysis, a provocative relationship between classroom practice and the English Curriculum emerged. As Negotiating participants critiqued the English Curriculum, the same factors that influence their teaching resurfaced in regard to the Document. Problems with or concerns about the English Curriculum usually centred around the same ideas and concerns that entered into the formulation of participants’ classroom practice. Therefore, in the context explored by this study, practice is not a function of curriculum. In reality, response to the English
Curriculum is co-constructed with teaching practice according to the same set of influencing factors. The conclusion to Chapter 5 offers a brief theoretical discussion in regard to the reasons for this connection.

Analysis of this data led to the development of the Model of Factors Influencing Practice and Response to the English Curriculum given in Figure 1. The seven factors comprising the Model—Experience, Management Purposes, Consciousness of Professional Environment, Teacher Interests, Context Constraints, Students and Teacher Beliefs—were developed from data contributed by the eight participants of this study; therefore factors which apply in the formulation of practice and curriculum response by teachers in other areas, time periods, or school and curriculum situations may be missing or different. As I will point out in a moment, practice and curriculum response are individually determined, and the same factors cannot apply or apply equally to every teacher. The Model is comprehensive to the extent that the data of this study allowed.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1.**

Model of Factors Influencing Classroom Practice and Response to the English Curriculum
THE MODEL

Radnofsky (1996) encourages the use of visual models for the presentation of complex qualitative data and for the reflection of the researcher during data analysis. The Model in Figure 1 and its progenitors have been an important heuristic in my theorising and thinking about the data as analysis progressed (see Appendix C; see also Morrison, 1997a, 1997b).

The Model (Figure 1) is a denotative representation of the relationship between practice and curriculum response described in this study. The factors are interrelated. Distinction between them is somewhat artificial and made only for purposes of presentation and discussion, just as the three-dimensional nature of a spiral was ironed out into a series of achievement objectives across eight levels in the English Curriculum. More metaphorically and perhaps appropriately, the Model can be conceptualised as a kind of atom, with classroom practice and response to the English Curriculum bonded together as protons and neutrons in the nucleus, and the factors circling about in the periphery as electrons. These factors influence both the nucleus and each other. The atom image is also appropriate because, just as the factor electrons affect changes in the nucleus, the nucleus also influences its electrons. Changes in practice reconstruct experience, beliefs, constraints and other factors which in turn influence practice and curriculum response.

Munby (1986, p. 197) warns researchers of the limiting consequences of using information-processing or decision-making models in addressing questions of teacher cognition. He asserts that these models do not take into account the “substance of a teacher’s thinking or the many ways in which the teacher’s perceptions are influenced by his or her conceptions.” In the Model introduced here, practice and curriculum response are understood as a construction in the interstice of a dynamic system which encompasses perception. The form of understanding drawn in Figure 1 emerged from my analysis of the data and was confirmed as appropriate with participants in check-back meetings. As I will discuss in Chapter 6, presenting the Model as a two-dimensional diagram and delineating the Model factors in the way done here is both insightful and limiting. While participants’ perceptions are addressed, the dynamic quality of change which is inherent in the process embodied by the Model is much more difficult to capture. Unfortunately, while it is discussed briefly in my concluding thoughts, in-depth analysis of that change process is outside the scope of my purposes in this thesis, though it is often implied in the data and discussion I present.
The Model given above is consistent with Cuban’s (1986, p. 63; see also 1984, pp. 249-252) presentation of classroom practice, particularly practice change in response to new curricula, method expectations or technology, as “situationally constrained choice.” Situationally constrained choice incorporates both the culture of teaching (which includes the beliefs of teachers) and the bounding influence of the physical and non-physical structures of schooling to explain why teachers do what they do. For Cuban, this idea underlies why some teachers change and others do not. Practice, response to new innovations or reforms, and consequent change in practice is determined by the interplay of factors in situationally constrained choice, not surprisingly embodied (if in different terms) by Figure 1.

Though his concern is more with the formulation of grammar teaching than curriculum response, Borg (1996) provides an interesting alternate construction of the Model factors. Using interviews and classroom observations, Borg developed a comprehensive picture which views classroom practice in terms of four interrelated dimensions: experiential, cognitive (teachers’ beliefs, assumptions and theories), contextual (factors external to the teachers which constrain their practice) and instructional (decisions related to instructional tasks). In Borg’s model (p. 4), practice is the phenotypic sum of particular interactions between these dimensions. His breakdown of each of these dimensions is quite similar to the factors described in Negotiating, and the clarity with which he breaks down relationships between the main dimensions and sub-dimensions is admirable and instructive. Heeding Munby (1986) and considering the scope of this project, however, the Model preserves the complexity and ambiguous nature of the relationships among factors, although throughout the following data presentation I will repeatedly emphasise their interrelated nature. Considering Glaser and Strauss’s (1967, see chap. 10) discussion of the importance of generality for theory application, I suggest that the degree of relationship specificity Borg offers circumscribes both his data and his results. Nevertheless, Borg and Cuban’s work offered significant insight into the data and Model presented here, and will be mentioned in this regard throughout my presentation.

Three observations can be made about the Model in regard to participants’ classroom practice and response to the English Curriculum:

1. Practice and response to the English Curriculum are individually determined. All of the teachers participating in Negotiating made statements about the existence of autonomy and isolation in secondary English teaching; therefore most participants insisted on only speaking for themselves when asked about how their colleagues teach.
This is logical in the complex picture of practice formulation and curriculum response given here. For some teachers, instructional purposes may dominate. For others, a recent professional development programme or resource constraints will take precedence in practice formulation. As Peter said when I asked him if his colleagues have had to change their practice in response to the English Curriculum, "I really can't comment because I haven't seen them in action....You know what the job's like. You're just cocooned" (139:11-15). Participants' statements of autonomy and classroom isolation confirm Scanlan's (1995, pp. 26-28) assertion that despite the pressures of "external publics" discussed by Goodson and Medway, teachers can and do act autonomously in schools.

2. The factors shift and grow more important, less important or disappear completely depending on the situation. Peter, Lisa and Annette, in their check-back meetings, said that they would have indicated different factors if they had been asked to respond in regard to a different class, a particular student, or in general. Therefore, for each participant the Model is constantly shifting.

3. Contradiction is inevitable in this Model of competing, ever-shifting factors. Every participant in this study, no matter how many years of teaching experience or how strong their beliefs, exhibited some kind of contradiction—usually several—during the course of an interview. For example, Peter started his interview by rejecting the notion of being child-centred in his teaching, yet during the conversation, constantly referred to how his teaching centres on his students' experience. Annette was clear that she feels it is important to use peer assessment in her teaching, yet made a number of statements indicating that she does not think that students are capable of validly assessing each other. Contradiction should be expected and seen as natural in practice and curriculum, especially when teachers are asked to condense what they do and what they believe into a relatively brief interview or meeting. What is naturally the gradual ebb and flow of practice and belief from day to day in the classroom becomes a contradiction when compressed into an hour. Again, Shaw's (1997) concern with the discrepancy between his respondent's rhetoric and reality is revealed as an inappropriate fixation. Instead of making a rash judgement, he should have considered the nature of the reality in which his respondent teacher worked.

These observations should be kept in mind while reading the discussion of the factors that follow in this chapter and in Chapters 4 and 5. The factors, Students and Teacher Beliefs, emerged as the most influential factors in the eight participants' formulation of classroom practice and response to the English Curriculum, so they are considered in individual chapters. The other five factors--Experience, Management Purposes, Consciousness of Professional Environment, Interests and Context Constraints--are presented here and treated with a depth determined by the amount of data collected in those areas. Though none of these five ventured near the mass and amplitude of data making up the two factors selected for their own chapters, each is interesting and revealing in its own right. Data in this chapter are presented in support of the Model, and for that reason will not be discussed at length. It is important to note that my interpretation enters primarily through the framework and structure of the Model.

As I warned in Chapter 2, occasionally I will make generalisations from the data and speak about "teachers" rather than specifying just these eight participants or even myself, the ninth participant. Our purposes here--reflection and the development of a conditional guide for understanding the relationship between practice and curriculum--nurture these types of statements. However, any generalisation, any theory, any statement in fact, is subject to revision in light of new data.

EXPERIENCE

Unlike many other professions, teaching is not set at a distance from the general population. Long before I entered the USC Department of Education, I had known and spent the better part of twelve years with over sixty public and private school teachers. Every present or past student seems to have a story, along with its concomitant evaluation of good or bad teaching, to tell about a remembered Mr. Littlejohn or Mrs. Sloan. As participants in compulsory education systems, we know about teaching and about teachers. Teachers also know about teachers in the same way, and this affects what kind of teachers they choose to become. For this reason, I did not call this Model factor, "professional experience." Yes, the participants in this study formulate their practice on the basis of professional experience at Teachers' College and in the classroom, but they also talked about making practice decisions based on their experiences as students. Therefore, the first part of this section deals with participants' classroom experience, the second part with experience at Teachers' College, and the third part with participants' experiences as students.
CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

Participants' understanding and familiarity determine not only whether they choose to use certain content or methods in their teaching, but also how they approach what they do use. This approach changes over time as they bring their practice and philosophy into contact with different groups of students and different classroom goals. Theresa said:

I got very confused in my first year because I believed, firstly, that the students should control the teaching environment, but I was too inexperienced to actually facilitate that. So, I had this philosophy which I believed in very, very earnestly and very generally, but I didn't have the experience to make it work....For example, I would try and negotiate what they would do as a class in certain learning situations. How would they run discipline for people who were late and things like that. And the kids would buy into it, but the first thing I learnt was that the younger the kids, the more draconian they are, and you actually have to ameliorate that. And the second thing I learnt was that you can't sit back and let the process do everything--you actually have to have some sense of purpose in yourself. There's no substitute for experience. So, I really wavered that first, probably two years. (305:41-48, 306:1-12)

As teachers gain more experience in the classroom, they become more confident about what they are doing and trying to accomplish, as well as how to go about achieving their goals. They come to understand what works for their students and what does not. In the process, teachers discard practices that do not work or alter their ideas about what they can do with students. For example, Margaret came to the realisation that students learn better when they seek out the knowledge themselves when she saw that "I would be fired up about a topic, but not necessarily my class because they never did the reading I did" (35:42-47). Christopher realised that he would have to provide his students with a variety of activities when his students began to "rebel" against lessons comprised of only two types of work (172:37-41).

On the other hand, methods or activities which teachers find successful are used again and again. These are strategies "that work." Laura described an activity where students looked at the ways in which people talk and developed role plays using the language they found, saying, "That's worked well. I've used it again this year" (274:13-23). Christopher finds that a game in which students must remove words or lines from a poem while still having the poem make sense is a good way of stimulating discussion for language topics (183:30-50). What works is based on what has been successfully tried in the classroom.

With new material or methods, however, teachers are taking pedagogical chances. Laura said that, after being introduced to the Statement of Aims in the 1970s,
she began to teach static image presentation and use practical drama and group work without really understanding the reason behind why she was using these methods. This caused confusion in her teaching (and thus learning outcomes that were less than what she expected) because she did not know what she wanted from her students and she could not transmit her expectations clearly (206:27-33, 207:14-21). "I just look in horror now at probably what I tried to set up with classes at that time, but with the best of intentions then...because I thought I was doing the right thing" (207:35-38). Now, after many years' experience and work with setting up assessment criteria, Laura said, "When I set a task up now, even if I don't write a detailed assessment schedule, I definitely have worked out what it is that I want and I communicate that to the kids, what things I'm going to be looking for, what's going to be important" (208:19-23).

TEACHERS' COLLEGE

While most participants felt that the classroom shaped their practice more than their initial teacher training, Lisa offered that Teachers' College was a place for her to develop ideas about teaching.

I guess the thing that Teachers' College does is that it gives you time to think about your ideas, because before that you're sort of getting an education yourself. You haven't had time to think about what you think...It sounds awful to say that you went into Teachers' College with one set of ideas and came out the other end with the same. I didn't, I guess, but I probably hadn't formulated my ideas so strongly. I didn't come out feeling like I'm going to teach this way because somebody else has. I think it gave you time to think, "I like that. I'll have that and all. I like the look of that." (72:41-48, 73:1-3)

She came to ideas about integrated approaches to learning, how to convey to students the joy of learning, the writing process, and how to be somewhat controversial in her teaching, "...give [the students] something to get their teeth into to start with...to challenge their thinking about things" (69:20-28, 70:15-17). Christopher reinforced Lisa's sentiment when he said that, on section, he was introduced to the need for teaching social skills like independence, co-operating and perseverance when he saw "some of the classes there for whom any work of literature really was largely an irrelevance in their own lives" (181:37-48, 182:1-2). On section was also where he first came across the need for variety in instruction (172:16-23).

Exposure to the English Curriculum during Teachers' College very much affected several participants' responses to the English Curriculum as it was beginning its implementation in 1994. Theresa said, "I came into teaching with [a] draft document really as the basis of my teaching. I didn't really need to throw out as much as a lot of people did because I came in with a very student-centred focus" (304:38-43). Though
she was not familiar with the English Curriculum, she had a sound foundation with
which to approach it because of her exposure to that draft document. Theresa's
comment points to Teachers' College as an important agent in determining norms about
practice and curriculum. The normative function of Teachers' College is explored
further in the discussion of another factor, Consciousness of Professional Environment,
later in this chapter.

EXPERIENCE AS A STUDENT

Though this aspect of Experience did not figure into participants' explicit
statements about the English Curriculum, three participants talked about how their
experiences as students affect their current classroom practice. I include these data
because they indicate how some teachers "know" about teaching. Experience as a
student obviously affects the factors, Beliefs and Students, which in turn influence
participants' response to the English Curriculum. All of these experiences revolve
around things that they decided they would not do in their own classrooms and all
indicate beliefs about what a good teacher "should" do. For example, Margaret refuses
to use sarcasm and tries not to openly criticise her students because of a high school
teacher she had who used these tactics as a form of discipline. She remembers how
debilitating that was for her self-esteem (31:17-46). Laura's determination that her
students should have explicit knowledge of their achievement levels and reasons for
being at those levels is based on the ignorance and confusion she felt as a student in the
bottom of her third form class about why she was there (285:7-14). Annette said:

I had an experience in the sixth or seventh form, I can't remember which. I think
it was about Hamlet...where in an exam, I'd been given an appallingly low mark.
I can't remember what it was. And the reason was that she didn't agree with the
view of Hamlet that I had...written about. And in fact, I had come up with [that]
view by having done quite a lot of extra reading, and could have actually
justified to her which critics I had actually been having a look at, and so on. But
she clearly didn't agree with that. I suppose that experience, it made me think at
the time [that there is] not much point in actually stepping outside of what you
have been told by the teacher. That was my particular experience with that
particular teacher. And so, going into being a teacher, it made me extremely
determined, and I think I'm still determined that way, to ensure that kids are
given the freedom to know that it's okay to put forth any viewpoint...providing
you can justify it. (229:24-47)

Experiences as students, in Teachers' College, and in their own classroom
influences both how participants teach and how they respond to the English Curriculum.
Borg's (1996, p. 9) experiential dimension of language teaching includes each of these
subfactors. In his discussion, he suggests that what made his respondents' experiences
more or less powerful in influencing their beliefs involved the existing cognitive state of
the teacher at the time of the experience, the duration of the experience, the teacher's willingness (and I would add ability and opportunity) to reflect on that experience, and the perceived intensity of the experience. Borg's hypothesis makes sense in light of Negotiating participants' statements. Perhaps this is one reason why traumas suffered at the hands of teachers while students remain so fixed and influential in our minds.

MANAGEMENT PURPOSES

Often, teachers will use classroom strategies for purposes of management in regard to time, instructional goals or other aspects of classroom life. For example, Christopher uses journals because he can "get an awful lot of writing out of [students] without really having to struggle at all" (180:21-23). He gives each of his students a small sheet of paper to keep at the front of their journals. At the top of that paper he asks them to set a goal for the number of lines they will write each day. At the end of each journal writing session, each student swaps his or her journal with a classmate whom they are willing to have read what they have written, and the classmate checks it for legibility and sense, counts the number of lines written and records that number on the front piece of paper with the date and their signature (179:28-41). So, while Christopher uses journals to increase his students' interest and motivation in English, his management purposes centre around having his students produce work without incurring student resistance (180:21-23), as well as making his record-keeping simpler. "I'll come around and check that it's done, but I will never look at it but maybe once every couple of weeks to sort of see how they go compared with the standards that they've set for themselves" (180:24-28). In fact, Christopher has students set their own writing goals so that the responsibility for motivation rests on them. In structuring his students' journals in this way, he finds that his management responsibilities are further reduced in that he does not have to punish students so much for not writing (179:43-52).

Susanne's purpose in using journals is to find out where her students are in their understanding. She also uses questioning, class discussion (256:45-48) and student self-assessment (249:17-21), to that end. All of these are methods of more easily managing on-going evaluation of student understanding.

At the end of the practice exams, I made [the senior students] do a self-evaluation sheet on how much time they'd spent and all that sort of thing. But, it was actually just to get them to see where their strengths were on exam technique. I do that with listening, and that really helps me because...I can get at, say, a listening self-assessment, and the kid says something like, "Oh, you know, I just daydream." So, you can tell if their listening problem has something to do with just being easily distracted...or whether it's [that] they don't understand something. (248:44-47, 249:1-13)
Group work is another classroom management strategy identified by participants. Susanne uses it to help reticent students express their ideas and "get kids doing learning in a different way, like moving around" (263:30-38). Annette said the management purposes for which she uses group work have changed over the course of her career.

Why did I use group work, get into group work? ....Initially, as a means of facilitating discussion. I still use it for that still now, too, but I use it for other purposes as well. But, it was a means of...instead of teacher up front and kids giving you ideas, it was a way of sharing the responses, I guess,...because there would always be some kids who were really reluctant to be asked to speak, whereas they would contribute their ideas in a small group situation where they wouldn't contribute in a whole class situation. So, at the beginning, I saw it as a means of pooling ideas of students together....Now I see [group work] as a way of partly getting them to take some responsibility for the learning process, and a good example of that is actually what came out of those [group projects] for Lord of the Flies....I felt that it was a way of actually getting them to do some detailed analysis without it needing to take a huge amount of time. (208:46-50, 209:1-18)

While the necessity of management purposes in school culture affect formulation of practice more than response to the English Curriculum, participants talked about management strategies similar to those described above in dealing with the requirements of the English Curriculum. For example, Peter's notion of the dressing of things described in Chapter 1 can be seen as a time-saving management strategy used for the purpose of satisfying the ERO in a busy English department. Departments are having to manage the English Curriculum, just as teachers must manage their classrooms. The title of Worley and Christie's (1996) workshop at the New Zealand Association of Teachers of English conference, "Manageable Management of the Curriculum," is indicative of how many English departments view implementation of the English Curriculum.

**CONSCIOUSNESS OF PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

"Consciousness" was a word first used by Annette to describe her awareness of changes in teaching between the time she started teaching in 1976, left to have children, and when she came back to the classroom in 1986.

It's not that I didn't use [the teaching practices encouraged in the English Curriculum]. I used discussion and all those sorts of things, but I think I'm much more conscious of questioning techniques, all those sorts of things, than I perhaps was in the Seventies and so on....I probably asked an awful lot of closed questions to begin with, whereas now I don't think I would ever....I think that's
now not [because] I’m consciously thinking they must be open, but I’ve just adapted my thinking to that. (205:50-52, 206:1-18)

For example, expressive writing, just because that page happens to be looking at me. In terms of poetic writing, too, for that matter, I guess I have learned a lot more about the writing process than was dealt with in the Seventies as well. But, in terms of actually getting kids to acknowledge and understand that their own experiences are valuable experiences on which to base something that they might write about, I’ve placed a lot more emphasis on that since I came back than I ever did before. It’s more that I just have a consciousness about the fact that those kids do have lives outside of my classroom. (230:20-35)

After talking with Annette, I started thinking about how teachers do have a kind of professional consciousness. Our profession, like any other, has its own trends and change. Unlike Annette, I came into teaching in the 1990s when the writing process is simply the way “it’s done.” I’ve never known any other way and when I hear of teachers who do not use pre-writing strategies with their students or who are not interested in publication of student work, I assume they are old-fashioned and they are doing their students a grave disservice. Theresa, who has only been teaching for the last six years, expressed much the same sentiment. She came into the profession with learner-centred ideas espoused by the English Curriculum (304:38-41), and at a meeting about the English Curriculum, when she came across teachers who disagreed with the concept of “...making something learner-centred” she was shocked. “I couldn’t believe anybody would even argue about it. I thought they showed themselves to be right-wing prats. I couldn’t believe that they were that static” (327:15-24). We define good practice and good curricula according to the norms with which we are familiar. This is our consciousness of the professional environment in which we work.

All of the participants agreed that the English Curriculum is not new and that teachers are already teaching according to its principles, but there was an interesting difference between participants who had been teaching for less than ten years and those that had been in the profession longer. For the former group, which includes Theresa, this (practice in line with the Document principles) is simply the way you teach. Both Lisa and Christopher expressed similar opinions. Lisa said, “I haven’t been around for the last twenty years...I’ve been teaching for eight so certainly in my experience this is how you teach English. I have to say we’re all pretty agreed on this.” When I asked Christopher where he came to the idea that this (practice in line with the Document principles) is how English is taught, he said,

Well, I don’t know. I was aware of the relationships between the different forms of English through University, but that was an intellectual awareness. What [I saw that] teachers were doing in the classroom...I took for granted that I would
do when I came into the classroom. Other teachers may have been doing it for years. In some ways, it's a practical thing that in a lesson you've got to have a variety of activities...to keep the kids interested....It may be done just as a matter of practicality and has always been done.” (166:28-47)

However, more experienced participants pointed out that teaching has not always been done as it is now. “This way”--a student-centred, integrated approach to teaching and learning--is the only one Christopher knows. He sees it simply in terms of being practical; therefore teaching must always have been this way. Theresa knows that accepted teaching practice has not always been like it is now, but she considers anything else as politically conservative, out-of-date and poor. In the discussion of experience earlier in this chapter, most participants pointed out that they felt Teachers’ College had a minimal effect on their teaching and that the sections were the most useful and insightful aspect of their teacher education. However, this discrepancy between how participants with less than ten years’ experience in the profession and those with more than ten years’ experience suggests that Teachers’ College acts as a powerful determiner of what its students take on as norms in their profession, through sections of course, but also through the classes, where students are given the foundation tools of teaching, including documents like the English Curriculum. This reflects Carr’s (1995, p. 53) observation of how new teachers are initiated into their beliefs:

The theory structuring the thoughts and practices of teachers is not something that they work out for themselves. Rather, it is a way of thinking and acting into which novice teachers are initiated and which is maintained through the routine, everyday social activities that occur in schools. It is, then, an inherited (or in Gramsci’s phrase ‘mechanically imposed’) form of thought from which teachers derive their common-sense ‘craft knowledge.’ In short, it is what, within the teaching community, ‘everybody knows.’

Three participants with more than ten years’ experience--Annette, Margaret and Laura--feel that they are already teaching with principles like those of the English Curriculum, but all expressed awareness of changes in practice since they first began teaching. For example, Margaret talked about changes in her use of classroom resources:

You have to break down the task more simply....I think there has been a swing more to that now. In English, when I started out [in 1968], you had a set group of class texts for grammar and everything, and you just taught from those books. Now, it's much more that you photocopy something for one lesson and you have one copy of a whole lot of books, but only one copy, and you might take a bit out of this and a bit out of that. Whereas before, you went through page one of one book to the end. (36:8-26)

Often, the changes more experienced participants like Margaret pointed out were subtle. Consciousness is a word that implies change in thinking more than in blatant classroom action, and it typifies the slow and incremental process of change in education that evolves in the collective mind of the teaching profession. Annette, Margaret and Laura’s comments give credence to Connelly and Clandinin’s (1995) presentation of the collective “professional knowledge landscape” as one that is ever-changing, both epistemologically and morally. Teachers’ College is heavily implicated in this process, but there are also other influencing factors which were revealed during the course of discussions with participants, such as curriculum documents, professional development, courses and the teaching environment.

While Annette used the term consciousness and Margaret used “swing,” Laura talked about changes in her "awareness." English curriculum and assessment documents had much to do with changes in how these participants thought about the norms of their profession. For example, Annette talked about changes in her teaching because of the government’s Achievement-Based Assessment (ABA) initiative in the 1980s:

I think actually the use of ABA is partly what has [caused me to re-educate myself], setting up the criteria for that and what I was expecting for each level. I had to really stop and think about what is it that I really want these kids to do, and I was having to think about it. I think, in the past, we often used to set a task and then write, well, I don’t think we even wrote an assessment schedule. We just had in our mind what it was we were looking for. So, the change in assessment having to be much more accountable for what you’re actually doing with assessment has made a huge difference because it has made me think. When I set a task now, even if I don’t write a detailed assessment schedule, I definitely have worked out what it is that I want and I communicate that to the kids, what things I’m going to be looking for, what’s going to be important. (208:4-23)

More experienced participants also talked about other influences on changes to the field and thus to their teaching. The statements above indicate that Teachers’ College, professional development courses and curriculum initiatives like The Statement of Aims and ABA are significant, though not always obvious, influences. More obviously, a teacher’s immediate environment impacts her perception of norms. This was pointed out by Theresa when she said that, in the beginning, “I was doing what everybody else was doing and I didn’t read the material that I got fixed up with.” It was only when she left her initial school environment that she was faced with different norms and different ideas. “It was only when I moved out of that environment that I had to start solidifying and revising and constructing my own philosophy” (322:11-16).
Laura left a Christchurch public high school, went overseas and returned to teach in a rural country school. Experiencing a different kind of teaching environment profoundly affected her classroom practice and the way she thought about teaching. The following statement shows how a different environment challenged Laura’s accepted norms:

That changed my teaching...because there were primary school teachers there. It was little kids, 5-year-olds, right through to seventh form. I’d walk into their classrooms and think, “Wow! This is so interesting!” They had posters and all kinds of things happening and kids have different areas to work at things...they were up at their desks or tables, and they had play-doh, they had a reading corner with bean bags and books, and I thought that was fantastic....so I tried to do that in my rooms. (277:8-23)

TEACHER INTERESTS

A number of times during the interviews, participants mentioned personal likes and dislikes in regard to their classroom practice. For example, because Lisa likes music she used Bach’s *Toccata and Fugue* to grab her students’ interest in beginning a unit on *Frankenstein*. (51:5-7). If she were more interested in film, she may have used a clip from an old *Frankenstein* movie to begin pre-discussion of the novel. It was Christopher’s expression of his interests that I noticed the most. Like Lisa, he brings his interests into his practice. "I know quite a bit of grammar through doing foreign languages and I enjoy it because I enjoy looking at syntax and things like that, just the way the language is put together. So, I will often try and bring it into other language topics" (183:26-31). Christopher is a relatively new teacher who has come to the high school classroom with a PhD in Literature and university teaching in his background. He said:

I really enjoy the kind of game playing and...detective work involved in literary analysis. I mean, I'm not heavily into literary theory--I think most of it's a load of crap. But, say, looking at a Shakespeare play and finding that the character says something here which seems to contradict something that goes there and how can you match that within that character? And themes and the imaging, things like that. I really enjoy doing that stuff....It's really something I can only try and do at the senior levels, because in most of our junior classes there are so many kids who are either reluctant readers or, in many cases, barely literate. (173:17-39)

It is not surprising that Christopher's own interests seem to tie into what he sees as a good class. Many participants talked about their love of literature. As Theresa said, "I crave to have just two hours of teaching poetry, walk them out of it with a buzz on. That does happen, but it's not exactly as you'd like" (313:6-9). A "good class," therefore, is not just about a class where the teacher can do as he pleases while the students sit docilely by. It is a matter of shared interest, shared motivation and passion.
Participants' comments showed that their interests impact their response to the English Curriculum less than their classroom practice. Even so, some response was evident, although not in terms of criticism of the Document. For example, Susanne is interested in New Zealand literature and, because the English Curriculum explicitly addresses the use of New Zealand texts in classrooms, Susanne remarked positively on it (251:14-18).

**CONTEXT CONSTRAINTS**

Context constraints are any part of school life or culture that limits what a teacher can do in her classroom. Constraints are more of a negative shaper of practice signified by comments like “I can’t do that because…” or “The English Curriculum is idealistic because…” Participants talked a lot about the constraints of school culture. They also talked about students as a kind of constraint on their practice. While Chapter 5 discusses how teachers perceive students and their needs and formulate practice accordingly, this section will focus on how students act as a constraint on teaching along with time, class size, assessment, curriculum and resource availability.

**TIME**

The constraint of time is overriding and plays a part in all of the other practice limitations this section will discuss. As Lisa said, referring to the English Curriculum, “You’re only limited by the amount of time you’ve got” (56:34-35). Later in the interview, she went on to say, “the reality of things that get me really is the time. I could teach much better if I had, say, one less class a week...five periods more free” (75:32-35). Teachers must be aware of their time in planning classroom activities and assessment, in teaching and in setting up department schemes. It is a matter of keeping the workload manageable. Awareness of time constraints affects how Lisa responds to the English Curriculum.

[The English Curriculum] is wonderful in theory. I agree with the theory, but in practice, you just don’t have the time to cater for every single individual. So yes, when I look at my fourth form, I think to myself...I’ve got a boy in a wheelchair with spinal bifida. I think about his needs. I think about the hyperactive one that can’t stay in his seat. I think about his needs. I think about the kids who are sick or away from school for a predominant part of the time and what I can give them when they’re actually in front of me that’s going to keep them going when they’re not there. So, as far as those personal needs go, I’m thinking about those, but when it comes to what I can teach the class that is going to extend their English skills and attract their attention and so on, then I have to think of them as a class, [because] otherwise, I’d be giving twenty-six different things to them, and I just can’t cope with the work load. I mean,
ideally, it would be nice, wouldn’t it, if you could give out twenty-six completely different things, but you can’t do it. (49:33-52)

For Lisa, time and keeping her workload manageable means that she looks at her classes as a whole. She cannot cater to every individual. As Laura pointed out in the concluding section of Chapter 4, class size and lack of time are two of the reasons that she does not know her students very well (278:10-17). Because of time constraints, teachers cannot effectively treat or see their students as individuals. In fact, as Laura emphasised, secondary teachers have a difficult time just keeping detailed records of every student’s individual academic progress. Before coming to her current school, she taught at a small rural school which contained all grade levels. “At [the rural school]...I saw how primary teachers taught. I was incredibly impressed by the effort that they put in and the way they kept running records, for example, of students’ reading progress, which we just don’t do. We only see them for an hour and then they’re gone” (282:29-34).

Time also affects how teachers structure assessment and manage their classes. When talking about how English teachers in her department set up the common tests for this year, Margaret said they worked to cut down on their marking work loads because most of the teachers in her department carry five classes with at least thirty students to a class. “If you get a senior essay of all of them in one week, you’re just zonked under. That’s something like 180 essays plus to mark, and so, we’ve said, ‘Okay, you’re killing yourselves and everybody was feeling very stressed, particularly with all the work that has sort of been coming up with meetings and things” (7:9-19). She went on, “So, we’re looking at it from the kids’ point-of-view but also from our own preservation here” (14:6-7). Murfitt’s (1995) findings support Margaret’s statement. Murfitt asserts that teachers’ time has been increasingly occupied by administration and committee tasks having to do with recent reform initiatives, resulting in work overload and teacher insecurity.

In relation to the English Curriculum itself, Lisa said, “You don’t sit down with your Document for hours. I don’t sit down with it because [teachers] don’t have time” (56:18-21). While lack of time affects how much teachers use and how they respond to the English Curriculum, it also affects classroom practice. For Laura, time constraints limit her use of strategies like group work for student self-discovery (269:41-49, 270:1-5). She said that the English Curriculum has changed how she approaches her practice, but laughed and added “when I have time to do that” (294:42-44, 295:1). Change requires preparation time and classroom time to experiment. This is not always
possible. Lack of time even affects fundamental beliefs about what teaching should be. For example, student enjoyment is one of the most important aspects of Lisa's practice, but she said, "[it's hard to succeed] in having kids enjoy the classes and things because you get tired, you get stroppy, you take it out on the kids, you know?" (75:43-47) Lisa went on to talk about how lack of time affects her classroom planning and pedagogy.

You lose your creativity if you don't have time to put into your lesson planning and things. You tend to go for the easiest option rather than the most educationally beneficial. When you're tired, you say, "Let's turn to this textbook and do exercise such and such," ...if you're getting tired, you do a lot more of [that] than is perhaps beneficial. (76:2-9)

CLASS SIZE

Class size exacerbates the constraining effects of lack of time. For Peter, lack of class time limits his use of strategies like conferencing with students. Class size does the same. In his critique of the English Curriculum, he said, "...and even this one-on-one stuff, teacher sits down and conferences...with the particular student. Now, that's ignoring the other thirty-two. So, [with the] logistics of class size and the time we have available, it simply doesn't stack up" (141:43-47). Peter's main criticism of the English Curriculum is that it is written for a "...private school with twelve in a class" (142:5-6).

One of the greatest effects class size has for his teaching is that, although he would like to teach each of his students at their own level, he finds that he must treat the class as if they were at one ability level, and simply do his best to help individual students where they are, so they at least learn the basics of the material being covered (148:40-42). He finds it "...ironic really, this...‘Well, everyone can go at their own pace.’ Well, not really, because it runs headlong into the system of a class of twenty-five or whatever. So it's a time tabling nightmare if they want to do it ideally" (149:18-24). Part of Peter's concern about teaching classes at individual ability levels has to do with his own accountability as a teacher. He feels he needs to know what each of his students is doing. Thinking about how he could accelerate more able students working at a different level than their classmates, he said, "I mean, I would come up with extension exercises for somebody who might have finished or something, like ‘Okay, you’ve got three periods to produce a little film for me welcoming new students to [this school]. Go and do it.’ But, you run into trouble there, like what are they actually doing?" (148:30-36).

Laura contrasted her work with student goals in one of her large and one of her small classes.
I don’t actually spend a great deal of time with kids individually on their goals. I guess it’s hard to do...but with my fifth form alternative [class], I talked to them individually because there are only nine of them. So, it’s easy to do that. And I say, "Okay, come up. Show me your goals. We’ll talk about it." But with, say, my fourth forms, which [have] thirty in each, I tend to say [as a class], "Well look, how do you feel about what you did last term? What do you need to work on?" (286:21-35)

Class size seems to be an even greater constraint in classes where some or a majority of the students are speakers of other languages. Lisa acknowledged this when she was talking about the learner-centred principles of the English Curriculum.

I come from a school which is a predominately Pakeha school. We don’t have huge numbers of Maori students or Pacific Island students. We do have a number of Asians, but they’re not necessarily here to learn English in the same way. So, learning programmes should affirm the value of the learner’s own language and experience. If you’ve got thirty kids in the classroom and you teach in Auckland, say, and you’ve got a whole variety of cultures in your class and you’re teaching twenty-seven hours or something. Twenty-seven periods a week to make that actually a practice, that’s quite different from theory, isn’t it? You’re going to be facing huge work load problems. (48:19-35)

Two participants who do teach a large proportion of NESB students affirmed Lisa’s hypothesis. Theresa says that the NESB students in her class “aren’t getting a fair try [because] the class is too big, their needs are too great and there’s not enough money for them” (328:3-5). She says that, as a result, NESB students are marginalised (328:6). In the ESOL class she teaches at her school, Margaret said, “because [the students’] English was so poor, they were placed in my class to up their English for across-the-board help, really. [I] try to, but because there were so many in the class, it’s not really individual help. But, we try and do things that are generally helpful for settling into Christchurch” (27:29-34). As pointed out in Chapter 4, these things are the basic language Margaret thinks her students will encounter in questions and terms for things like food and clothing. The dilemma arises again. With the time and class size constraints that teachers like Margaret face, how can teachers be expected to know their students and accurately recognise or teach to their needs?

**STUDENT BEHAVIOUR**

Some of these data link to how teachers perceive their students (Chapter 4) and have implications for what they see as their students’ needs. However, anticipated and actual student behaviour, resulting from maturity, motivation or background, at least in
part determine what participants feel they can attempt or accomplish in their teaching. In this case, students are a type of constraint. For example, Theresa said,

Well, you can sort of say, "I can [give] you some written stuff...and go, go, go. Okay, now I want you to work in a group to do something and I want you to assess each other in the group." And the next bit, you're actually literally separating kids because one's called another one lazy. And the reality is that the other person has been lazy, and it doesn't do really any harm to be confronted about it, but it's not a good idea for them to have dealt with it in the way that they have. (317:17-26)

She criticised the English Curriculum for its idealistic conception of student behaviour. "If you want to deliver [the English Curriculum] and to have the balance and to have nice, holistic learning, then you've got to have a reasonably good dynamic in the class" (317:11-14). To establish this dynamic and to use group work, she sets up solid "ground rules" (316:48-51) and works to create a "safe" environment in her classroom (317:28-30). Peter agreed that the English Curriculum was idealistic in regard to student behaviour.

A lot of it [is] idealistic. Nice idea if you get the right class. But, you know, you leave that group discussing the meaning of life while these ones are looking at...adverbs that describe that particular action...and it didn't really work....Sometimes, you have to resort to the good old written exercise, or it comes back to being teacher-centred quite a lot. I try to avoid that, but sometimes you can't do anything about it. (140:30-40)

The constraints of student behaviour and having to enforce classroom discipline were an important realisation for Christopher, the newest teacher of the participants. "It is difficult, but it's really just sort of frustrating....Some days you'll come out and think, 'Well, no one actually learned anything in any of my classes today.' You're spending the whole time just trying to keep some kind of control and get them to sit down. Today, [they didn't] feel like doing any work" (188:13-21). To his surprise, he quickly found that "old-fashioned teaching methods" like detentions were necessary in his classroom practice (190:12-16).

DEPARTMENT SCHEMES AND ASSESSMENT

As I discussed in Chapter 1, assessment is a major concern in teaching. Participants felt accountable to students, parents, employers, and the school. Margaret mentioned teachers' accountability to students' future employers a number of times during her interview. Accountability to employers was reflected in her response to and understanding of unit standards.
Do they supply somebody with a top and a bottom?...In the old way, that was much clearer. You all sat the exam and, with the reference test, even when it was internally assessed, they all sat the same paper. All the internally assessed schools sat a reference test in June which brought to that school a pool of grades so that they knew that in our school any one year was, say, ten people who were capable nationally of getting a one. Now that, as I understand it, will not happen. So, how is an employer going to know that my classification of someone having reached the unit there at a five, you know, say...I don't know whether even their certificate shows that they got it with an excellent. (19:18-33)

This concern with accountability in assessment was stated over and over again, and it was obvious that assessment is not only a concern in everyday classroom teaching, but also determines how participants respond to the English Curriculum, particularly the levels, as well as to unit standards. Accountability and assessment in regard to the English Curriculum is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

External exams are often the sole determiner of content in sixth and seventh form English, where exam prescriptions are still in place. In its description of seventh form English, Lisa's handbook says, "Pupils who elect to do seventh form English follow the Bursary prescription, but some account is taken of the fact that a small proportion of pupils are back only for a social year, and attempts are made to ensure the programme is as varied and pleasurable as possible within the constraints of the syllabus" (103). During professional development for the English Curriculum, Peter said that he discovered some new teaching practices using group work, but that "it's fraught with problems, like with assessment. There's this strange ambiguity at the moment because I've got this [English Curriculum], but them we've still got dinosaurs like School Certificate exam. So, you've got the exam syllabus [and] you've got to teach to it" (140:12-17).

External exam prescriptions generate time pressure. Annette said she uses less group work with her seventh form classes because of, "...the pressures of the syllabus. For example, I [also] don't do nearly as much visual language, that sort of thing, with them because [of] the time restraints of actually getting through everything just seem to be greater" (205:22-26). Even in discussions of junior classes, time constraints figured prominently. Margaret gave a good example of how the common tests required by department schemes can affect the running of a class.

I think [the English Curriculum has] come on at the same time as a four-term year so our year is a bit topsy-turvy anyway and we're trying to fit in the common tests like all of the sudden. It suited me fine because I had just finished what I was doing and I can prepare for the common tests next Tuesday, but I know another teacher that's actually midway through reading [a novel] with her class and, all of the sudden, thought,"Oh, they're going to be sitting next Tuesday this common test. I'll have to give them some questions on [this novel]
which will make them do a transactional writing and poetic writing and comprehension," so in actual fact, perhaps the work that you might in the past have done on those works, you've altered slightly because all of the sudden you're under time pressure. The fifth form English course is quite full. I never get right through the syllabus. You have to choose what you can fit in. (15:21-38)

Schemes and exam prescriptions limit what teachers can teach by determining what will be assessed. They limit how teachers teach, as illustrated above, with the time limits enforced by those assessments. Time, class size, student behaviour and assessment/syllabus constraints affect teachers’ practice significantly in how they treat their students (individually or as a class), what they choose to teach and what methods they use to teach it. This is not always taken into account in educational studies like Laub’s (1997) work and is a serious flaw in their conception of teacher cognition and practice. The next chapter will examine how the factor, Students, influences classroom practice and response to the English Curriculum.
CHAPTER 4
STUDENTS

Students, according to the ranking exercise conducted during check-back meetings, are the most influential factor in the formulation of participants' teaching practice. Almost everything that teachers talked about doing in their classrooms seemed to pivot around their students: "it depends on the class" was a common refrain. Indeed, students are a component of almost every other factor presented for consideration in the Model. Participants are not unusual in this respect. Baker's (1996) survey of 119 New Zealand Science teachers revealed that 84% felt students were the most significant factor in their teaching.

In a November meeting discussing the results of this research, Ellis (ERO) commented positively on the primacy of students in participants' consideration of their practice, saying that "it would be scary if the English Curriculum came before students in the formulation of practice" (Log, p. 311). In this at least, teachers and the ERO are in agreement. From the data presented in this chapter we can see that participants deliberately shape their students with expectations and definitions of need, though none of the teachers who participated in this study spoke explicitly of themselves as instruments of socialisation, cultural transmission or the economy. They talked about students, kids, and working with those kids--giving them what they need, what they want and what they deserve. The relationship between participants and their students is complex and not easily defined, full of "shoulds," perception, and the teacher's own philosophy and world view. The next chapter, Teacher Beliefs, will attest that a teacher's beliefs are inseparable from the students she teaches. At the heart of this relationship between teachers and students lies how we see children in the function of schooling.

Participants' talk about students as a factor in the Model focused around two main subfactors: Student Ability and Student Needs. Initially, I included data about student resistance as a subfactor in this chapter, but removed it because, while student resistance affects practice, the data did not support or imply its impact on participants' responses to the English Curriculum. Talk about issues like student resistance was problematic in developing the Model. At the end of this chapter I note that while participants may not have mentioned their responses to the English Curriculum so strongly in regard to certain factors in the Model, in these factors' interrelationships with other factors that do influence response to the English Curriculum more strongly,
they play a significant role in curriculum response. Because it is part of a factor, Students, that is itself problematic in this regard, I did not delineate data about student resistance as a specific subfactor for data presentation. However, I believe that many aspects of student resistance are encompassed by the data presented in this chapter about participants' definition of student need through constructed visions of the students they teach.

**STUDENT ABILITY**

Student ability was generally conceptualised in terms of academic competence. Most importantly, participants' comments showed that they are careful to teach to the perceived level of their students. If the material or method is too difficult, less able students tend to give up; if the material or method is too simple, more able students will become frustrated. As Margaret said, "...[teachers and administrators have] sort of gone away from having this straight bottom class because the kids then feel, 'We're the dummies.' Whereas the danger, of course, from doing that is how do you keep accelerating your more able ones so that they don't get frustrated" (29:21-25).

Essentially, all participants felt their practice must begin at their students' level of knowledge and ability. "That's their current level of knowledge. You see? Making connections between the learner's own world and that of school. Their world is not one of reading, so there's no point in me starting from that respect" (52:16-21). Because of this, Lisa finds that with her "slow" fourth form class, she must start by simply convincing them to open a book. To that end, she uses material that is short and of high interest (49:8-15). In much the same way, Margaret uses short stories like Patricia Grace's "Butterflies" with her ESOL students because of its simple and accessible language (4:11-14). Both teachers tend to select material for interest or simplicity in accordance with what they perceive as their students' ability. This kind of selection extends to the academic requirements participants ask of their students.

In this regard, Margaret provided two good examples. As the Reading teacher for her school, Margaret says other English teachers come to her when students in their classes, particularly ESOL students, cannot keep up with their classmates. Margaret will often drop assignments for students having difficulty. "We will say, 'Okay, it's enough that they've read the book, not to worry about the assignment" (37:10-12). In another instance, English teachers chose to substitute a viewing test for the previous listening component of their common tests because the listening test was simply too difficult for the students. "Good kids were fine. It was the poorer kids we were
concerned about, and we felt we were perhaps being a bit unfair" (8:52, 9: 1-3). Content choice and assessment requirements had to do with what was fair in accordance with student ability. In many cases, like the one above, fairness means that teachers reconsider their practice in terms those students who are of lower academic ability. Therefore, though teacher perception is involved, the comments above illustrate that academic requirements, content and teaching methods are purposely geared for the specific ability level of particular groups of students. While the identification and sorting of students according to academic ability is a norm in schooling, Margaret’s comments point to her common sense understanding that this is done in the name of fairness to students. Other reasons given by participants in regard to the purposes of sorting and identifying students by ability included talk about the context constraints of time and class size.  

In addition to starting at students’ ability level, participants discussed dealing with lower student ability by emphasising certain materials or methods in their everyday practice. For example, they may ask their students to learn or show learning in ways that they know those students are more capable. Christopher gave one example:

We have a lot of quite low ability kids, and so we would always be using especially viewing and speaking because many of our kids are poor at reading and writing. They really struggle with that and they’re very reluctant at that, so we look at them to do a bit of that and then something which they are more confident about. We have an awful lot of very talented artists, for example, very kinaesthetic learners who are really good at learning through doing rather than through reading or writing. (168:22-31)

Alternatively, teachers may emphasise those content or skill areas with which they find their students have less experience or difficulty. In discussing students in an alternative fifth form English class, Margaret mentioned that they're not ready to take an academic School Certificate English class yet, so she said she emphasises basic skills like punctuation and spelling to build up the side of knowledge they lack (27:46-50, 28:1-4). In regard to what material she chooses to do with students, Susanne added, "...sometimes it just depends on the weaknesses or strengths of the student. If they're really strong in one class on creative writing, then I might not do so much creative writing, but maybe some more transactional formal writing, just so they can get stronger in that area" (241:17-22).

47 Interestingly, this points to how Apple and Weis’s (1983, p. 5) notion of schools as an agency of the legitimization of social and cultural ideologies translates into everyday classroom life. I suspect that, at the teacher level, this legitimization is called fairness or necessity.
Accommodation of student ability in practice may also mean that teachers alter the material or their methods to fit their students' ability. In these examples, ability is inclusive of students' maturity and motivation. For example, Peter considers peer assessment to be a sophisticated and mature skill, skill rarely found in the typical sixth or seventh form student. He finds that students need to be broken into it. To do this, he writes down what students should be looking for and commenting on, and keeps peer assessment exercises short (141:31-42). Other teachers, like Margaret, may give what she calls "little reminders" on difficult material or tests (8:32-33). Annette may give her students a "trial run" with an exercise with which she thinks they will have difficulty, like a listening test (202:9-10).

Expectations are fundamental in how teachers perceive student ability and consequently develop their practice. Accustomed to university undergraduates, upon entering high schools during section, Christopher found that his expectations of what his students would be able to achieve fell considerably. His current practice reflects this. Though he enjoys and would like to motivate students to play with themes and imagery in literature, he says he can only do this at the senior level because in many of his school's junior classes, students are of such limited reading ability that he must approach texts at the level of simply understanding the plot. "In most of our junior classes there are so many kids who are either reluctant readers or, in many cases, barely literate that the level you've got to approach a text at is if they can understand what's going on. In many cases, that's sufficient. And then you take what's going on...and you try and expand it out into other activities...so you treat the text really just as a starting point" (173:37-47).

Ellis (ERO) questioned Christopher's lowering of his expectations. She maintains that only poor practitioners lower the expectations of what their students can achieve (Log, p. 311). However, we can see from the rest of the above comment that what Christopher lowered was not the end result of what he wanted his students to achieve, but where he could begin with his method. He realised that he could not simply enter the classroom, expecting his students to engage with, read and understand the material, and have classroom discussions based on the students' intrinsic interest in learning and literature. He had to structure his practice according to their ability so that they could eventually achieve to the desired level. The change is not in expectation of end result, but in how to get there and where to begin.

Identification of student ability is not a static event. Many participants expressed the relationship between their practice and student ability as one of growth
where the teacher begins at her students' level of ability, but gradually draws them further and deeper. Laura, for example, finds that her students have a difficult time grasping the concept of text as construct. They tend to analyse superficially.

It's like academic stuff these days, how they're looking at post-structuralism and that sort of thing. You look at a text as construct. And I think that's a very hard concept for kids to understand, because they look at a film and they think, "Oh yeah. That's okay. I like that, a little bit of action...," but they're not thinking, "Well, this has been deliberately constructed. Somebody had an idea and how are they showing it? And what have they done with it?" (271: 24-34)

Because of this, Laura scaffolds her students into a deeper kind of deconstruction through classroom questioning. She asks her students not only to think, "that's a good story," but to think back to what lies behind it (271: 46-49).

Although we'll see in a moment that teachers do hold strong conceptions of their students, change is possible. For example, Annette was taken aback by the level of work her students achieved on their Lord of the Flies group projects without her help.

We talked in detail about Chapter 1 together. Then, I divided them into pairs, and they took one chapter each, and they had...something like eight quite specific questions to do with what plot details they discovered in their chapter, what elements of theme did they think came through, what information did they learn about each of the main characters, and so on....I was just astounded at the level of work that the girls actually managed to come up with, given that...I had really told them very little at all. (209:28-40)

Once Annette knew that her students’ ability was greater than what she had previously thought, her practice began to take this new knowledge into account, just as Christopher's practice changed to meet the lower ability level of his students. In Borg's (1996) model of classroom practice, this confirms the relationship between the instructional and experiential dimensions. Once new knowledge enters practice, change in experience comes about which in turn influences future instructional practices.

**STUDENT NEEDS**

Statements about student needs were difficult to lift cleanly from the transcript data. Definitions of their students’ needs were rarely clear-cut because so much of what participants defined as “need” seemed based on their own perceptions and values, not necessarily the student’s. This will become obvious in the ensuing discussion. In the end, I realized that conceptions of student ability and need are inseparable from the other factors in the Model. Participants’ definitions of need focused on student success, requirements of the world outside the classroom, the teacher's own beliefs and the ways in which teachers see their students. Participants did not necessarily use the word
“need” in the following examples. I often assumed student need when participants expressed aspects of teaching and learning that they felt were vital in regard to their students.

SUCCESS

Almost all study participants see success as an important student need. For example, when asked why he gives his students optional activities to complete in addition to prescribed reading and writing exercises, Christopher said:

Some kids struggle with [writing] and so there are some compulsory writing tasks, but there are others that are more creative or artistic perhaps that involve different skills which are...still part of the English Curriculum, but which will give them some success. Whereas, if they had to sit down and write for the whole project, if that was all it would involve, they would feel like failures and they wouldn’t enjoy doing it. (169:27-35)

Success is important for a number of reasons. As the above comments suggest, success is necessary so that the enjoyment of what students are doing is not dampened by a sense of failure. When Lisa begins a unit on Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein* with a shortened, abridged version of the novel, she does so with an awareness of the need for student success. “They’re going to manage it. They’re going to have a feeling of success from it” (51:2-3). She feels that a sense of impending failure will dissuade students from engaging in the material, so she is careful to begin with material she is sure they are capable of working with. For Margaret, this feeling that students need to be successful emerges when she is assessing common tests.

Some of us are perhaps kinder at the bottom. That was my fault because I work with remedial kids. I tend to want to give them a mark if I possibly can...you know, it’s pretty grim to give them a two out of twelve for an essay and they’ve written two pages. There must be something [in] there. You sort of creep them up a mark or two. (6:23-30)

In the above examples, students’ need to feel successful is actually something required by the teacher in order to motivate those students in their academic work. Student success, in fact, has a kind of Management Purpose.

OUTSIDE WORLD/JOB MARKET

Some of the needs identified by participants focus on what they see their students facing outside the classroom, especially in regard to competing in the job market. In her teaching, Susanne provides a number of different exercises on material so that they learn to transfer skills from one environment to another. For her, student flexibility is important,
so that when [students] go on to different situations, they can apply what they know...in a different situation and so they're confident in a different situation, I think. Probably the clearest example is speaking. If they've been able to speak with a peer, and then speak to a small group, then I think they're reasonably confident about speaking in front of a big group, and when they go outside the classroom, they are able to use the skills that they've learned to get that confidence and to get their ideas across in a whole different situation, which might be a job interview or something like that. (243:1-12)

She emphasises reading and writing in her classroom because this is what students will need most when they leave school. Those skills are what the outside world will use as a marker of their ability (260:31-37). Christopher makes certain that he teaches his students basic English skills, in addition to more enjoyable material like poems and stories, so that "they have the skills to survive in the job market" (182:42-45). Finally, because many of the students she works with are recent immigrants, Margaret feels that they need basic vocabulary that is helpful in settling into Christchurch, like clothing and food terms as well as language they might encounter in questions (27:32-37). Student needs in this light are part of what participants see as the function of schooling; therefore need in this sense is intimately related to the factor, Teacher Beliefs.

THE TEACHER'S BELIEFS

Student needs were often even more obviously defined by a participant's own world view. Needs springing from the teacher's values often appeared as a kind of theme running throughout the interview. Lisa emphasised a number of times that kids need to have fun (74:2-3, 41-42). This need evolves from her belief in the primacy of the teacher-student relationship in teaching. In another example, Laura feels that students need to know where they stand academically and what they can do to improve. Anything else is "defeating" (282:47-49) and unfair to the students (285:11-16). To this end, she has students in her fifth form alternative class complete self-awareness and grade charts (284:33-48). In addition, she has students in her fourth form class complete goal sheets which they keep throughout the year in their classroom folders (298--example). This need arises from Laura's own experience as a student feeling defeated and confused about her academic status. A final example in which the participant's personal beliefs determine what she sees as her students' needs involves Susanne. Because the New Zealand context is important in her world view, she feels that students need to be familiar with New Zealand culture.
A lot of New Zealanders don’t believe they have a culture...and also a lot don’t believe that there’s anything worthwhile in New Zealand, and they often don’t know what it is that’s different about themselves from other people. And I just think to live in a country, you actually need to have an idea of that...and I think if kids don’t know that, they can’t read things properly in some ways, because they read from within their culture, and sometimes they can’t read things from overseas because they look at them from a New Zealand viewpoint. (251:46-48, 252:1-22)

As mentioned in Chapter 3 under Teacher Interests, her belief in the importance of New Zealand content matter also causes Susanne to react positively to the English Curriculum. She likes the Document because it includes an emphasis on New Zealand texts (251:14-18).

Lisa’s emphasis on fun as a student need is more oriented toward her personal belief in what children need, while again Susanne and Laura are defining their students’ needs as those in the academic arena. In any case, it is obvious that these needs spring from the teacher herself and the culture from which she comes. Teachers’ tendency to construct their students needs from their own culture is discussed in more depth at the end of this chapter.

NATURE OF STUDENTS

Many of the statements participants made about students' needs emerged from their beliefs about the nature of the students they teach. For example, most participants identified their students as being unmotivated about academic work. To overcome this common lack of interest, participants thought students need to be offered knowledge that they want (Theresa, 311:28-35), students need to be taught material that is enjoyable and relevant to their experience (Susanne, 253:9-12), and students need help improving their self-esteem (Laura, 278:41-48).

Throughout the interviews, participants consistently made descriptive statements about the nature of their students. In fact, we made descriptive statements. I have included two of my own statements made during conversations with participants. These statements about students were extracted from the transcripts using the frame, "Students are____", "Students will____", or "Students do____." A number of these are listed below. Looking through the study transcripts, many more statements can be found, but the few given here will serve to highlight the kinds of beliefs participants have about their students and lead well into the discussion about how these perceptions and beliefs define student needs and determine practice. They are not direct quotes but, where it is appropriate and possible, the same terminology is used. The reader should remember that they have been taken out of context and may refer to past experience. They should
be regarded as participants' theories about students—theories that I will point out are subject to revision in light of experience. Though here they are considered in isolation, many of the statements below can be found as part of participants’ beliefs about teaching and learning in the next chapter. Beliefs about students do not actually exist in teachers' minds in this kind of sterile list. The next chapter's approach to presentation is much more accurate. The list is used here only for purposes of discussion.

ACADEMIC MOTIVATION

1. Compared to university students, high school students have to be controlled because they're not motivated (Christopher, 172:3-6).
2. Kids will sit and draw posters all day if you let them (Christopher, 169:48-49).
3. Most of our students see little or no value in education, and in most cases, don't find learning a reward in itself (Christopher, 176:35-39).
4. Most students don’t want to read anything and will often make book choices based on what has the most modern cover (Theresa, 306:46-49, 307:1-6).
5. Students are unmotivated because of self-esteem problems (Laura, 278:41-48).
6. Students don’t want to learn, but you can get them to work independently (Christopher, 177:9-13).

STUDENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

7. Students are disorganised when given freedom (Theresa, 325:35-38).
8. Students are good at viewing (Lisa, 62:21-23).
9. Many students don’t have good listening skills (Susanne, 246:2-5).
10. Many students don’t know how to set goals (Jennifer and Laura, 285:35-37).

STUDENT MATURITY AND THE NATURE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

11. Students are usually honest (Susanne, 249:10-11).
12. Students are dramatic about their emotions (Theresa, 316:51-52).
13. Children have an egocentric nature (Theresa, 316:43-44).
14. Children have a generosity of spirit about co-operating (Theresa, 316:41-42).
15. Boys want to read violent stuff but many girls are turned off that (Theresa, 324:35-39).
16. Teenagers want to grow up so quickly that they can’t enjoy being kids (Lisa, 73:39-42).

NATURE OF STUDENTS

17. All kids have a potential that they can reach, even if it’s not as high as somebody else's (Margaret, 30:38-40).
18. Students are reluctant to do what they’re not good at (Christopher, 168:25-28).
Many students are teacher-dependent, even the ones who want to work but are limited (Christopher, 178:41-44).

Able students become frustrated in mixed ability classes (Margaret, 29:23-26).

Most students play up because they're not interested (Christopher, 179:6-7).

Students will give input if asked (Laura, 283:20-22).

Students will back off from ideas and material that are too "close" (Laura, 290:29-31).

In straight bottom classes, students feel like "We're the dummies" (Margaret, 29:21-23).

Low ability students and some high ability students have short attention spans (Christopher, 168:20-22).

Most kids find studying grammar really boring (Christopher, 183:4-5).

Students don't give themselves credit for what they can do what they know (Laura, 289:14-16).

Students resist responsibility for their learning because it's easier to depend on the teacher (Jennifer, 204:9-14).

**WHAT STUDENTS LIKE**

Students like structure (Christopher, 178:41-42).

Students want the teacher to keep control of the class (Christopher, 189:11-15).

Fifth form classes love SE Hinton books (Laura, 287:35-37).

Remedial students like my class because they don't feel ridiculed or threatened here (Margaret, 32:10-13).

**WHAT STUDENTS WANT**

Maori kids in your class don't want to be a resource; they want to learn from you because their culture has been marginalised for so long (Theresa, 324:35-39).

Kids won't accept the uninteresting or irrelevant, they want to be entertained (Margaret, 36:33-38).

Students are interested in their marks (Laura, 285:39-42).

How a teacher perceives his students affects what he determines those students' needs to be. With any of the statements above, a need can be defined and a teaching practice formulated on that basis. For example, taking Statement 4, because she feels that most of her students do not want to read at all, Theresa finds that she must be prescriptive in her teaching. "I have to be a lot more persuasive as a teacher I'm finding...I do try and consult them...but with most I don't go as far with [that]. I'm much more punitive about not doing work that I used to be" (307:1-9). For her, this is a dramatic change. She started her career with the belief that the content of learning should be determined by the students, that they should be able to negotiate what they learn. Her assumption was that students are curious, that they want to learn and will learn when given the opportunity. With earlier students, she found this to be true and
was able to hang on to this belief, but at the school where she has recently begun teaching, she finds the students are different. Theresa's current students, because they are reluctant, need more prescription and negative reinforcement in the classroom. As will be discussed in a moment, when making these statements, teachers were basing them on experience.

In another example, Christopher's statements about his students' lack of academic motivation (Statements 1, 2, 3 and 6), reluctance to attempt what they are not good at (Statement 18), short attention spans (Statement 25), and desire for structure and control (Statements 29 and 30) translate into practices focusing on task variety, student success, a more authoritarian style of management than Christopher initially envisioned in his teaching, and the management-oriented use of journals "just to get the kids writing" (180:13-14). These kinds of beliefs about students also influence how participants respond to the English Curriculum. Theresa hesitates with the English Curriculum Characteristic that English programmes should reflect the New Zealand context because she thinks that Maori students do not want to be a resource in the classroom (Statement 33).

Most of the information given here has to do with how teachers see their students and their students' needs as a group. This is actually one of the problems associated with participants' attempts to really know their students. However, Annette gave an example of a situation in which she responded in practice to a student's individual personal and academic needs.

One of the best moments, really, was where...Stacy came to school one day...and she said to me, 'Look, I've just come up with this idea. It's probably the most stupid idea that it could be,' because that's typical of Stacy--in an ordinary class situation, she may not have offered the idea--but she said, 'I think that you could actually relate Lord of the Flies to democracy and dictatorship and so on....' And I said, 'Stacy, that's just it!...Now, I want you to keep that idea just to yourself...that can be your moment to actually present that [idea when you do your presentation]....I think it [gave] her a great feeling of achievement herself. And...I think it's had some spin-off in terms of her confidence...it really helped her in terms of her own development. (210:17-55, 211:4-5)

Annette went on to say that this was important because of some difficulties in Stacy's home background that affect her self confidence (211:11-17). Unfortunately, due to the time constraints of school culture, participants have said that these individual responses are few in practice. In this way, perception of student ability and need is intimately tied to the factor, Context Constraints.

When I first generated this list of statements, I was taken aback by the way we typify our students--the way I typified my students. What is important to note is that
these statements are locked in a vacuum. As discussed above, teachers' perceptions of ability are always subject to change. Conceptualisation of students is a continuous process in the development of teacher experience. When I said that "a lot of students don't necessarily know how to set goals" (Statement 10), I was thinking back to a summer school study skills class where I asked my students, the first day, to name some goals they had for the summer in my class. What skills did they want to master? What did they want to learn? What I elicited was a class full of blank stares. The next summer, before I asked the students what their goals were, we talked about their experiences in school—the problems they encountered, their hopes for the coming year—and, together, we listed the study skills we came across in our discussion on the board. From that list, I asked the students to write three goals beginning with "I will ___." No blank stares, and we had some goals to work toward for the summer. Similarly, many of the participants' statements are based on a point in past experience. Even if they are not, they are subject to change just as Christopher found that his students wanted structure when he was not giving it to them, and Theresa changed her practice when she tried to give her current students the freedom to negotiate the curriculum and they chose nothing.

**HOW WELL DO TEACHERS KNOW THEIR STUDENTS?**

Most participants expressed frustration about the difficulty of knowing their students. While Theresa was making descriptive statements about her students that are outlined above, she acknowledged she might be presumptuous in assuming that most of her students do not want to read anything (306:46-48) and that, despite assumptions, she really does not know if her students actually intend not to read the books she assigns (325:29-32). Class size and time seemed to lie at the root of teachers' lack of knowledge, especially when diversity of culture, ability and behaviour are taken into account. Speaking about her early teaching experience, Laura said:

I found it quite hard, because you had a whole classroom full of them, and you only see them for an hour, and then they go away. You don't really get a chance to know them very well...I find in this job still, you are surprised by parents coming along and telling you things that you never knew, you'd never have known if they hadn't told you. (278:10-17)

We can see from the Negotiating participants' descriptive statements about their students that teachers see their students and come to their definitions of those students' needs from observations that are both academic and personal, yet most of what teachers evaluate and seek to find information about focuses on the academic aspect of the
students they teach. The information they have is limited. In light of time and class size pressures, students cannot be treated individually (see discussion under Context Constraints in Chapter 3). In the end, teachers may fall back on their own schema or background to know their students. Montero-Sieburth (1996) maintains that this happens anyway. Following Anderson-Levitt, the author asserts that a teacher's knowledge base, which is determined by her culture, produces generalised beliefs about students which are coloured by her cultural assumptions and knowledge of those students. Montero-Sieburth's research focuses on at-risk Latino students in urban schools, but I believe her theory is applicable here. In their students, much of what participants see is actually of their own production.

I found it interesting that so few responses to the English Curriculum emerged in regard to student ability and needs. Perhaps it is because participants' beliefs about students are so steeped in the educational culture created since the NESC's work that they do not think to question whether the approach to teaching and learning advocated by the Document is actually good for the needs and nature of their students. Discussion in the next chapter, Teacher Beliefs, revisits this issue of accepted professional culture in contrasting the beliefs of less experienced participants with their more experienced counterparts (see also the discussion of professional knowledge landscapes and the normative functions of Teachers' College in Chapter 3).

I would like to briefly note before moving on that while participants may not have mentioned their responses to the English Curriculum so strongly in regard to this factor or the factors, Teacher Interests and Management Purposes, these three factors are so significant in the data and formulation of participants’ classroom practice that they could not be ignored in the Model. I suspect that, in their interrelationships with other factors that do influence response to the English Curriculum more strongly, they play as great a role as Experience, Consciousness of the Professional Environment, Context Constraints or Teacher Beliefs.

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CHAPTER 5

TEACHER BELIEFS

This chapter focuses on the factor, Teacher Beliefs, as it relates to the Model described in Chapter 3. I begin with a discussion of the nature of the beliefs expressed by participants and then move on to describe how and why the belief statements presented in this chapter were developed. Five belief statements follow. My comments at the end of each statement will highlight how participants' beliefs influence their practice and response to the English Curriculum. Although its ultimate aim is the presentation of data in support of the Model, I will use this chapter to consider the nature of beliefs and their implications for research methodology.

THE NATURE OF TEACHER BELIEFS

Theresa illustrated how a teacher's beliefs affect practice when, talking about how her belief that students should negotiate what they learn has changed, she said, "but you also have to maintain the integrity of the subject and your own integrity as a teacher. So, the priority is the student, but not to the extent of compromising things that you believe in" (315:15-19). The example she gave involved how her own negative beliefs about drug use would affect a class discussion of the topic.

Some kids in our school, thirteen of them, were just recently busted for smoking dope. Now, I think it's quite appropriate for that to come up for discussion in English class, and I think it would be appropriate...for the kids to say that they think dope smoking is okay. Now, I don't. I think I'm a role model. I don't actually think it's okay. My personal philosophy is that it it's not okay. I don't support it, but even if I did, I still wouldn't say it [in school]....I acknowledge that it happens and I want the kids to talk about it and to talk about why they do it. And I don't see myself as a reformer, coming and saying, "Thou shalt not do this and thou shalt not do that." But, I also feel that if I've opened that can of worms, I then have a responsibility to address the issue in more than a superficial way, because otherwise you're sort of saying, "Talk about it. This is a really trendy classroom where you say what you think, but then what changed about your ideas?" Because a lot of what they're saying is crap...it's uninformed....That's where I think the experience of a teacher is really important. (315:19-45).

Though the example describes a personal belief, it is indicative of both the strength and complexity of beliefs teachers carry into their classrooms. Munby (1982) asserts the primacy and power of beliefs in the formulation of teachers' classroom practice and
response to curricula. Citing Nisbett and Ross, Munby (p. 206) points out that our beliefs influence how we characterise events and perceive experience. Because of this, he maintains beliefs are difficult to change, even in the face of contradictory evidence.

If I have found in all my experience as a teacher that left-handed students are more musical than their right-handed peers, then I am unlikely to be very impressed by an instance you might present to me of a tone-deaf southpaw. I may fleetingly note the anomaly, but the power of my beliefs will easily outweigh the single case. (p. 207)

Munby's example shows how constitutive teachers' beliefs are in the perception of their students, and indicates how tenacious those images tend to be. Though in the last chapter, I discussed how the participants' expectations and definitions of students were subject to constant revision, Negotiating participants confirmed the resistance of their fundamental beliefs about teaching and learning to change. Six of the eight participants said that the beliefs and principles with which they started teaching had not changed significantly during the course of their careers. For example, Lisa thinks of herself as a role model and believes that the classroom should be a place where students are valued and encouraged and enjoy themselves, so she does her best to make certain her students have fun. Though the reality of school life and time constraints have affected her practice, she said her principles have remained the same (77:48-53).

Returning to Theresa's example above, one can see how her belief about recreational drug use ties into her belief about what is appropriate for discussion in English classrooms which ties into her beliefs about the purpose of schooling and the nature of her students. Not only are teacher beliefs powerful and resistant to change, they are incredibly complex and endlessly recursive. As I will discuss in a moment, this chapter presents five of the belief statements I developed for participants from their transcripts. My choice to present them in full without the dissection of my own commentary reflects the authentic nature of belief in all its tangled messiness.

Participants expressed their beliefs in a variety of ways, but the word, "philosophy," was rarely used and even avoided by a few participants, perhaps because they defined philosophy as their personal beliefs and felt these beliefs have little to do with the subject English. Lisa's comment illustrates this:

I wanted the students to have fun. I wanted to teach them to think. I wanted them to do well on exams, for their own qualifications and so on. What else did I want them to (pauses)? I guess...this has nothing to do with English again, you see. This is how when you get on to the philosophy of things, I mean, I guess I wanted to be a role model for a kind of lifestyle. (74:32-38)

Despite their reticence to define a philosophy, every teacher in this study had a clear set of beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as beliefs about students, the classroom and school environment, and their roles as teachers. In any event, Theresa and Lisa may have been the only participants to use the “p-word” with ease and familiarity. Perhaps this is because teachers rarely articulate their beliefs in a coherent, comprehensive and purposeful fashion. Theresa’s interview supports this theory. A recently appointed HOD, she talked about how she had to develop “clarity” when she became an HOD:

One difference [in being an HOD] for me in terms of the English Curriculum is that I have a lot of clarity...but not for myself. Once you’re an HOD, you have to have clarity for other people as well....I mean, people really look to you. You know what you’re doing, and if you’re a professional, hopefully you’ve got a philosophy as well, a clarity about what you’re doing. (304:7-17)

This observation implies that regular classroom teachers are not necessarily asked or required to have clarity about what they are doing in the same way that an HOD would be. Theresa said her career in the classroom illustrates how classroom teachers can teach without having clarity.

I went to a school that allowed me to experiment with my philosophy, which had a very, very strong philosophy of its own and a very strong leader....So, I got on with my teaching absolutely happily teaching away because I was doing what everybody else was doing and I didn’t read the material that I got fixed up to read [saying], "Oh yes, of course it makes sense." It was only when I moved out of that environment that I had to start solidifying and revising and constructing my own philosophy, my own beliefs and things like that. (322:3-17)

Annette had a similar story. She spent almost a month of 1995 in Australia on a Woolf Fisher Fellowship, visiting schools throughout the country and looking at their new national curriculum documents and implementation. “That was something that I found when I was in Australia last year. It clarified things quite a bit for me because in some ways because I was needing to talk about [the English Curriculum] as opposed to [the Australian Curriculum] with people” (219:33-39). Though she still felt that she did not have a “really clear idea of what the overall philosophy is based on” (219:31-33) and would have liked a more specific “overall view” (220:23-40), Annette felt she could articulate the principles and ideas of the English Curriculum. Theresa and Annette’s stories point out that, when it comes to beliefs and philosophy, participants could only articulate what they had been asked to examine. Several participants said that was the reason they agreed to participate in Negotiating; participation was an opportunity for them to take a fresh look at the English Curriculum and their teaching, and perhaps find
some clarity in the process. Susanne expressed this sentiment at the end of our interview.

[This has] been quite useful just because [as I go] through my teaching programme I sometimes forget to actually go back and look, revisit so to speak, as my old HOD used to say at times, “Revisit the Document!” [It’s] quite helpful just to see what is actually in there and to look at it again and say, “Yep, yep, or...have I actually done this?” (265:8-17)

WRITING THE BELIEF STATEMENTS

This chapter offers the five belief statements I developed for Annette, Christopher, Lisa, Peter and Theresa from their initial interview transcripts. Similar statements were written for the remaining three participants. While participants seemed to think that they did not have philosophies, much of what I was hearing during the interviews was educational philosophy expressed in terms of personal beliefs about teaching and learning. Participants simply were not articulating it as such. At first, writing the statements was more for my own clarity—a method of eliciting information from the data—but once the statements were written I saw how they might offer another opportunity for participants to revisit their teaching. To that end, I mailed each participant his or her respective statement, asking that they read, make the appropriate changes and return it to me. All eight returned their statements and none were significantly altered. Most of the marks on returned statements involved small grammatical or semantic changes. The nature of their changes and the notes most participants enclosed with their returned statements saying that the statements adequately reflect their beliefs indicate that the statements are coherent and credible interpretations of the interview data. In addition, the statements acted as a form of time triangulation, as I have discussed previously in Chapter 2.

The statements which follow focus on beliefs about teaching and learning, though it has been established that those beliefs cannot be separated from beliefs about students or constraints or any of the other factors outlined in the Model. To extract those beliefs from the interview transcripts, I used a prompt inadvertently offered by Margaret. When I asked her about her philosophy, Margaret began with “I believe that...” (30:38). “I believe that ____” became a simple yet effective frame for pulling talk about beliefs from the transcripts.

The presentation of data in this chapter is perhaps the least artificial in this thesis because it retains that synthesis of content I have separated out everywhere else. To reinforce their authenticity, I have relegated my comments to the end of each statement. In writing the statements I worked to show the relationship between these beliefs and
participants' classroom practice and response to the English Curriculum, which is the ultimate focus of this chapter. In most cases, I will be quoting the participants directly, but I've removed certain sections and sometimes inserted words to clarify or repeat key points as well as to enhance the flow of the monologue. I have kept it as close as possible to the flavour of each participant's thoughts and language; in writing them, the question I kept at the back of my mind was, "Would she say 'Yes, you've got it. This is what I believe.'" Each of these statements gives a whole picture of how each participant thinks about his or her teaching, and thus, a picture of each participant.

Their beliefs could have been categorised and examined thematically, but I find they have more meaning when they are examined individually in their entirety. In a study of teacher beliefs using Kelly's Repertory Grid Technique, Munby (1983) laments the artificial production of his methodology.

[The study's account of the data] demonstrates that an attempt to force idiosyncratic and contextually meaningful statements into rather coarse and ambiguous categories can lead only to a dilution of the data's power. The power of these data lies in their context, and the meaningfulness of any of these beliefs and principles emerges fully only when we can picture all of them held in concert. (p. 38)

The Repertory Grid Technique is very effective in generating a list of succinct, contextualised beliefs from the teachers with whom it is used. Munby is correct, however. In the presentation of his data, those lists only become meaningful when presented alongside extracts from the interviews that produced them.  

While generalising is a natural part of this work, what I have been forced to remember in writing these statements is that this study is about myself and these eight participants. This section will highlight the individual nature of the participants in this study. I also had the opportunity to write a belief statement for myself from my own comments in the eight interview transcripts. This statement can be found in Appendix E.

ANNETTE

Though I find resistance from students to this, I think students should take responsibility for their own learning (202:50-54). There is to some extent, perhaps particularly with the girls at my school, a reluctance to actually put themselves on the

51 See Munby (1983, 1982) for detailed description of his use of the Repertory Grid Technique. I would recommend use of the grid in eliciting concise statements of belief contextualised in the teacher's own perspective and practice, perhaps for use as a focus during discussion or for triangulation. The method seems limited in itself, however, given the complicated nature of teacher beliefs. Munby later turned to other techniques for this reason (see Munby, 1986).
line, but I want my students to be able to think for themselves. I won’t be in the Bursary exam with them to say, “You must write this.” They’re going to have to be able to do it without me and adapt what they’ve learned to fit the particular exam questions (202:53-54, 203:1-37). Group work is sometimes a way of getting them to take some responsibility for the learning process. A good example of that is a group project I had them do in pairs on Lord of the Flies. Each pair took one chapter and had something like eight specific questions to cover. I was just astounded at the level of work that the girls actually managed to come up with, given that I had told them very little at all (209:16-40). Sometimes, I think we teachers think that we need to give the gems of information to students, but I’ve come to believe that many of those gems can be given by the students themselves (210:13-17). Besides, with some students, taking responsibility and finding that their own interpretations are valid has spin-offs for their sense of achievement and personal development (211:3-6). I don’t see myself just as somebody who has a syllabus or a curriculum or whatever to get through with students. I also want students to develop as people. I want to impart a love of literature, but I have a wider view of that which has evolved over the last few years, perhaps because I just have a kind of consciousness of how things have changed in English and in how I see my students, possibly because I’ve had kids of my own (205:1-11). Plus, I’ve learned more about the writing process. I can’t teach the way I did when I first started teaching in the Seventies, so since I’ve come back to teaching, I’ve placed a lot more emphasis on actually getting kids to acknowledge and understand that their own experiences are valuable and something on which they might base things that they write. But, every class is different. Sometimes, I have to structure and adjust the way I teach to fit what a class needs in terms of, say, their organisational skills. I would never lower my standards, but for certain students, having me at the front of the room doing things isn’t going to be particularly successful (230:12-55, 231:1-26), while for others that may be important or necessary.

I have a strong belief that it has been necessary to return to teaching the structures of language in our programmes. I don’t accept the theory that students can only learn these concepts as they have a need for them. Students need the terminology and concepts to help them in their own writing. I remain fairly focused on literature. That may be one reason why the Australian National Curriculum rings home much more with what I’m trying to do with our students. I would not like language in its widest sense to become too overriding in our programmes at the expense of literature. I don’t know. English in the New Zealand Curriculum just isn’t specific enough about
text. The Australian document gives the general information and then the quite specific things about what they would be expecting students to have done with classic literature, contemporary literature and so on (222:3-15). I think the English Curriculum is just a little bit woolly with some of the things it is saying, especially in how they are expecting teachers to do some of these various things. The English Curriculum contains a lot of words that don’t have absolutely specific meanings. I guess I want clarity, a clearer idea of what it is that I’m expected to do in my classroom (217:33-40, 218:9-13), as well as consistency (223:22-26) in the strands themselves (193:1-39). Even though I like the Australian document better, I’m still not entirely sure that their idea is any better or any clearer than anyone else’s (220:18-21). I like the English Curriculum and it is fine as a sort of overview or philosophy, and I think if it had that plus more specific detail, I’d be quite happy about it. I sort of feel it doesn’t really give you a very strong lead into what is required in terms of the Achievement Objectives (222:35-44). I think, as an individual teacher, I can make judgements and feel confident about how I define things like ‘developing a personal voice’ as given for Level Five of written language in the English Curriculum, but will it be consistent with other teachers’ definitions and with the definitions of assessors (197:19-54, 198:1-2)? As a teacher, I should know specifically what is expected.

I think we can and should include listening and viewing in our curriculum. This does not have to take the literary benefit away from students. If you’re going to address these areas, you may have to do one less piece of literature with the class or whatever. This year at the form 5 level, I may do two novels instead of the usual three, but I’ll do a film study of something like *Pride and Prejudice*, so in fact, they’re still going to gain the literary benefit, but be looking at it through a different perspective like viewing. And I’ll make the books available to them, obviously, to read as well. So, I think there are ways of doing it while, importantly, not compromising the depth of what you’re doing (199:45-48, 200:1-17).

**DISCUSSION OF ANNETTE’S BELIEF STATEMENT**

Like the teachers participating in Munby’s study (1983, p. 34), Annette expresses many of her beliefs in terms of the personal and instructional goals she has for her students: she wants them to take responsibility for their own learning, become independent and develop as people. This influences her use of practices like group work. Annette’s goals also include that her students achieve academic success on the external exams they are required to sit. Her more personal goals tie into this—she
believes her students must be able to function independently if they are to succeed on
their exams. This goal of student success also induces a belief that teachers should be
consistent in their assessment and know specifically what is expected of their students.
This leads to her main criticism of the English Curriculum: it is not clear enough.
Although she is open to areas of learning like listening and viewing, her belief about the
nature of the subject English is more literature than language based, and this also causes
her to respond to the English Curriculum with some hesitance. This belief in the
primacy of literature in English also means that when she teaches viewing, she will
probably teach it with a literary focus.

CHRISTOPHER

Different forms of language are interrelated, so I don’t treat, for example, poetic
language as an entity entirely separate from viewing or spoken language or any other
form of language. They’re all linked. They all relate together, and this is one of the
emphases of the English Curriculum with which I agree. For me, this idea came from
my work at University. I have a doctorate in English, so I’ve done a reasonable amount
of work on English literature and language, but that was an intellectual awareness. On
section, I saw that it was practical as well. You have to do a variety of activities within
even one lesson to keep the kids interested. It’s just common sense (166:4-47, 167:1-2).
I really hate teaching nuts-and-bolts English stuff and I find it very difficult to teach
because I won’t teach it in isolation. Like anything else, you’ve got to teach grammar
as part of something else because most kids find studying it really boring. Besides,
even if they know the grammatical rules and tell you all the answers one day, the next
day they won’t be able to tell you how a sentence starts. So, because I enjoy looking at
how language is put together and because I won’t teach it in isolation, I will often try
and bring grammar into other language topics or language games (183:1-36).

Part of offering variety is giving students choice. In any project, there will be
two or three things that some kids won’t really enjoy because they’re not interested or
it’s not what they’re good at. If they have a choice so they can do, say, four or five
things they are good at, they’ll get involved in the work and then, hopefully, that will
carry over into the rest of the project. They’ll start off doing a really good job with the
things they’re good at and they won’t want to do a sloppy job with the rest, because they
know that would drag down the whole thing, not necessarily for their grade, but for their
own satisfaction (170:35-48). Students need to be successful and enjoy what they’re
doing. I give the variety, the optional activities in projects, because some kids love
writing in a lot of different styles. Some kids struggle with that, so there are some compulsory writing tasks, but there are other more creative or artistic activities that involve different kinds of skills--skills which are still part of the English Curriculum--that will give them some success. If they had to sit down and write for the whole project, if that was all it involved, they would feel like failures and they wouldn’t enjoy doing it. It’s important to complete the English Curriculum, though, and the compulsory tasks in a project would cover all the basic skills required by the English Curriculum (169:24-48).

I enjoy the kind of game playing and detective work involved in literary analysis. I’m not heavily into literary theory and think most of it’s a load of crap. But, say, looking at a Shakespeare play and finding that the character says something here which seems to contradict something that goes there, and how can you match that within that character? Things like themes and imagery--I really enjoy doing that stuff. It’s something I can only try and do at the senior levels, because in many of our junior classes, there are so many kids who are either reluctant readers or, in many cases, barely literate. So, in reading, you take what’s going on and expand it out into other activities which might be a play or a movie or something that’s happened in the students’ own lives. The text is really just a starting point for a whole lot of other activities. Literature can’t be an end in itself. The point of literature is really what you can get out of it in your own life. If you sort of slip it under the microscope and study it without taking any of it into yourself or putting any of yourself back into it, it’s a waste of time. That’s not why you do English (173:17-48, 174:1-9). When we read a book and think about it, we notice contradictions, things that make us think, things which fall into us and expand our view of life. That’s why I enjoy reading. In academia, that’s not what academic study is about. During my PhD, when I took this amalgam of Marxist and feminist theory with a fair bit of history and applied it to this guy’s plays, if I had been really keen and dedicated, I could have probably made an academic career out of applying exactly the same theory to fifty other playwrights and novelists. But, I’d know almost in advance what I was going to come up with before I’d even read the plays. Why bother publishing ten articles a year if you know what you’re going to say, you’re not going to be learning anything from it and neither is anyone else? The classroom is different. You get this personal response, whether it’s kind of an emotional level where students identify with things in their own lives or whether it’s through literature or language (175:1-23).
The ability to work independently and co-operatively, perseverance and all those kinds of things are, in many ways, the most important thing we’ll ever teach at school. On section, I saw that for some of the classes there, any work of literature really was largely an irrelevance in their own lives. You had major social problems. The students were totally unable to work together and the teachers I observed were trying to develop things like self-esteem. That’s not true of all our kids, but if we can do both—complete the curriculum and work on social skills—that’s really good. It seems to me that the English Curriculum definitely has a sort of left wing, social agenda, and I’ve got no problems with that. Most of the academic skills kids learn at school, they’re never going to use. What students will take away and hang on to will be things like independent thought and problem-solving skills. At the same time, there’s this kind of liberal, new right agenda that is very Business Roundtable emphasising that our schools are educating kids for what they need, interpreting what they need as what the market needs. I’m not happy with that philosophically because I just don’t agree that the market should decide what happens in schools or anywhere else. That’s extremely dangerous, but at the same time, there is certainly in a school like this an awful lot of proof that almost none of our kids will go on to University and study English in the same way that I did and get the pleasure in it that I did. Most of our kids leave school to get a job, so I have to make sure if I can that they have the skills to survive in the job market and to that end, teach the nuts-and-bolts English stuff (181:37-48, 182:1-53, 183:1).

I agree with most of the English Curriculum. It’s pretty much what I’m trying to do in the classroom (185:36-39). I think I was just looking through it to see what was expected of me and, as I read it, I kind of thought, “Well, yes, that’s what I would be trying to do anyway.” Then, I would have flicked over things about gender inclusive and Maori students. That’s stuff that goes without saying (186:5-12).

DISCUSSION OF CHRISTOPHER’S BELIEF STATEMENT

I have included Christopher’s belief statement because it exemplifies the interconnected nature of the factors, Teacher Beliefs and Students. Most of Christopher’s beliefs revolve around students—what they need, what they can do, what they can’t do, what they feel and find important. Those beliefs cannot be separated out from his beliefs about how English should be taught. For example, he refuses to teach grammar in isolation both because he believes the different forms of language are interrelated and because he believes his students think it’s boring. In her statement,
Annette asserts the need for teaching what Christopher calls the “nuts-and-bolts” of English, regardless. She would probably not be as bothered in her classroom practice by teaching it in isolation. Neither is especially interested in formal grammar teaching, but both participants see a need for it, albeit for different reasons. Christopher believes grammar teaching is important because his students will need those skills to survive in the job market and Annette believes in it because she thinks students need the terminology for their writing in school. In looking at Annette and Christopher’s statements, grammar teaching--the nuts and bolts of English--sits at the junction of the factors, Students, Teacher Beliefs and Teacher Interests. Whether, when and how grammar teaching happens in their classrooms is a function of the continual interplay of these factors.

It is also interesting to note that both Christopher and Annette believe in developing their students’ ability to work independently. However, where Annette’s belief in this involves academic assessment, Christopher feels that developing social skills like independence and co-operation is the primary function of schooling.

**LISA**

I’ve been teaching for eight years, and an integrated approach to learning and all that is a part of how I understand English. So, in my department of about twelve or fourteen English teachers, I’d say we would have accepted this before the English Curriculum ever came out. To me, it’s just common sense. I think it spells out good teaching practice (52:32-49, 53:1-24), so good teachers are doing this already (59:9). During the English Curriculum training, I was frustrated because what I wanted to learn was not how to teach English, which I felt I already knew how to do, but how this was going to affect my reporting and my assessment (55:4-7).

I won’t say I’m resistant to change, but I’m a fairly contented kind of person and I can accept change, but I don’t rush ahead at it. I guess I was nervous about what was going to be thrown at me in terms of the English Curriculum. I was thinking, “What are they going to make us do? How are we going to have to change all our fantastic resources and all that kind of thing?” But, in fact, there’s really not a lot to be concerned about as far as I can see (59:33-48). For example, we’re being encouraged to make viewing a compulsory assessment at our school, just to ensure that we are covering all aspects of the English Curriculum. Personally, for me that was a little bit threatening because it’s not my field of expertise. Viewing was not something I felt one hundred percent confident about, but I’ve quite enjoyed learning about it. I’m much
more interested in literature, so to get them looking at films as literature has been really interesting because they’re very good at it (62:13-26). And I think it teaches them to be discerning when they’re going out socially and things. It’s like teaching advertising, which we’ve done for years. Why teach advertising? I think it helps them to be less gullible and I think it gives them power. They can understand how they’re being manipulated, and like music, if you understand what’s being done, you can enjoy it on two different levels. You can enjoy it just as, “Ah, that’s really nice music,” but you can also enjoy it on an educated level as, “Ah, that’s a lovely little motif and the oboes picked it up there and somebody’s done such and such.” With an advertisement or a film, kids can go to a movie and enjoy it, but then they can also have the power to choose how it affects them (64:25-46).

I’m a gut-reaction kind of teacher, and I can tell you why I’m doing things and why they work (54:1-3), but I try not to get bogged down in paperwork. The English Curriculum has helped me in the direction of my overall planning, but my daily planning is pretty much by gut instinct. I mean, I’m a very structured person in how I live my life. I’m well-organised and punctual and all those kinds of things, but I guess when it comes to teaching, I have objectives and aims and I know what I’m doing, but I don’t necessarily have it all written down. It’s a tricky balance. To me, a good teacher is someone who has a good relationship with the kids and is really teaching them stuff. If I’m spending all my time piddling around with little bits of paper, I’m probably not being as effective in the classroom, because you only have so much energy. I do a lot of things outside teaching and I want to keep it that way, because I think that makes me a better teacher. So, it’s a choice (68:17-40).

I believe that everything should be integrated in learning and I believe in the writing process. I first came across these ideas in Teachers’ College, and it was there that I also was encouraged to have the courage to be a little bit controversial in my teaching (69:20-28). I don’t mean that I stand up there and shock the kids, but being controversial and teaching to get the kids to think, give them something to get their teeth into to start with, challenge their thinking about things (70:13-17). With Romeo and Juliet, for example, I will come in and, rather than sitting down and starting from a stand point with which they’re not familiar, I might say, “Alright, who believe in love at first sight?” and start from a concept that they’ve got lots of conflicting ideas about. That makes kids think, and whatever else English is about, it’s about making kids think. And if you can teach them how to think for themselves, then I suppose that’s what lots of education is about (69:34-44, 70:1).
I’m a Christian, so I come from this really strong moral standpoint as well, and I believe that helping kids think is all part of teaching kids how to look at their lives and those sorts of things. Of course, I can’t do this overtly, but it’s all part of what makes me tick as a person and so, as a teacher. Consequently, I’m bringing a lot of beliefs into the classroom as an underpinning to why I do what I do and how I do what I do (71:4-12). I enjoy English, so I did an English degree, but that’s not why I’m teaching. I chose to teach because I think that people are important and I like people. I think that kids need to be really valued and their ideas need to be valued and they really need to be encouraged, and I’m quite an encouraging person and I thought, “Yeah, I can go out there and help those kids as people.” I’m actually thinking of leaving teaching, but it’s not because I’m disillusioned, although I don’t like the direction of some of the things coming in. I’m concerned about those unit standards and so on. I think we’re going to bog ourselves down in “stamp collecting,” as my father calls it, where people are out to get little qualification after little qualification. That’s no education. That’s not teaching kids to think. It’s teaching kids to get qualifications. It’s teaching kids how to pass tests (71:42-43, 72:1-22).

I guess one of my driving principles is that students should have as much fun as they possibly can. That doesn’t sound very educational, but it says that somewhere in the English Curriculum, too, that students should enjoy what they’re doing. I think kids are kids, and what really upsets me about teenagers is that half of them are trying so hard to grow up so quickly that they’re not actually enjoying being kids. They are still kids, but they’re so busy being responsible and getting all the right qualifications at school, and outside school they’re doing all sorts of things socially that I wouldn’t have dreamed of, you know. So, I wanted to teach and help kids have fun, and I think I’ve done that. We do Theatresports, for example (73:16-44, 74:1-5). The reality, especially the time constraints, have affected my teaching, but I think my principles are the same as they were when I started teaching (77:50-53). I want students to have fun, I want to teach them to think and I want them to do well on exams, for their own qualifications. I also want to be a role model for a kind of lifestyle. Every day I’m standing there and I’m thinking, “Okay, I’m a role model in lots of ways for these kids, aren’t I?” I’m a single woman who is happy and that’s something I’m modelling to kids who are hung up on relationships, especially perhaps some of our academic girls who may have a low sense of self-esteem because they’re not in a relationship. I’m also role-modelling my faith, which for some kids is helpful. I hope I also role model things like the love of
learning because I’m still at university part-time and I often talk about being there (74:32-42, 75:1-23).

DISCUSSION OF LISA’S BELIEF STATEMENT

Lisa’s statement is included because it shows the importance of personal background in the development of classroom beliefs. For Lisa, the content of English figures less in her beliefs about teaching, than it does for Christopher or Annette. Teaching, from her standpoint, is about the relationship she has with her students, not assessment or content. She says that this belief probably comes from her Christian background. Her statement supports Connelly and Clandinin’s (1995, p. 27) suggestion that a teacher’s professional knowledge landscape is intimately connected with the “personal landscapes” outside their professional setting. This strong moral background also influences Lisa to define her job in terms of being a role model for the students she teaches.

PETER

I have doubts about the idea that everything should be child-centred, that everything must be related to the child. I just think that the knowledge and skills are much greater than the child at level and that one can have too much inward-looking. Why make everything relate to the child’s experience? Why not make it something new, something wonderful to discover? In my classroom, I do that by feeding my students anything and everything—what’s in that day’s newspaper, political cartoons that deal with the current election, a book written by someone from a totally different culture or century. I want to give them things to discover through what other people have felt about the world through their writing, film-making or whatever. But, at the same time, I use a lot of discussion in my teaching, and that comes back to the child’s experience: what do they know in the course of extending their knowledge through what the professional has written or what a published person has thought, or through one of their peers writing a letter to them. Right now, I have a fifth form class that is reading Letters From the Inside, a book comprised of a couple pen pals writing each other, so I have my students who are studying it writing letters to students in one of my fourth form classes. So, I just try to bring in everything and anything I can get my hands on (137:19-46, 138:1-13). I bring in this kind of scope because I’m interested in where our planet is heading, what we are and what we do with our words, our language and our communication with each other (146:5-14).
It wasn’t a shock to me when the English Curriculum professional development course was based on what the child knows and drawing out of them what their experiences and thoughts are. Though I have my doubts, I’ve always encouraged my students to talk a lot about what they think. I like them to think and inquire and pursue things. I won’t let them just sit there and copy notes (139:20-30). But, not everything can be centred on the child. There’s some great stuff to take from the English Curriculum, but it seems to have very little actual teaching in it. The child is exploring, the child is finding, the child is writing out, and the teacher is sort of running around as a monitor and recorder of what the child is doing. So, according to the English Curriculum, I would spend fifty of the sixty minutes assessing what the students are doing, but nothing would have been given to them in terms of new direction (142:8-15).

I don’t agree with the concept of unit standards. I don’t like this idea of neat little boxes for learning because I don’t think kids learn like that. I think this idea of vocation-minded emphasis on competency is coming through in the English Curriculum as well. It’s in the whole tenor of the thing. “You can do this. You can do that. You must be able to do this.” That enjoyment element seems to be missing (135:29-42, 136:1-8). When I saw the Draft about two years ago, I had problems with it because I thought learning was much more random than the developers were suggesting. I couldn’t see how, in something like literature, that they could say the child had achieved so neatly, so simply, at the different levels. Besides, if you’ve got thirty kids in the class, you’ve got thirty different ways of answering it and drawing the same conclusions (137:3-11). English and responses to English can’t be labelled like that. It’s so wide in its scope. As soon as you try to label something, it becomes facile (142:38-44, 143:1-3). I actually like the aims of the English Curriculum. It covers the scope of the subject very nicely—language skills, literature, viewing listening. They’re all social skills. English is social and it’s also personal because it gives skills for life (154:14-20).

There’s nothing about excellence in the English Curriculum and unit standards, only competence. I’m not sure if they even use the word. It’s all “you can achieve at that level,” but where’s the extension, where’s the excelling? If you just have these levels with their unit standards, every student from the old eighty percent to a one hundred percent is the same on paper. Where does it say that the student has done absolutely wonderful material and they should be at University? New Zealanders seem to like to drag everything into the middle—the Great Kiwi Clobbering Machine. You’ll notice it, especially in our seventh form. Students can’t be seen to be working hard because that’s the nerd and the swot and all the rest. So, teachers are up against that all
the time, and I think that it’s even coming through in the English Curriculum. You can’t tell someone that they’ve failed. You can’t tell someone that they’ve excelled, because that suggests that the others haven’t. At least they’re reasonably brave at my school. They will have an accelerated class in English in sixth and seventh forms, and they’re doing it with the fourth form this year. I want my students to excel. I want every student to reach their limit and push and push, rather than to say, “I can do that. What’s next?” I reinforce excellence by praising and rewarding, giving them something as silly as a chocolate bar, acknowledging excellence, acknowledging effort. So, they can’t do something, but at least they tried. For example, in an academically limited class I have, I’m trying to get the students to concentrate and do sustained reading for twenty minutes and then answer some questions I’ve set on it. And I actually had a bet with one student that she could not be quiet and read for fifteen minutes, but she did and I gave her a Crunchy bar. It’s silly, but there’s a reward for effort, rather than punishment. “You’re not reading. Go to the withdrawal room” (151:42-44, 152:1-45, 153:1-25). To promote excellence, in my seventh form class, I asked permission of the owner of a really superb essay if I could copy the essay and give it to the rest of the class. That also comes back to sharing the child’s experience (153:36-38, 154:1-3).

DISCUSSION OF PETER’S BELIEF STATEMENT

Peter’s beliefs about teaching and learning can be presented effectively in terms of metaphor (Munby, 1986). As a teacher, Peter defines his role as that of an experienced guide for his students as they journey in the plains of English. He enjoys showing them the fabulous landscape through which they are travelling, and knows that, without him, students would wander off the path and get lost. Therefore, he is hesitant to use strategies like group work in his classroom practice. For Peter, learning is a journey and teaching is about guiding students. He is central to that process, and because of this criticises the English Curriculum, saying that there is little actual teaching in it.

In schooling, Peter sees a path to academic success, although it is not a path that can be delineated into the eight levels of the English Curriculum. His path, however, involves progression toward excellence and he encourages his students along the way with rewards.
THERESA

I came into teaching with a very student-centred focus, and a real Freirian\(^\text{52}\) focus, so I didn’t have to throw out as much as a lot of teachers did. I left Teachers’ College very clear on my teaching philosophy, which is very much the essence of the English Curriculum (304:38-42, 305:8-10)—start with the student’s experience. Because I started off teaching adolescents and adults, there’s no other way really to teach that combination of age groups, so I didn’t come in with a strict prescriptive view (305:1-6). I came out of Teachers’ College believing that the students should control the teaching environment, but I didn’t have the experience to make it work. For example, I would try and negotiate how they would run discipline for people who were late and things like that. The kids would buy into it, but the first thing I learned was that the younger the kids, the more draconian they were and you actually have to ameliorate that. The second thing I learned was that you have to have some sense of purpose in yourself. You can’t sit back and let the process do everything. So, I wavered my first two years, but I did manage to hold on to this philosophical idea that you start with the kid. This year, because of the students I’m working with, I’ve become more prescriptive in my teaching than I’ve ever been. Prescriptive teaching isn’t necessarily the bogie I thought it was (305:27-47, 306:1-30). I still agree with the English Curriculum in that students should control the learning process, monitor their own learning and be in touch with what they’re actually doing, but I used to think they should control the resources as well. I don’t believe that any more (324:26-32). Once, I would have brought a range of set texts to the classroom and said, “What would you like?” Now, I’m not so inclined to do that because it’s a much more reluctant group of students. I’ve found that a good three-quarters of them don’t seem to want anything. I have to sell them ideas a lot more (306:43-49, 307:1).

In Teachers’ College I embraced Freire a little bit too naively, but it’s good to be a little bit of a zealot to start with so you don’t have all the doubt. Freire worked with people who were illiterate and his idea was that if you’re motivated and you get a resource that hooks learners into what they want to know, then they’ll learn more quickly. So, if you’re teaching forty-year-old peasants how to read and write, you don’t show them Janet and John. You use resources that are tailored for their needs, knowledge that they want. The second principle is that you problematise the learning, so that students can say, “What prevents me from learning this? What prevents me from

being able to do something?” Freire uses that as the beginning of learning and I believe it, especially that you give them knowledge that they want. But, I’ve found that thirteen and fourteen year-olds don’t have much general knowledge and they can’t access what they know intuitively about life. Besides, the knowledge they want isn’t necessarily the knowledge that they think comes in a classroom (311:26-45, 312:1-3, 312:10-11). I definitely believe, however, that conventional English, where kids get an hour of Greek every week, only works for able, motivated kids who are learning under the fear of punishment (339:7-12).

I’m not a pessimist about learning. I think the learning that goes on underneath the skin, that sort of clicks in ten years’ time, is just as important as anything else. It’s the stuff that you don’t test, the stuff that you model or the environment you create in the classroom. I don’t think teachers can even know how successful they are with that, and I certainly don’t bend my brain to try and work it out (313:12-20).

It’s important to maintain the integrity of the subject. In my classroom, we don’t talk about an issue for the sake of talking about it. I use issues as energy for things we’re doing anyway, like writing or listening exercises (316:3-16). At the same time, the social aspect of the classroom is sometimes as important as the English Curriculum, and it is part of the English Curriculum that you look at those underlying processes. Children have an egocentric nature and they don’t want to be party to anyone else’s rubric. They have a generosity of spirit about co-operating, but they don’t actually often see that they have any role to play in anyone else’s mirror. So, I use reflective listening exercises and group work to help them with these skills. Besides, group work doesn’t work if everybody hates each other. When third formers say hate, it’s not hate. “I hate Susan,” she says, and I say, “Okay, so you hate her. Let’s get that out of the way. How can you work with her?” Those social skills are really valuable, and you can’t deliver the English Curriculum holistically, anyway, if you have not only a reluctant group of learners, but an antagonistic group of learners in terms of each other’s learning. If you want to deliver the whole thing and have the balance and nice, holistic learning, then you’ve got to have a reasonably good dynamic in the class (316:38-56, 317:1-14).

I believe in the sanctity of the classroom. The classroom is a place where you can come and bring in the essence of who you are as a person and a learner, so I was pissed off when the Deputy Principal at our school was trying to negotiate with the staff to bring drug dogs into the school. Drugs has nothing to do with it. It’s the sanctity of the classroom. I’m not saying that you should be able to bean somebody over the
head—there are some rules about how you should behave in the classroom—but it should be safe for kids in the most important sense. The school rules say, “Thou shalt not eat. Thou shalt not drink in class.” I think that’s shit. I don’t care if the kids eat and drink in class, but I have to enforce the school rules, because if I don’t when they go to another class, they’re hard to manage. So, I try not to see a lot of the misdemeanours which I don’t personally feel are an issue, without actually subverting school rules (317:30-51). I mean, the rules say that students don’t wear coats in school buildings, but I won’t ask a kid to take their coat off if it’s cold outside. I’m not the uniform police. I’m a teacher, but I’ve learned not to actually subvert school rules openly (318:14-40).

I agree with the English Curriculum. “Language expresses identity” (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 10). I just think that’s a given thing. Who you are is how well you communicate. “Language is fundamental to thinking and learning” (p. 10). I believe that. I can’t believe in all this negotiating with subjects about what bits you give up. When people grab little bits out of the English timetable, I think, “No, it’s the grease of every other bit of learning that you do.” I’m very clear on that.

“Language is essential for living in society” (p. 10). I’ve been talking about that. I believe that the classroom is a microcosm of how you can use language. You’ve got to get on with people. You’ve got to articulate how you think and feel, not just think. For example, if I meant to do some transactional writing, I might give them a resource on bullying. I’ve done this with my fifth form. Bullying is a big problem. So, I would say to them, “What makes somebody a bully? How do you become a bully?” Then, we’d talk about it, profile a bully and spend time with the gender issues of violence and acting out. Then, we might talk about how those people will be parents, but carefully because some of these kids have got those parents. That’s reality. It’s about thinking critically, because they move from the fact that they don’t like bullies to looking at themselves as bullies and victims of bullying. Then, we bring it a bit closer and look at how to deal with bullying. I had all mine writing letters to the principal about how badly the problem affected them and how they saw the role of the school in the bullying situation. It was actually very good because two kids suggested peer mediation. I think that’s part of English because it’s about living in society. I feel perfectly okay about that being in the English Curriculum (319:8-50, 320:1-40).

I’m ambivalent about the Characteristic that says “English programmes should reflect the New Zealand context” (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 11). It’s partly my own education. I’m a South Islander, Pakeha, and I’ve had very little to do with Maori
education. I'm very supportive of it, but until I have that education, I teach it, but I teach it at a distance. I teach it very anxiously. I don't think the Maori kids in your class want to be a resource. They don't want you to pick them out and say, "How do you say this and how do you say that?" They actually want to learn from you because they have a culture that's been marginalised for 150 years. They don't suddenly want to become the leading learner in the class. It's sort of like saying, "Well, you're Maori. What do you do in your house? What do you eat for tea?" I think that's really insulting. So, I have an ambivalence which is based on lack of confidence (326:1-24). Philosophically, I feel very ready, but--no, I don't. I'd like to lie and say I do it well, but it worries me that I don't feel confident with it. In terms of my integrity, I feel guilty about it (330:30-35).

I'm really frightened of unit standards. They're mediocrity gone mad. They encourage kids not to achieve to their fullest potential, because kids are very mark-oriented, and with unit standards they only have to pass. Some kids will work harder for that one percent more. My niece is working hard because she wants to be top of her year in her marketing course. If she knew that it wouldn't matter, that it would look like everybody would be in the top ten percent, she wouldn't be out there working. She's in it for the grade. It's a matter of excellence rather than competence (339:27-41). While unit standards may work in some subjects, I don't believe English can be chopped up and modularised into units which are often incredibly general anyway.

DISCUSSION OF THERESA'S BELIEF STATEMENT

Theresa, like Christopher and Lisa, defines schooling in terms of social skills rather than content, to the point that she regards her classroom as a kind of haven for the inner selves of her students. As part of this belief in the personal and social function of schooling, in her practice Theresa makes a point of choosing content that is relevant to her students' experience.

At the same time, she has come to recognise the developmental limitations of her students and to that end has become more prescriptive in her teaching. The nature of their students has had a profound impact on both Theresa and Christopher's classroom practice. They have modified their expectations and become more traditional in how they conduct their classrooms. This modification has led to changes more in their beliefs about students and student ability than in their beliefs about teaching.

The role these beliefs define for Theresa is that of a guardian and advocate. She uses her subject area, like Lisa, to fulfil the role she has defined for herself. In contrast,
for teachers like Annette and Peter, though it may be strong, their role is secondary to the demands of the subject. In regard to the Chapter 3 discussion dealing with the normative function of Teachers' College, it is telling that all three of the less experienced participants in this chapter define their beliefs about teaching in terms of social skills. Each of these three, in terms of philosophy, agree with the English Curriculum. Their responses to the English Curriculum in this regard are more benign that the responses of Annette or Peter, who are both more experienced, as well as being more content and assessment-oriented. This supports Haynes's (1996) observation in primary mathematics teacher education that familiarity with a curriculum gained in Teachers' College is important for developing later beliefs in keeping with that curriculum.

FROM BELIEFS TO TEACHER KNOWLEDGE

Annette, Christopher, Lisa, Peter and Theresa's belief statements stand as a testament to the complexity of teachers' conceptualisation of their students, curriculum, role, goals and subject. The convoluted quality of this conceptualisation reflects the complexity and interrelated nature of the factors governing construction of participants' practice formulation and response to the English Curriculum. Furthermore, the complex nature of classroom practice and curriculum response put forth in the Model and supported by data in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, lends itself well to ideas about the composite nature of teacher knowledge and decision making offered by researchers like Connelly and Clandinin (1995) and Grossman (1989).

I have already mentioned the personal and professional knowledge landscapes described by Connelly and Clandinin. They maintain that teachers operate in a complicated matrix of the relationships between these landscapes: knowledge and practice in a situation both act upon and are formed by this matrix. Connelly and Clandinin call teachers' knowledge in this context "personal practical knowledge" (see pp. 4-6). Grossman labels that kind of background-laden, situation-specific everyday teacher knowing "pedagogical content knowledge" (p. 25). According to Grossman's definition, Negotiating participants' pedagogical content knowledge would include their conceptions of what it means to teach English, knowledge of curricular materials and curriculum, knowledge of students' understanding and ability, and knowledge of instructional strategies. In this sense, the construction of participants' pedagogical content knowledge sits alongside their formulation of practice and response to the English Curriculum at the centre of the Model. Indeed, I maintain that their relationship
is connected. Response to curriculum is classroom practice, which in turn is pedagogical content knowledge. This brings us full circle to the notion of curriculum as practice (Grundy, 1987) mentioned in the opening comments of Chapter 1. According to Grundy, curriculum is a fusion of the technical and interactive aspects of teaching. She maintains that curriculum in this respect is a social construction determined by the beliefs and values of its practitioners. However, in light of Negotiating results described in terms of the Model, the formation of curriculum as practice encompasses far more than simply the beliefs and values of teachers, though Teacher Beliefs is perhaps the most far-ranging and influential of the factors. Appropriately, Cornbleth (1990, pp. 6-7) criticises Grundy's lack of addressing the effects of setting in her concept of curriculum as practice. The Model, as well as Cuban's (1986, 1984) theory of situationally constrained choice as it was discussed in Chapter 3, supports this criticism well. Curriculum as practice in this study is shown to be influenced by seven factors, all of which including Context Constraints, are negotiated in participants' "curriculum practice" (Cornbleth, 1990, see chap. 4).

Schön's (1983) notion of professional "knowledge-in-practice" speaks to the link between action, response and knowledge described above. Moving beyond description of this phenomenon to its implications in action, he warns that without reflection--specifically the "reflection-in-action" that happens when a teacher considers and reflects upon her practice, curriculum response and knowledge in the moment--stagnation, burn out and deskilling are imminent. Schön maintains that this reflection happens both as a daily part of practice and as a kind of meta-reflection outside that practice. In the latter regard, professional development issues are vital to teachers' cognitive functioning, growth and change. In my concluding thoughts, I would like to end this presentation by addressing the implications of the Model and this study for the teachers' professional development.
CHAPTER 6
LOOKING TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

My main purpose in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 has been to present the Model of Factors Influencing Classroom Practice and Response to the English Curriculum (Chapter 3, Figure 1) and to support that Model with data from the study. Now, I would like to turn to the implications of change in the Model. Though not discussed deeply, change has been hinted at throughout this thesis in the words of participants and my description of the changing nature of the study methodology from research to teacher empowerment, both for the participants and for myself.

In this work, I have delineated teachers' classroom practice formulation into a series of chapters on two-dimensional bits of paper. This has been a useful exercise—-it has allowed us to stop that action long enough to scrutinise it and gain some insight into curriculum practice\(^{53}\) in this context. At the same time, however, we have lost a sense of the Model's process.\(^{54}\) Even though it accounts for perception, approaches the issue of time passage in its triangulation methods, and implies movement in emphasising the interrelated nature of the factors, the Model as it is presented in Figure 1 is only a slice of something dynamic frozen, dissected and labelled for discussion. Remember the atom? Imagine the Model spinning in space, its electrons flashing around and in and out of each other, changing shape, sparkling with random energy, around a centre that is itself shifting as the protons and neutrons of classroom practice and curriculum response twist like a wringing of hands. This dynamic view of the Model was not entirely unrepresented in our discussion. Participants talked about change in regard to their classroom experience under the factor, Experience; change as a result of shifts in their professional knowledge landscapes (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995) during discussion of the factor, Consciousness of Professional Environment; change in meeting new assessment and syllabus requirements under the factor, Context Constraints; and even change in their definitions of student ability and needs as discussed in Chapter 4, Students.

\(^{53}\) In my concluding thoughts, because it is inclusive of the Model factor, Context Constraints, I will use Cornbleth's (1990) term "curriculum practice" in referring to the curriculum-practice relationship embodied by the Model. I believe her term encompasses both Grundy's (1987) notion of "curriculum as practice" and Schön's (1983) conception of "knowledge-in-practice." This idea is also consistent with Carr's (1995; see Negotiating Chapter 1 for discussion) definition of an educational practice.

\(^{54}\) See Strauss and Corbin (1990, chap. 9) for a discussion of process presentation in qualitative research.
What the Model suggests and other classroom teachers contributing to the literature (Starner, 1996) support, is that change in practice involves change in the teacher. Considering Cornbleth’s (1990) criticism of Grundy (1987) discussed in the previous chapter, this suggestion is not meant to repeat Laub (1997) and other educational researchers’ mistake in forgetting the powerful influence of outside context constraints on a teacher’s formulation of practice. The Model after all outlines a negotiation among many factors. What is suggested here is that changes in more than one of the Model factors--Experience, Management Purposes, Consciousness of Professional Environment, Teacher Interests, Context Constraints, Students and/or Teacher Beliefs--promote change in curriculum practice. One or more factors must be affected for a significant change to occur. Change in a department scheme is not enough for a teacher to take on board viewing and teach it with care if she is not interested in viewing and believes viewing to be a waste of instructional time. Please note that with the Model, I am not offering up a theoretical instrument of controlling changes in teachers’ practice. This would not be possible in any case. The Model shows that only one factor, Context Constraints, is available for manipulation outside the teacher herself.55

I am suggesting that for professional development to be effective in helping teachers step outside the status quo and move forward—which may not always mean a change in practice or curriculum response and implementation—a number of the Model factors need to be addressed. Teachers’ thinking works this way naturally. Model factors are constantly revisited and redefined in light of new evidence. Schön’s (1983) concept of practitioners’ ongoing reflection-in-action supports this notion, as does Carr’s (1995) assertion that practice and theorising are not separate processes in teaching. Professional development is not something outside the teacher. As Wolk (1996, p. 3) points out, “professional development is a process that is embedded in [teachers’] daily professional lives as they solve problems, collaborate with colleagues, plan, and reflect.” Negotiating, in many ways, harnessed this natural process of professional development. In our discussions and reflections on the data, we were able to reflect, reconsider and revisit, as Susanne would put it, our practice and thinking about curriculum. Because it is instantly grounded in the day-to-day relevance of work in the classroom, teachers talking, sharing and reflecting on their theories and strategies

55The Context Constraints factor is an obvious lever, particularly in assessment requirements. In that regard, washback has been mentioned a number of times in this thesis. I would like to note that New Right reform tactics and the operation of hegemony within the educational sector have effectively harnessed some of the other factors for their own purposes. See Murfitt (1995) for discussion.
is an effective method for encouraging reflection on and change of the Model factors in teachers' thinking. Indeed, this inter-teacher discussion is what teachers often take away from outside-sponsored professional development programmes. Gilmore's (1994, p. 61) evaluation shows most of the teachers surveyed felt that the opportunity to meet, discuss and share ideas and problems with other teachers was the most valuable aspect of the Advisory Service teacher development programme for Mathematics in the New Zealand Curriculum and Science in the National Curriculum. William Scott (Buyer Beware, 1996, p. 46), an American junior high school Social Studies teacher, gives a good example of the effectiveness of professional development utilising teachers' own talk and experience.

Armed with the description of another teacher's literacy program, I was able to refine my reading workshop to reach all my students. Although I've had two education professors lecture me about wait-time, it wasn't until a recent [teacher-oriented professional development] work group that I internalized its importance and began to slow the pace of my classroom discussions.

What teachers need for this kind of professional development to happen is both the structures that will harness those natural processes in productive ways—and time. Unfortunately, it is not within the scope of these closing thoughts to discuss professional development structure in detail. I suggest those interested in the teacher-motivated and teacher-centred professional development advocated by this study look to structures like teacher study and inquiry groups which are now being promoted by professional organisations such as the National Council of Teachers of English in the United States (see National Council of Teachers of English, 1997). Turning back to the data, however, time was mentioned over and over again as a kind of constraint on participants' teaching. Because reflection and practice are not separate, Schön's (1983) work suggests that time is also a significant constraint on professional development. That teachers need time to reflect is a sentiment voiced from researchers like Aviva Freedman (Maguire, 1995, p. 94) to Negotiating participants to other classroom teachers writing about professional development concerns (Reins, 1996; Mader, 1996; Schiller, Gere & Rosaen, 1996). As Margaret Gill (Maguire, 1995, p. 20) states, "it's unreasonable to urge teacher change if that change is going to take up much more teacher time." If teacher inquiry and study groups are to be instituted, teacher time must be a significant consideration.

If it is to be deliberate and reasonable, if it is to reflect careful consideration of good practice and the nature of students, if it is not to be the struggle Apple and Weis (1983; see Negotiating Chapter 1 for discussion) suggest, even the daily negotiation of
curriculum practice requires time—individual teacher time and time on a larger scale in the implementation of statements like the English Curriculum. Eventually, given the time and support through professional development like that discussed above, the aim of negotiation will come to light—success. In the negotiation demonstrated by the eight participant teachers in this study, success means the betterment of their teaching, and ultimately the betterment of their students’ learning.
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APPENDIX A

FAMILY DESCRIPTIONS
(Log, pp. 79-82)

STRATEGIES
Data about the strategies using in implementing the English Curriculum, developing or changing department schemes, developing or changing materials, and meeting student needs.

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT
Data about the running of, relationships within, and/or structure of participant’s English department or school.

STUDENTS
Data about the participant’s attitude toward students, as well as her interpretation of student needs, desires, ability and feelings.

TEACHING
Data about how the participant approaches classroom practice. This would involve concerns, logistics of and attitudes about that practice.

CHANGE
Data about change. Change implies before/after situations with mediating factors.

CONTEXT
Data having to do with the participant’s physical, mental and emotional context--the environment in she works and makes decisions.

CURRICULUM
Data given by the teacher in regard to the English Curriculum. Talk about how the English Curriculum is approached, used and thought about.

IMPLEMENTATION
Data regarding the implementation of the English Curriculum in schools, focusing on teacher development and any departmental work with the Document.

POSITION
Data about how the participant positions herself in relation to co-workers, English Curriculum developers, students, government, school, etc.

METHODS
Data dealing with study methodology.
APPENDIX B

CATEGORIES DEVELOPED
FOR MARGARET FROM FAMILIES
(Log, pp. 79-82)

STRATEGIES

Philosophy of the Document—Teachers

_Margaret articulated the philosophy of the Document only in the context of the particular students in her school (which are ESOL). This makes her interpretation school and student specific. In fact, she doesn't seem to pay attention to the Document at all—what she's really talking about when she discusses the "philosophy" of the Document is probably just what she considers important herself—her own philosophy._

Financial Limitations
Practice Focused on Students/Student Needs
Practice/Topics From Students (not Document)

_This is a difficult movement for me to articulate. Margaret seems to go from her student population to practice, or how she works in the classroom (in this case, questioning techniques). She definitely does not move from the Document to practice._

Practice/Topics From Teacher
Levels/Skills

_It's interesting in her English department that they're focusing on the levels and skills—leaving philosophy up to the teacher._

Factors in Changing the Scheme
Common Work/Coverage
Teacher Choice in Coverage
Linking Scheme to Strands/Curriculum
"Worthwhile" Student Work
Logistics of Film
Keeping Things Fair

_In the "Teaching" family, fairness has a lot to do with ranking of students. It's interesting (and not post-modern) that Margaret believes a fair/true ranking is possible. In the "Change" family fairness has a lot to do with whether changes will be made._

Logistics of Listening
Applying Achievement Objectives/Levels After

_Margaret seems to be moving from the activity she wants to do to seeing what English Curriculum skills apply, not the other way around—from skill objective to activity._

Assessment Concerns
Jumping to the Unit Standards
Dealing With Poorer/Difficult Students
Adapting New to Old—Reasons
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

School Understanding of Curriculum (good--poor; none great)
Experts
Created Experts--Reasons for
This would be the person at a school designated (sometimes with a PR) to handle all incoming information on a certain topic. This person would be the one "honed up."
Division of Labour--Reasons for
Division of labour seems to tell TI that she doesn't need to take on everything--for example, she doesn't need to learn how to run the computer. Is this an abdication of responsibility?
Departments (Great < > Poor)
Places to Get Teaching Ideas

STUDENTS (STUD)

What Teachers Think Students Think/Know
Margaret assumes many things about the feelings of her students. She relates her own feelings with theirs. Is this projection or empathy?
What Teachers Think Kids Want/Enjoy--How Do They Know?
Hierarchy of Knowledge
Streaming
Attitude Toward Students
Kids Have Changed--Reasons for
Reasons For Teacher Change
Market Talk
Changing Student Population
Learners (Good < > Poor)
Kiwi Kids Versus Asian Kids
Why Do It or Know It?

TEACHING (T)

Note: I could place much of the information in this family under the categories listed above. It's interesting to note that, in this family, there's a lot of information about lesson logistics, assessment, fairness, streaming and only some information about personal teaching beliefs. Is this my doing or Margaret's? What is teaching anyway?

How Much Should Students Know?
Faith in Unit Standards
Concerns With Unit Standards
Curriculum Creates Assessment
Attitude Toward Philosophy
I don't think Margaret thinks about philosophy in the same way I do.
What does she mean by "philosophy?" What do I mean by it?
Personal Philosophy--Kids
Personal Philosophy--Past Experience
Personal Philosophy--Goals
Personal Philosophy Applied to Document
CHANGE

Effects of Changing Scheme
Change Processes in School
Choices Must Be Made
Connection Between Curriculum and Assessment
Current Teacher Frustrations
Changes in Practice Because of Students
Changes in Subject English

CONTEXT

Effects of Context Constraints

CURRICULUM

Note: While doing these interviews, I realised it was a mistake to ask teachers about the philosophy of the Document right off the bat. They really seemed to have little idea what it was-I think they had never articulated their own philosophy to themselves.

Little Need for Change
Current Practice and the Document
Starting Points

IMPLEMENTATION

Receiving the Document
Introduction to the Document
Curriculum Posters
Teacher Training
Preparation
Departmental Work: Schemes, Brainstorms
Teacher Resources Expected
Teacher Emotions

POSITION

Powers That Be
I'm Not an Expert
How Teachers Become Expert/Get Knowledge
Consultation

METHODS

J On Principles/Characteristics
Concern With Questions
Teachers' Positioning of Me
Teachers' Knowledge of Me
Tape Recorder
APPENDIX C

INITIAL FLOW CHART DEVELOPED FROM CATEGORY GROUPS
(Log, pp. 193-201)

Connections made once flow chart had been completed

WORK DURING DEPARTMENT IMPLEMENTATION OF ENGLISH CURRICULUM

TEACHER RESISTANCE

"DRESSING"

SCHEMES

TEACHING NEW CONTENT

CONTEXT OF ENGLISH CURRICULUM
- current feelings about NZ educ environment
- unit standards
- "experts" & positioning of selves in relation to others

OPINIONS ON ENGLISH CURRICULUM
- feelings & opinions
- PROBLEM AREAS
  * assessment
  * levels
  * jargon
  * achievement objectives

PRACTICE HASN'T CHANGED

REASONS WHY TEACHERS CHANGE

SPRINGING FOR SELF & TEACHER AUTONOMY

DETERMINERS OF PRACTICE: INSIDE & OUTSIDE
APPENDIX D

FINAL CODING CATEGORIES DEVELOPED
FROM THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
WITH ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS
FROM ALL TRANSCRIPT CODING
(Log, p. 273-274)

1 ASSESSMENT
This category does not have to do with unit standards, but with assessment and beliefs about assessment in general.

2 ✓ UNDERSTANDING/FAMILIARITY
Information about how understanding and familiarity of content or method impact practice

3 ACCEPTANCE OF CHANGE & NEW IDEAS
Includes reasons for or factors in teachers' acceptance of change, as well as examples of that change.

4 ✓ RESISTANCE TO CHANGE & NEW IDEAS
- TOOLS OF RESISTANCE
- OVERCOMING RESISTANCE in a department/teachers
- REASONS FOR RESISTANCE

5 DEFINING THE DISCIPLINE
How do teachers conceive of English as a discipline? What do they see as its goals? What is important in English?

6 TEACHER GOALS/PRACTICE RESULTING FROM:
- EXPERIENCES AS STUDENT
- TEACHERS' COLLEGE
- PAST EXPERIENCE
- PERSONAL BELIEFS
- INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES
- PERSONAL INTERESTS
- OUTSIDE REQUIREMENTS/FACTORS
- TENDENCIES/HABITS IN PLANNING
- AWARENESS/CONSCIOUSNESS

7 STUDENT ABILITY
This category is based on a continuum of teachers' beliefs about student ability (capable <> not capable). Ability is not just defined academically; it can also be a matter of maturity or cultural background. This category applies to any teacher expectations and perceptions of student ability.

8 STUDENT NEEDS
What do teachers perceive as their students' academic needs?
9 STUDENT INTERESTS/DESIMES

10 STUDENT RESISTANCE

11 STUDENTS - GENERAL/TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF

12 CONTEXT CONSTRAINTS

13 ✓ NEW CONTENT REQUIREMENTS
   (WIDENING THE CURRICULUM)

14 NEW CONTENT LOGISTICS

15 NEW METHOD REQUIREMENTS
   (GROUP WORK AND PEER ASSESSMENT)

16 PHILOSOPHIC INTERSECTION
   This category includes teacher talk about the philosophy of the
   Curriculum and their own, particularly the relationship between
   them. What do they "read" into the English Curriculum?

17 WHAT TEACHERS LIKE ABOUT THE ENGLISH
   CURRICULUM/DOCUMENT

18 PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRICULUM/DOCUMENT
   • RESULTING FROM PRACTICE FACTORS
   • WHAT THEY WANTED

19 LEVELS

20 THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM IS NOT NEW--LITTLE CHANGE

21 AUTONOMY
   This category encompasses information about teachers only
   speaking for themselves, change as an individual event, and the
   nature of teacher autonomy.

22 PHILOSOPHY
   What are teacher's attitudes toward the idea of philosophy?
   How do they use this word?

23 ✓ EXPERT POSITIONING

24 DEPARTMENT IMPLEMENTATION: MOTIVATION

25 DEPARTMENT IMPLEMENTATION: BEGINNING

26 DEPARTMENT IMPLEMENTATION: LOOKING AT CURRICULUM

27 FACTORS IN IMPLEMENTATION
28 HODs

29 SCHEMES

30 DRESSING/ADAPTING NEW TO OLD

31 OTHER CHANGES AS A RESULT OF DEPT IMPLEMENTATION

32 THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM SCENE
   • UNIT STANDARDS
   • GENERAL

33 TRAINING/DEVELOPMENT WITH CURRICULUM

44 METHODOLOGY

45 THE DRAFT

46 USE OF THE DOCUMENT (INDIVIDUAL)

Underlined categories were added as coding progressed through all transcripts. Categories not underlined were developed from the project’s theoretical framework.

✓ = Categories that didn’t quite fit in the theoretical framework. Most of the codes in these categories were eventually resolved in the three observations about the nature of teaching and curriculum response made in Chapter 3.
APPENDIX E

BELIEF STATEMENT DEVELOPED FOR RESEARCHER
FROM NEGOTIATING INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

There are certain people who fall into teaching as some sort of job, but for me it feels like a calling. This is what I was meant to do. I found out about teaching and realised that I was meant to do this because this is who I am (71:17-27). I am a young teacher and so I’ve purposely developed this kind of slightly more formal, more authoritarian, older sort of teacher self. In the classroom, I’m probably not really myself. I respond as a teacher. I’m still trying to figure things out and negotiate certain kinds of things, so I have to have this teacher self to keep things functional. I mean, the only time I’m ever called Ms. Morrison is in the classroom. Everywhere else I’m just Jen (227:22-49, 228:1-7).

Television is an interesting thing to talk about in class. Take the sitcom, Friends, for example. People really like that show and I watch it, but I’m very critical of it. So, while I enjoy and am manipulated by it, I know what’s going on. I live in New York City. I know what it’s like to live there, and that’s not what it’s like, but that’s what everyone believes it’s like to live in Manhattan. You know, all the women are young and beautiful and skinny, and in New York you’ll have an apartment like this even if you’re an actor strung out between jobs and that kind of thing.

When I teach, there are certain things that I’m thinking about. I’m an English teacher, but I also consider myself a teacher in a lot of different ways. I want to teach my students to step outside of themselves and take an objective look at their lives and then learn how to make some decisions based on that, instead of getting caught up in this very dangerous and very un-self-aware media culture. That’s something I’m very concerned about as a teacher (229:1-12). I think that kind of media analysis is really empowering (65:28-43, 66:1-10). I’m really interested in helping kids see the image of themselves that they’re creating and being coerced to create. Our society, is full of these images. Kids have to be cool, kids have to wear the right clothes, kids need to do this, kids need to be sexual. I think that if they can step outside that for a bit and look back, then they can make clear decisions in themselves. That one idea I took away from my teacher education (145:30-38).

I’m trying to role model that you can be this very healthy person and you can be a woman and you can be very strong and, at the same time, you can still be feminine
and attractive and whatever. You don’t have to live up the stereotypes and examples
put forth by the media to be happy. I want kids to know that if you are yourself, how
happy you can be being true to yourself and not worrying about image. That’s what I
see kids doing these days--imaging. Everything is image, like how to be this certain
thing or how to look this certain way or how to be cool or strong or whatever. If you’re
just yourself, if you become yourself, you will be those things. And that’s what I want
to help kids to do--become themselves and find out what is true in them. That’s just
really hard, partially because it’s hard for me. I can’t be true to myself all the time. I’m
constantly negotiating this in myself, but I also want to show kids that becoming is a
process that is ongoing. I wanted that with this project as well. I wanted this project to
be a chance for teachers to talk about their philosophy and articulate some things and
see how what they believe relates to other teachers. I thought we could go from there
and see what that says to policy makers and people who talk about curriculum and that

When I go back to the US and look for a job, I’ll need to think about and find a
place where I can be the good teacher that I am. It’s just really hard, especially in the
public school system. I feel so overloaded and I can’t get a lot of things done (76:29-
34). In the US, they’re moving toward vouchers right now. Ideologically, I feel bad
about that. I think every student has the right to a terrific education in a good learning
environment, but I know that only money buys the best environment and the
opportunity for a terrific education. I hate participating in that class creation, but for
me, it’s just a lot easier to teach in private schools (309:1-7).

I’ve experienced student resistance. Oftentimes, I’ll attribute it not necessarily
to laziness, but it’s a lot easier when someone tells you exactly what you should be
doing and exactly what you should be writing and this is what it takes to get an A
(204:5-14). I’m trying to teach a lot of things other than literature and
language--independence, ambition, self-awareness--and I believe in something I call the
Twenty-Year Theory. The learning that I’m trying to elicit isn’t going to come out for
twenty years, anyway. There’s no point in looking for it in the moment. If it happens,
great, but don’t be disappointed. Kids don’t make up their minds about who, how and
what they are until long after high school (313:21-23).

Something I think about in my teaching is the kind of path I negotiate between
what people say kids should know and what kids say they want to know or do. That’s a
hard one. I think the courses I’ve most enjoyed teaching are those where I don’t have to
worry about grades or grading students. I taught summer school before I came here to
New Zealand in Charlotte, North Carolina, at a private school. It's a bit of a Richie school, but it was fun to teach there because the kids that were coming there that summer were not necessarily just from that school or area. It was such a freedom not to have to grade. Not the first summer, though. The first summer I taught the same course, I instituted grades because I didn't know any other way. It was a way to motivate the students and the only way I knew how to judge how they were doing. I don't agree with grades as a motivator, punisher or reward, and I don't necessarily think that kids should be judged in relation to each other, and that's what grades do. So, last summer, I said, "We're not going to have grades. Forget it." I remember during a long-term reading and presentation project, one of my students asking, "Ms Morrison, how am I going to know how well I do if you don't grade it?" I said, "Kurt, you know how well you do. Don't you know when you do a good job? And don't you know when you do a crappy job?" He agreed. It was such a freedom, though reporting to parents without grades was more time-consuming and difficult (170:3-32).

Kids, in my experience, don't want independence and they have a hard time with it, but I think it's incredibly important in life. That was probably one of the most frustrating things for me going into the school system. It wasn't that the students were difficult or that they had behavioural problems. It was the fact that I wanted to do all these things in the classroom and the students didn't want the independence or autonomy that required (177:36-47, 178:1-54). In a situation where you have students who are resistant and who have wide-ranging needs, you have to work an awful lot harder, but I think it's an awful lot more interesting. I learn more about myself as a teacher and a person (187:9-13).

This whole control game is a problem for me. I don't like the idea, "I've got to keep control." It's true that I have to have a certain amount of control to get anything done and that the students need me to control them. They want it, and developmentally, maturationally, I know I can't expect them not to need it. They're not adults and chances are, with most I couldn't sit and have a conversation of equals. Not that I don't think kids are equals. It's just that the control, role issue is always there. Students need parameters and I have to provide them as the sort of caretaker in the classroom. But, I hate the control game, where it's teacher versus students. That really bothers me and I hate it that the students make me play. I hate not having any options or choice about playing. Even so, that doesn't mean I can't play. I can. In fact, I'm getting better and better, but it's a problematic skill and I don't think I've come to terms with it completely. I'm uncomfortable. Maybe that shows through, maybe it doesn't. I'm not
sure. It definitely plays a large part in my creation of a teacher facade. I find that it’s just much easier to on me and on the students if I go ahead and do the control thing. We can move on after that (188:42-48, 189:1-47, 190:1-4). Schools as institutions promote this kind of control game with rules that I, as a teacher in the institution, have to enforce—rules that I don’t believe in. Hats, for example. Boys are not allowed to wear hats. This doesn’t apply to girls, mind you, just the boys. I actually don’t even notice hats. I don’t give a crap about hats or the social conventions that spawned this rule that boys shouldn’t wear hats indoors. The only time I notice and do something about hats is when students use them to hide their eyes and sleep or cheat or whatever. To me, that’s the only time that it matters. Hats in themselves are moot. My kids know that I don’t notice, so they wear them in my classroom. If an administrator walks in, they whip them off and hide them. That’s fine. When I first started teaching, I made a point of enforcing the school’s hat rule, but it was hopeless because I kept forgetting. I didn’t care enough. I think you have to choose what you’re going to offer up as a fight. Hats aren’t worth it. It takes too much energy from all of us and I don’t want to participate in something simply because it’s a school versus students power issue. I’m a teacher, not an enforcer of cultural norms. Not in that way, at least. I want to be a little more significant than that (318:1-13).

It’s important that students know where they stand and are aware of their learning. A lot of this feeling comes from my own experience as a student. I was not an English speaker when I first entered primary school in the US. The school I attended was a small, rural institution that didn’t have ESOL programs and they didn’t know how to deal with me. There was a standardised test that they administered to all students at the beginning of the year and they gave the same test to me, although it was in English and I couldn’t read it. Obviously, I failed, and I was placed in certain kinds of classes and seen in a certain kind of way. That really affected my conception of myself and I never knew why. I think it’s good to tell students what’s expected of them, where they stand and help them step outside themselves and see themselves as learners. It’s important to help them formulate goals for themselves. They don’t necessarily know how to do that, though. One summer during a study skills courses, I started off asking the students what their goals were for the course and all I got back were blank stares. The next summer I started out saying, “Okay, we’re here to learn study skills. What are some different study skills?” and we listed those on the board. Then I asked them to think about those skills that they were having problems with. “Of all the stuff on the board, what are three or four things you’re having problems with?” Then, from their
lists, they were able to generate goals for the course. For example, "I will learn to read faster. I will designate a study place." I was able to scaffold them into it. Of course, that negates any goals they might have had outside study skills, but during the course, they were able to add to, change or subtract from their goals without my interference. I just gave a starting point. I guess part of this is just recognising the developmental level of my students as well as what their interests are. They don't sit around and think about study skills or learning the way I do (285:17-36, 286:1-20).

Maybe it's because I'm a young teacher or because I lack faith or skill, but I feel like I have to have a grip on what my students are learning. I think I only believe in assessment for that reason. If I don't know where they are or what their learning, if they don't know where they are or what they're learning, we lack vital information in the process of knowing where to go. Thus far, I have hesitated to use independent reading with classes of more than five students. With more than that, I just feel like I don't have a grip on what they're reading. There's no way I can read that much. I have a feeling I'll get over this fear, though. I haven't taught long enough to feel loose about what I'm doing. I think it's a matter of confidence. I don't have to have read every book. In the classroom, I'm learning, too (325:1-5).