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**Creating Effective Invited Spaces: Putting the  
lens on early childhood teacher education  
practica**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Education at Massey University, Manawatū,  
New Zealand.**

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## **Abstract**

The teaching practicum offers many opportunities for growth of knowledge, practice and development of new understandings and competencies for student teachers. However, student teachers who are placed within low socioeconomic early childhood settings, if they have little or no knowledge of this habitus, may find this a challenging aspect of their initial teacher education. This study aimed to identify factors that support, facilitate and nurture the positive relationships between associate teachers and student teachers during teaching practicum within low socioeconomic early childhood settings.

A qualitative case study approach was used to gather data, including in-depth interviews with two pre-service teacher education coordinators as well as six associate teachers in a range of low socioeconomic early childhood educational settings. The findings provide insights into associate teachers' pivotal role in allowing student teachers access to the very intimate and specific dispositions and approaches that they implement every day in their practice. In addition, the findings highlight the reciprocal responsibility of student teachers to take advantage of the opportunities to share with their associate teachers during the short passage of time that the teaching practicum allows.

The findings from this study led to the development of a conceptual model which reveals the characteristics of an effective 'invited space'. This invited space is most likely to emerge when both the associate teacher and the student teacher negotiate a respectful and trusting relationship that allows them to share their identity, beliefs, values and practices, and to be prepared to move flexibly between the roles of teacher and learner.



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Getting the rare opportunity to talk on an intimate basis with two pre-service teacher education coordinators and each of the participating associate teachers about their specific pedagogies and philosophies was a privilege. I appreciated the honesty and integrity with which each participant shared their own personal and contextualised practices with me. Kia ora koutou katoa.

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## **Kua takoto te mānuka, hiki ake, kawe!**

The challenge is for associate teachers to pick up this knowledge, take it, and use these insights to nurture beginning teachers.

Associate teachers hold the power position and the key to creating transformative teaching practices. Utilising the mentor role with a willingness to share, and a view to creating a new genesis of teachers through a collaborative lens, is vital for the success of future teaching. Understanding and guiding our learners today will empower them to use this rich knowledge for navigating tomorrow's world.

**Kia kaha, kia toa, kia maia, kia manawanui!**