EXPLORING BIOGRAPHIES: THE EDUCATIONAL

JOURNEY TOWARDS BECOMING INCLUSIVE

EDUCATORS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

The current study explored the formative processes of twelve student teachers constructing role understandings in the context of their experiences and interactions with people with disabilities. In particular, it examined the participants' changing notions of self-as-teacher and their unfolding perceptions of an inclusive educator's role in teaching children with disabilities. The research aimed to investigate personal and professional forms of knowledge linked with the prior subjective life experiences of the student teachers and those arising from their interactions in situated learning experiences in community settings.

The contextual framework of the study focused on the development of the student teachers' unique understandings and awareness of people with disabilities through processes of biographical situated learning. The investigation examined participants' voluntary out-of-course experiences with people with disabilities across three community settings for the ways in which these experiences facilitated the participants' emerging role understandings. These settings included respite experiences in families' homes of young children with disabilities receiving early intervention, an after-school recreational program for primary and secondary aged children and adolescents with disabilities, and an independent living centre providing post-school options and activities for adults with disabilities.

Two groups participated in the current study, each consisted of six student teachers in the Bachelor of Education Course at the Bathurst campus of Charles Sturt University. Group One participants were in the second year compulsory inclusive education subject and Group Two participants were in the third year elective early intervention subject. The investigation examines the nature of reflexive and reflective processes of the student teachers from subjective, conflict realities in an attempt to link community experiences with real-life issues affecting inclusive educational practices. The voluntary community experiences engaged the research participants in multi-faceted interactions with people with disabilities, providing thought-provoking contexts for their reflections on observations, responses and reactions to situations, such as critical incidents. The participants engaged in reflexive and reflective processes in records made in learning journals and in semi-structured interviews conducted throughout the investigation. Results were analysed from a constructivist research paradigm to investigate their emerging role understandings.

Prior to this study there had been few practical components in the compulsory undergraduate inclusive education subject which meant that previously student teachers gained theoretical knowledge without the opportunity to apply their learning. Many student teachers had expressed their feelings of anxiety and uneasiness about what they should do and say to a person with a disability. Thus, the community experiences were selected in order to give a specific context for student teachers' learning and to provide participants with expanded opportunities to consider their professional identity, social awareness and acceptance of people with disabilities.

An analysis of the data demonstrated the centrality of reflection within a situated teaching and learning framework. Understandings of prior experiences and motivation were shown to interact with the outcomes of the community experiences through an on-going process of reflection and reflexivity. This reconstructing process encouraged learners to reflect on past, present and projected future experiences and reframe actions from multiple perspectives as a way of exploring alternatives within broader contexts. The data reveal the participants' engagement in the community experiences facilitated their awareness of wider socio-cultural educational issues, while focusing their attention on more appropriate inclusive teaching and learning strategies. The reflective inquiry process of identifying diverse issues led participants to consider other possible alternatives to current community practices for better ways to support their changing perspectives on ideal inclusive classroom practices. The dialogic nature of participants' on-going deliberations contributed to the construction of their deeper understandings of an inclusive educator's role.

The findings of the study identified external environmental and internal personal factors as contributing biographical influences which shaped the student teachers' emerging role understandings. The results emphasised the value of contextual influences in promoting desirable personal and professional qualities in student teachers. Importantly, situated learning enhanced participants' unique interpretations of their prospective roles. As a result of analysing their insights from interactions in community contexts, the student teachers had increased their personal and professional understandings of individuals with disabilities and broadened their perceptions of their roles as inclusive educators. Thus, the study found that encouraging a biographical reflexive and reflective orientation in participants was conducive

to facilitating changes in their understandings. Overall, the outcomes had benefits for student teachers and teacher educators in finding innovative ways for integrating biographical perspectives into situated teaching and learning approaches. The study showed that contextual influences facilitated deeper understanding of role identity and produced new ideas about the nature of reflexivity and reflection in guiding student teachers' learning.

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DEDICATION

In memory of my loving Mother and Father, Vivienne Marie and Roy Francis Brogan, who

inspired me to value learning.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION - CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Diversity has become an increasingly significant issue confronting many in the human service professions. Society, in general, has become more accepting of diversity amongst people in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and disability (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001). Legislation, such as Australia's Disability Discrimination Act, 1992, (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992), has recognised the rights of individuals to experience equal opportunity and has promoted attitudes of acceptance, tolerance and valuing of difference in others. Such societal and political trends to embrace diversity have led to reluctance by service providers to label, categorise and segregate people with disabilities and instead have encouraged policy makers and educators to adopt more inclusive practices to meet learners' diverse needs (Atelier, 2004; Lim & Quah, 2004). These approaches are designed to promote acceptance of individuals with disabilities as people first, and only then to consider the impact of their disability.

In line with this broader shift to a more humanistic perspective, teacher educators are faced with the challenges of preparing student teachers in effective ways to accommodate diverse learners in functioning independently across curricular domains. There is concern about the lack of preparation given to student teachers in promoting inclusive practices to accommodate these diverse needs (Bishop & Jones, 2002). The range of instructional contexts under this new climate goes beyond traditional school environments to include home and community settings. The significance of implementing inclusive practices which cater for diverse learners has meant that student teachers are required to be flexible in

adapting their teaching for children with disabilities to reach their full potential. Additionally, student teachers need to develop productive interactions and relationships with a wider group of people with and without disabilities (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 2002).

Students who enter into teacher education programs differ in the extent and nature of contacts and personal understandings about people with disabilities. This changing profile of the students from different socio-cultural backgrounds entering the teaching profession prompted inquiry about influences from family and community contexts. This current investigation broadened research and learning beyond the context of the university to examine both personal and community ecological influences (Arthur, Gordon, & Butterfield, 2003). In doing so the findings provided new insights gained by tracing the student teachers' processes of developing role identity as inclusive educators through both confronting and rewarding interactions with people with disabilities in local community and home contexts. These situated learning experiences outside the classroom were considered essential for authentic engagement in powerful learning and gave rise to different kinds of knowing (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Several insights for teacher educators were illuminated by the student teachers' personal backgrounds combined with their situated learning from real-life experiences in relating to individuals with disabilities.

Thus, a major emphasis of the current study was to examine student teachers' perspectives and understandings in terms of voluntary experiences and biographies. In particular, the present study focused on analysing the links between selected individual student teachers' biography, personal practical knowledge and prospective teacher role identity. Importance

was placed on student teachers' perceptions about people with disabilities, their prior experiences and interactions with people with disabilities, and their emerging personal and professional perspectives about their future role as inclusive educators. The current study adopted an inquiring orientation where the process was to enrich the participant's understanding of self-as-educator by developing a grounded personal philosophy based on past experience and present situations. For this reason, the intention of the present research was to expand teacher educators' understanding of student teachers as learners on an educational journey beyond the classroom context.

The present study was undertaken with the main aim of identifying the major biographical influences on selected student teachers' past and present lives and the impact of experiences on personal practical knowledge relating to critical incident decision-making and understandings about role identity and curriculum for students with disabilities. Critical incidents in teaching are considered as those events that contribute to meaning and may trigger thinking and learning towards deeper knowledge and understanding (Tripp, 1993). In conducting this study, I chose to broaden Tripp's (1993) notion of critical incidents beyond a teaching context and apply the notion of critical incidents to significant events in one's personal and professional life, as a means of identifying the major biographical influences on the student teachers' lives.

Inclusive curricular approaches, which are successful in accommodating all learners, are frequently dependent on collaborative goal setting and getting to know individuals' needs, interests and priorities (Agran et al., 2003; Dettmer et al., 2002; Foreman, 2001). Those

experienced in the delivery of services to people with disabilities recognise the need for collaboration and teamwork in community and family contexts, in order to identify and benefit from critical incidents and experiences which facilitate these partnerships. Thus, open communication among the student teachers, parents and carers was encouraged to form effective team partnerships.

Theories relating to reflection and critically reflective practice in context informed the current study (Brookfield, 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995). In particular, Knowles' (1992) Biographical Transformation Model was selected, which linked stages of development of teacher role identity with phases of formative experiences, interpretation, schema and framework for action with pre-service teachers' reflections on field experiences (Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 1994; Knowles, 1992). These interactions were analysed to investigate the varying nature of student teachers' reflective practices as they attempted to construct and expand their view of teaching and learning. An integrated notion of reflexive and reflective inquiry was considered crucial to facilitate the process of clarifying role identity. The distinction between Knowles' earlier research and the current study was the expansion of his model for developing role identity to student teachers responsible for educating a more diverse population of children with disabilities.

Situated learning opportunities were designed, presenting a variety of practical experiences involving decision-making about individualised instruction, which simultaneously, were expected to nurture student teachers as learners. The intention was to encourage purposeful reflection about prior experiences, learning theories, curriculum practices and the desired and

unintended consequences of the student teachers' actions. The community field experiences were selected to provide varied contexts for interactions with people with disabilities and to incorporate a range of age groups, including respite in families' homes of young children, recreation programs for school-aged children and independent living skills for adults. Consequently, these settings provided multiple opportunities for student teachers to engage in reflections about the impact of critical incidents on their lives. Examining the implications of these reflections actively involved student teachers in constructing role identity based on situated experiences in conjunction with the teacher education program. Reflective thinking was used as a tool to increase student teachers' awareness about issues and concerns, enhancing and empowering individuals in their future roles as inclusive educators. It was expected that over the course of the educational journey that with an individual's increasing experience, each of the student teachers would expand his or her perceptions of self and people with disabilities, and ultimately develop a positive role identity.

Developing understandings from the individual's biography provided the structure for involving the student teachers in personalising their interpretations of critical incidents from their past, reflecting on the relevance, meaning and connections with present experiences. Semi-structured interviews engaged the participants in a process of theorising as learners, while maintaining a balance between backward-looking and forward-looking perspectives. Individual and group case studies involving situated perspectives were used for this study in accordance with:

> *the three conceptual themes that are central to the situated perspective – that cognition is (a) situated in particular physical and social context; (b) social in*

nature; and (c) distributed across the individual, other persons, and tools (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p.4).

The case method in teacher education has a dual focus of exploring integrated notions about both teaching and learning. Student teachers' relationships with individuals with disabilities were examined as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of experiences in developing person-centred curriculum for children with disabilities, along with the process of gaining a deeper understanding of the multi-faceted role of an inclusive educator.

A gap exists in the teacher education curricula for the preparation of future educators equipped with collaborative orientations and responsive practices (O'Shea, O'Shea, Algozzine, & Hammitte, 2001). Inclusive school communities are becoming more widespread; yet to date, there is little research evidence that provides directions about ways to prepare student teachers for their role in teaching children with disabilities in such contexts. In 1994, although many universities were already providing courses in Special Education, there was a state-wide politically driven requirement to include a compulsory Special Education subject in all teacher education courses in New South Wales. However, this requirement of one specialised unit is still not the case in all Australian states or territories (McRae, 1996). Similarly, in the United States, most general education teachers have not been formally prepared for or in inclusive classroom environments (Villa & Thousand, 2000).

Ideally, such a shift towards more inclusive school contexts provides opportunities for children with disabilities to experience curriculum beyond traditional boundaries. In practice,

as a result of the change, critical curriculum decision-making responsibilities have transferred from districts to the local schools and classrooms. For those involved in teacher education this means fully appreciating the necessity to cater for diversity and be responsive and collaborative with local community and school cultures. It is clear that:

> *only when we fully understand the personal needs, goals, and interests of our students can we formulate and support responsive school experiences* (Sands, Kozleski, & French, 2000, p.293).

The significance of the present study is that it situates the student teachers' learning in a way that focuses on the uniqueness of the individual, while recognising the importance of the dynamic, interactive nature of learning in meaningful contexts. The participants' reflective accounts of their experiences as learners in relating to people with disabilities provide a model for how, as future inclusive educators, they bring individual biographies that can enhance personal philosophies about their role identities. The research study makes explicit the participants' real-life dilemmas, goals and aspirations. In doing so, it explores:

> *the specific attitudes, dispositions, knowledge, and skills that need to be addressed in initial teacher preparation and continuing education program agendas which are informed by multiple sources, including the voices of teachers who are working, or facing a future of working, in more inclusive and heterogeneous classrooms* (Villa & Thousand, 2000, p.533).

Subsequent chapters of the current study discuss the literature concerning curricula and reflective practices in this broader context. Data gathered from the present study are analysed to examine alternative approaches and to take account of the student teachers' perspectives within the current climate of change.

The research questions underpinning the current study were:

1. Can we identify the critical biographical influences that shape understandings of student teachers about their role as inclusive educators of children with disabilities?

2. What understandings do student teachers develop about their role identity as inclusive educators through reflections on interactions with people with disabilities from both past and current situations?

3. In what ways do the different contexts of voluntary course-related field experiences with people with disabilities contribute to insights and understandings about role identities of student teachers?

4. What are the implications of the student teachers' reflections on their experiences for teacher educators and curriculum for children with disabilities?

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 reviews the literature relating to developing student teachers' role identity, the nature of the learner and curriculum challenges facing inclusive educators. Then, Chapter 3 addresses reflective inquiry to guide the educational journey and examines reflection in relation to teacher role identity and the influence of learning environments. Chapter 4 outlines the methodology employed during this qualitative study. In particular, the research design involved case study method, which was used across two cohorts of student teachers. Data sources involved semi-structured interviews with the participants and the recording of their learning in reflective journals. Subsequent chapters present the results of this research. In Chapter 9 there is a discussion of findings explicitly addressing the research questions, while Chapter 10 concludes with the implications for teacher educators.

CHAPTER 2: FACILITATING UNDERSTANDING OF AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATOR'S ROLE

This chapter examines the literature relating to understanding an inclusive educator's role and the broader ecological influences impacting on curricula for children with disabilities and their diverse needs. Recent changes to general and special educators' roles and classroom practices were introduced as a result of politically driven policies which legislate the rights of all individuals to participate in mainstream services. Whereas in the past, teacher educators have tended to take a narrow view of curriculum as catering for the population of typical children, today, in the current climate of inclusive practices more children with disabilities are enrolling in regular classrooms. Thus, there is a need for teacher educators to establish effective ways to equip student teachers for the future challenges of increasingly expansive notions of curricula.

A rationale for the current investigation is based on overcoming narrow interpretations of curricula by comprehending more fully the dynamic role changes facing student teachers studying Special Education subjects. A review of recent studies identified significant issues and demands associated with current practices affecting an inclusive educator's role. As a result of these concerns, this current study explores other alternatives to existing practices by focusing attention on student teachers' biographies and their needs as learners. This holistic approach emphasises personal practical dimensions of a student's learning in preparing to work with people with disabilities and provides a broader perspective of curriculum beyond the classroom context to include biographical understandings. In particular, Knowles' (1992)

Biographical Transformational Model is critiqued as a mainstream teacher education approach which was adapted for analysing the influence of biography on pedagogical theorising about an inclusive educator's role.

This chapter commences with background on the changing nature of the role of an inclusive educator and identifies issues affecting current inclusive practices. Section 2 presents an ecological paradigm for facilitating understandings about an inclusive educator's role. In the light of this context, Section 3 presents arguments justifying the need for more expansive notions of curriculum to cater for diversity. Following on from this discussion on curriculum, Section 4 examines findings from previous studies to show how biographical influences may affect an inclusive educator's role in relation to understanding their perceptions, beliefs and behaviours. To further illustrate the rationale for the current study, Section 5 provides a review of empirical studies as a progressive process towards selecting a biographical framework for analysis. A synthesis of the reviewed literature is presented in the final Section 6.

1. ISSUES AFFECTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATORS' ROLES

In Australia recent legislative, policy and community reforms have changed the way that children with disabilities are educated and supported in schools. Major changes affect enrolment processes, educational placement and the extent of school-based support (Dempsey, 2001). However, for these new directions to be sustained there needs to be an

alignment of political intention, policy and the professional development of educators, as well as the establishment of supportive environments (Brown et al., 2000). Thus, despite a conducive political climate of mandated Commonwealth, state and territory policies designed to increase opportunities for children with disabilities, the existing model of introducing systems change has failed to address the role perceptions of educators who are faced with the pressures of implementing these changes.

Recent socio-political initiatives in Australian states and territories include the introduction of teacher registration boards to support quality teaching in schools. Thus, the newly established NSW Institute of Teachers, formed in June 2004, has a primary role to support quality teaching through overseeing the accreditation of teachers and their continuing professional development. Such practices are based on research which found that the quality of teachers and their teaching was the key determinant of students' experiences and the outcomes of their schooling (Rowe, 2003). In working towards raising the professional learning of teachers, the current investigation recognises the need to change role perceptions of prospective inclusive educators to prepare them for accommodating children with disabilities. A key to successful inclusive practices relies on creating positive educators' attitudes to the process and a real commitment to meeting the diverse needs of children with disabilities in regular classrooms (Bishop & Jones, 2002; Bailey & du Plessis, 1998). Whereas in the past regular classroom teachers made few adaptations for children with disabilities, educators now have additional responsibilities for meeting the needs of all children (Brown et al., 2000). These increasing demands on the role of inclusive educators

currently pose major constraints and concerns raised by teachers and school personnel. Such concerns include:

> *lack of training and/or experience in Special Education; the child's rate of progress – teacher expectations are sometimes unrealistic; teachers may fear the unfamiliar; a feeling of isolation and lack of support; insufficient resources; lack of knowledge and experience in working with and effectively using a teacher's aide and itinerant support teachers and services; the difficulty of providing for children who have not been identified before beginning school but who require resources additional to what the school can provide; listening to parents' concerns and including them in problem-solving and programme design (Foreman, 2001, p.69-70).*

From these concerns it is clear that teacher educators have a significant role to play in preparing student teachers to feel comfortable and confident in their interactions with children with disabilities.

Today in Australia and other western countries, there is a global concern about teacher shortages. Role adjustment pressures have led to high levels of attrition of teachers in Special Education and caused severe teacher shortages, resulting in frequent incidences of teacher burnout and job turnover (Dettmer et al, 2002). Globally, such attrition has meant a lack of highly skilled, seasoned mentors to nurture beginning teachers, who without guidance from mentors, are likely to set unrealistic role expectations of themselves as inclusive educators (Renzaglia, Hutchins, & Lee, 1997). For beginning teachers, the lack of experience with children with disabilities and challenging learning behaviours, combined with the constant demands to problem solve, may heighten their feelings of inadequacy. Dettmer et al. (1999) cite Maslach (1982) to illustrate the point that for those in the helping professions, work-related stress leading to burnout was shown to affect them significantly (Maslach, 1982).

High levels of emotional exhaustion, feelings of disempowerment through lack of control and beliefs of low self-efficacy were identified as factors which signalled burnout. Those professionals suffering from burnout were depicted as typically feeling physically, emotionally and attitudinally exhausted. Thus, Dettmer et al. (1999), assert that there are three basic components of burnout:

1. *Emotional exhaustion ("I'm tired and irritated all the time. I am impatient with my students and colleagues.")*
2. *Depersonalization ("I am becoming emotionally hardened; I start to blame the students or their families for all the problems.")*
3. *Reduced accomplishment ("I feel like I'm not making a difference for my students.") (Dettmer, Dyck, & Thurston, 1999, p.182).*

Similarly, earlier studies by Zabel & Zabel (1982) showed that the severity of stress and burnout were related to the particular service delivery model used. In a study of teachers of children with disabilities, the researchers found that factors contributing to burnout included servicing multiple settings across geographic areas; large caseloads of students; demanding and unrealistic expectations of others; and feelings of low personal accomplishment (Zabel & Zabel, 1982). Additionally, the lack of career sustainability in the inclusive education field may be due to the additional time, effort, physical and emotional energy required to meet the particular program needs of children with disabilities.

It is anticipated that changing the current perspectives of future inclusive educators about the demands of their roles and responsibilities may provide part of the solution to overcoming burnout and attrition. To date, inclusive educators reluctantly cite the mandates of individualised educational plans as generating excessive paperwork and record-keeping,

along with insufficient time-frames, as major causes of their stress and burnout (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Such concerns therefore suggest that if new graduates are to be successful in the field of inclusive education, their roles and responsibilities need to be reconceptualised to assist in the management of the role pressures imposed on them both internally and externally. Hence, career satisfaction in the context of inclusive education is likely to be closely linked to the responsibilities and expectations imposed by both self and others indicating that these traditional roles need to be questioned. Thus,

> *The practice of labelling, sorting, and tracking students is fundamental in the delivery of Special Education services as they are traditionally conceptualized. These practices need to be closely examined with regard to the task of providing culturally responsive instruction. Consequently, special educators must be prepared to rise to the challenge of performing these examinations (Voltz, Dooley, & Jefferies, 1999, p.71).*

Changing role perceptions of inclusive educators to a more humanistic perspective will require adopting more culturally responsive curriculum which caters for diversity while at the same time, minimizing the stress of professional responsibilities (Ainscow, Howes, Farrell, & Frankham, 2003).

This current investigation focuses on re-examining effective ways to deliver inclusive education services to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Arguably, changing current narrow perspectives about inclusive educators' roles may emerge from attention to the biographies of student teachers and their needs in preparing to work with unfamiliar people with disabilities. By taking a more holistic approach to teacher education, this study draws

attention to the personal dimensions of intellectual, physical and emotional aspects of student teachers' learning.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATOR

The current study requires a critical appraisal of theory, research and practices relating to processes which lead to self-knowledge through biographical experiences. In defining a biographical approach, personal interpretation is recognised as connecting the inner and outer world of human experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In a similar way this study attempts to make sense of the individual's biographical interpretations of experiences with people with disabilities by connecting the inner world of thought and experience with the outer world of events and interactional experiences, as a means to construct personal humanistic understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Similar narrative methodology which focused on life history research (Woods, 1996) and lived experience (Van Manen, 1990) supported the notion of adopting a biographical research approach (Goodson & Walker, 1991). It was anticipated that, as a result of the community experiences, the shared meanings derived from participants' individual biographies would be valuable in clarifying concepts of their roles as inclusive educators. Consequently, a biographical ecological paradigm was used to investigate actual life experiences as participants reflected on their learning about people with disabilities bringing both past, present and future orientations. Such retrospective reflection on critical incidents involving people with disabilities was intended to draw out

participants' tensions and clarify self-knowledge through a situated learning process, thereby increasing understandings of their future roles as inclusive educators.

The biographical approach adopted was based on the recognition that peoples' actions may only be truly understood in context (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1991). Situated community contexts involving interactions with people with disabilities were selected for exploring and interpreting how such relationships and experiences contributed to participants' perceptions of their role as inclusive educators. Thus, situated learning provided opportunities for myself as a teacher educator to examine how student teachers constructed role understanding from real-life experiences (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Placement of students in community contexts was intended to motivate deeper understandings and facilitate meaningful relationships with people with disabilities. From this experience it was hoped that a belief system might emerge in each student teacher that would support diversity in education to include all children, particularly those with disabilities, and would guide the restructuring of curriculum for more inclusive classroom practices (Fisher, Roach, & Frey, 2002; York, 1995). This dynamic inclusive process was defined as:

> *Participation by all in a supportive general education environment that includes appropriate educational and social supports and services (Bradley, King-Sears, & Tessier-Switlick, 1997, p.6).*

Expanding on this participatory notion of inclusion has also meant creating responsive and conducive environments in which:

> *Inclusion is a movement of families, educators, and community members that seeks to create schools and other social institutions based on acceptance, belonging, and community (Salend, 1998, p.7).*

Accordingly, a belief behind this current investigation was that teacher educators need to listen to and interpret the biographies of student teachers in order to clarify the student teachers' role expectations in relation to people with disabilities. Thus, the present study adopted a conceptual framework that investigated how individuals made sense of biographical experiences in relation to their personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Personal practical knowledge is a construct that recognises an individual's life learning from practical experiences and the influences of these experiences on knowledge development. Therefore, it was argued in this study, that teacher educators would better facilitate an awareness of inclusive curriculum that catered for diversity, by presenting student teachers with the opportunities to expand their biographies through increasing their real-life experiences with people with disabilities.

Traditionally, the role of special educators has narrowly focused only on labelling and identifying entitlement for restricted disability services (Ashman & Elkins, 2002). These practices have driven the policy agendas of helping professions (Sands et al., 2000). Disability as a socially constructed label has led to questions about the suitability of categorised service delivery models, different kinds of social models of disability and the use of the term *Special Education* (Ashman & Elkins, 2002, p.45). Social, political and economic forces in the past have often produced curriculum which denied students with disabilities the *principles of participatory democracy* (Reid, 1992, p.14). A democratic process of curriculum for social justice is viewed as one which promotes equity and privileges minority groups within society by including them in real decision making about curriculum issues

(Phelan, 2001). Ideally, such a responsive inclusive curriculum based on the principles of participatory democracy, would be more flexible and adaptable in meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities and local school communities. Curriculum process was defined in the present study as:

> *… a series of decisions and judgments … based upon the planner's beliefs, assumptions, perceptions and biases and upon the ways in which teachers, and others, make meaning of the teaching reality in which they are located (Lovat & Smith, 1995, p.2).*

Such a definition of curriculum is relevant for the present investigation as it recognises unchallenged beliefs, biases and misconceptions held by student teachers about people with disabilities. Furthermore, the current study was underpinned by a desire to promote the value of interaction between people from diverse backgrounds through linking the relevance of biographical experiences to learning outcomes. This study took the view that an analysis of these life experiences needed to be considered as an essential component in all teacher education programs in order to foster supporting and caring attitudes towards people with disabilities. Thus, deeper understandings of inclusive curriculum were sought from real-life experiences and as a consequence of interactions and responses from a diverse array of explicit and implicit influences (Flem, Moen, & Gudmundsdottir, 2004; Agran et al., 2003; Cohen & Harrison, 1982).

A further purpose of this investigation was to determine the extent that the student teachers' understandings had come from exploring how disability had touched their lives. It was envisaged that these insights would provide teacher educators with more appropriate

practices to replace the narrow traditional curricular domains which have often failed to recognise the influential nature of student teachers' formative memories and experiences in shaping their lives (Brown & Shearer, 1999; Brookfield, 1995). The present study supported a more humanistic perspective of curriculum as culturally driven, in contrast to subject and content bounded curricula. It was based on a belief that student teachers would be more likely to appreciate the diversity within society by developing their awareness of the role of inclusive educators. This study questioned whether the student teacher's individual biographical experiences were reflected in each individual's readiness and willingness to interact with people with disabilities within the notion of a pluralistic society.

Debates in the curriculum literature on the role of narrative and experience have centred on the arguments between formalists and experientialists (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). On the one hand, the formalists have argued that a person merely plays out the hegemonies of politics, culture, gender and framework. Experientialists assert that specific actions are connected to autobiography and to a narrative study of experience. In locating curriculum, experientialists take the view that curriculum:

> *can become one's life course of action. It can mean the paths we have followed and the paths we intend to follow (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p.1).*

Thus, this study incorporated an integrated narrative approach within ecological systems theory for educational paradigms, which linked human development and the kinds of interactions to the context of experiential learning environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Discourses about curriculum and best practices are ongoing in most teacher education courses. Overall, teacher educators recognise their responsibility for stimulating student teachers to reflect on the nature of curriculum by modelling exemplary classroom practices and encouraging lifelong learning through self-inquiry and increasing personal teaching efficacy (Gordon & Debus, 2002; Groundwater-Smith & Hayes, 2001; Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991). However, developing reflective practitioners remains a challenge for most teacher educators. Those teacher educators who have attempted to challenge the status quo of curriculum by incorporating diversities, have done so by adopting a strategy of modelling experiential curriculum. This exposure to modelled practices provides student teachers with a process of learning to teach through example (Lowenbraun & Bobbitt, 1998). Thus, as prospective inclusive educators, student teachers who participate in such practices, ideally will implement individualised curriculum with an emphasis on meaningful ecological experiences for children with disabilities. These experiences need to operate both within classroom ecologies and in more generalised community environments (Arthur et al., 2003). Thus, preparing student teachers to work with children from backgrounds very different to their own, requires educating student teachers to develop awareness of cultural influences rather than narrowly focusing on curriculum content (Odom et al., 2004; Voltz et al., 1999).

A recent focus in the literature on inclusive practices is concerned with promoting self-determination while recognizing ecological influences (Agran et al., 2003; Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001). The principle of self-determination emphasises the rights of the individual. For inclusive educators, it means taking responsibility for preparing children with disabilities for independent functioning so that they may enjoy the

same opportunities as those without disabilities. Consequently, the role of inclusive educators, as service providers, has extended into the community and has shifted from being an expert in control, to one of being a facilitator who supports and guides decision-making. This empowering process enhances opportunities for people with disabilities to take more control of their lives in a range of settings (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1994). A shift in roles has meant that:

> *The roles of teachers change from "the sage on the stage" to "the guide on the side". Rather than being the experts who have all the answers, teachers guide students to be their own problem solvers and the decision makers in their own lives (Fortini & FitzPatrick, 2000, p.584-585).*

An implication of inclusive educators having a more collaborative role in negotiating individualised curricular processes is that teacher educators need to develop effective communication and instructional strategies for student teachers. Such individualised program planning for children with disabilities involves developing responsive curricula and unique instructional strategies based on deconstructing contexts (Thomas, 2001), in consultation and collaboration with parents, carers, health and educational professionals in a team environment. As facilitators in a team, prospective inclusive educators will require experiences in problem solving and being responsive to the complex needs of diverse learners, beyond the classroom level. To be successful as inclusive educators, collaborative consultation will also need to be situated in community contexts which incorporate the lives of people with disabilities (Dettmer et al., 2002). Recent expansion of collaboration to embrace curriculum diversity for people with disabilities has encouraged debate across all sectors of the community, particularly among education, health and community welfare service providers. This discourse across agencies reflects a shift from mapping disability as a

medical, biological, pathological landscape to one founded in social, even political and economic, locations (Smith, 1999a). Disability when viewed from this alternative perspective may be considered more as a socially constructed phenomenon (Carrington & Elkins, 2002; Christensen, 1992), which is open to multiple interpretations by student teachers and others, unfamiliar with this area of education. These discourses about perceptions affecting people with disabilities indicate a need for a more expansive notion of curriculum.

3. AN EXPANSIVE NOTION OF CURRICULUM TO CATER FOR DIVERSITY

Curriculum when viewed as a life-long voyage involving a process of reconstructing experiences was referred to in the literature as an educational journey (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995; Pinar, 1975). This expansive notion of curriculum it was argued, connected meaningful experiences with knowledge and required techniques such as problem solving and apprenticeships to facilitate analytical thinking (Sileo, Prater, Luckner, Rhine, & Rude, 1998). The present study therefore adopted the view that student teachers' learning required scaffolding in order to incorporate prior knowledge with planned experiences. In keeping with earlier research (Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 1994), the practical experience in the study was designed to give learning a context which would allow student teachers to broaden and apply their theoretical knowledge.

Planned community experiences were designed to provide exposure to authentic curricular challenges offering a range of apprenticeship environments as novel contexts for new learning. These definitions emphasised the dynamic nature of curriculum and its relation to past, present and future orientations. The current investigation sought to follow the educational journey of student teachers during their teacher education course to determine their processes for understanding their role in relation to children with disabilities. However, understanding how individuals interpret their own experienced curriculum within an ecological perspective was a difficult process which further required investigating the influences of society and cultural environments. It was considered that more positive

attitudes of student teachers towards people with disabilities would emerge by creating opportunities for collaborative interactions (Flem et al., 2004; Englert & Tarrant, 1995).

Throughout this study a less discriminatory approach towards curriculum for children with disabilities was advocated, moving beyond the school experience, to a broader consideration of inclusive curriculum and its cultural dimension within the community. Christensen (1992) offered the perspective that organizations need to respond to human differences by:

> *Rather than a few students being seen to have 'special' needs, schools must regard all students' needs as part of the fabric of human experience and must become open, inclusive and responsive institutions which celebrate rather than eliminate human difference (Christensen, 1992, p.8).*

A socially critical orientation to curriculum was considered relevant for exploring the meanings student teachers attached to their interpretations of past and present life experiences and challenges (Tierney, 2000). According to this orientation participants need to engage in critically reflective processes within a social context in order to increase their understandings of appropriate individual practices and to negotiate shared practices (Hatton, 1994). The field of inclusive education is typically characterised as needing to cater for diversity by caring for and valuing differences (Villa & Thousand, 2000). Experienced inclusive educators generally hold a strong appreciation and celebration of diversity in individuals and accept a pluralistic view of society where every person has potential and should be afforded opportunities to grow and to contribute; thus enjoying a quality of life within the context of a proactive community (Freire & Cesar, 2003; Brown & Shearer, 1999). The current research explored from participants' perspectives their role understandings because:

> *… social interaction is constructed by the people engaged in it, one should try to see it from their point of view and appreciate how they interpret the indicators given to them by others, the meaning they assign to them, and how they construct their own action (Woods, 1996, p.39).*

Existing approaches for developing responsive curricula for diverse learners acknowledge the difference between planned curriculum and experienced curriculum, in which experienced curriculum takes account of actual experiences and learner perceptions of those experiences (Sands et al., 2000). Such directions suggest that teacher educators need to be open and mindful of student teachers' perspectives, developing their technical skills and addressing varying beliefs underlying their behaviours and decision-making.

Previous studies by Liston & Zeichner (1987), Tom (1985), have viewed teaching as a 'moral craft'. They distinguished between technical skills and moral values claiming that:

> *… the focus is not so much upon the act of thinking as upon the actuality of being, on engendering particular dispositions or ways of being. Teachers can be honest, caring and fair in their relationships with students, and they can encourage their students to act likewise (Liston & Zeichner, 1987, p.6).*

This humanistic view of teaching promotes a personal, caring relationship between teachers and learners and engenders self-knowledge, which is particularly relevant in inclusive education contexts. The literature on caring places an emphasis on context, connection and relationships and cites truly important constructed knowledge produced in good teaching as:

> *… knowledge that we don't know and can't know unless we are in the context in which it is created – the interaction between students and teachers (Dempsey, 1989, p.102).*

A shift to personalise curriculum has led educators to adopt reflective inquiry as a valuable learning tool for increasing self-awareness and to clarify roles and responsibilities. Such notions represent a process of sense-making (Dewey, 1938). Proponents of reflective practice advocate nurturing particular dispositions of inquiry for critiquing and acting as a means of developing and understanding of an inclusive role (Gardner & Boucher, 2000). Based on the relevance of such approaches for analysing experiences, participants involved in this study were encouraged to adopt past, present and future orientations in their reflections, as ways of exploring their learning both about themselves, people with disabilities and relevant others. The following chapter elaborates on reflective strategies employed in the present study.

4. BIOGRAPHICAL INFLUENCES AFFECTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATORS' ROLES

Biographical influences were examined in the current study as a means to scaffold experiences within the teacher education course in order to overcome identified constraints affecting prospective roles as inclusive educators. Grounding learning in past and present experiences gave a more inclusive approach to reconstructing understandings about the nature of student teachers' interactions with people with disabilities. Knowles (1992) developed a model demonstrating the formation of stages of teacher role identity with phases of the Biographical Transformation Model (See Figure 2.1):

Figure 2.1. Developing teacher role identity, a model linking stages of development of teacher role identity with phases of the Biographical Transformation Model (Knowles, 1992, p.142).

Stages of development of teacher role identity	Phases of the Biographical Transformation Model
Family experiences as a child Experiences with teachers School experiences	Formative experiences
Meaning of family experiences Meaning of experiences with teachers Meaning of school experiences	Interpretation
Family role models Negative teacher role models and Positive teacher role models Development of educational philosophy	Schema
Ideals of adult-child relationships Ideal instructional strategies Ideal instructional environment Significant recent experiences and people	Framework for action
Teacher role identity	Teacher role identity
	Student teacher and beginning teacher practices

Features of the model depict the influence of childhood experiences with family and schooling as formative experiences. According to Knowles (1992), these formative experiences lead to an interpretation of positive and negative teacher role models. Based on exposure to such role models, individuals develop an educational philosophy which involves ideal adult/child relationships, instructional strategies and environment. From this philosophy, a framework for action is developed and refined through significant recent

experiences leading to the emergence of teacher role identity. Thus, the strength of Knowles'

model lies in how the constructs of role identities are transformed into philosophies and

classroom practices in which ideal behaviours may be modified by the context of the

situation. Knowles' (1992) model highlights the importance of how meanings change over

time and are the result of both the interactional situational context and biographical origins.

In the following ecological component of the model, Knowles shows how prior family and

school experiences interact with formal teacher education learning to influence student

teachers' perceptions of what is appropriate and inappropriate classroom behaviours (See

Figure 2.2 Interaction of biography and school environment: The influence of biography on

teaching practice), (Knowles, 1992, p.144).

Figure 2.2: Interaction of biography and school environment: The influence of biography on teaching practice.

Experiences of
family

Experience of school
and teachers

Prior teaching
experiences

Significant others and
experiences (including
Educational Training
Programme)

Teacher role
identity

Negative

Positive

Early
experiences

Early
experiences

Negative

Positive

School
environment

School
environment

Inappropriate
behaviours

Student teacher
Classroom behaviours

Appropriate
behaviours
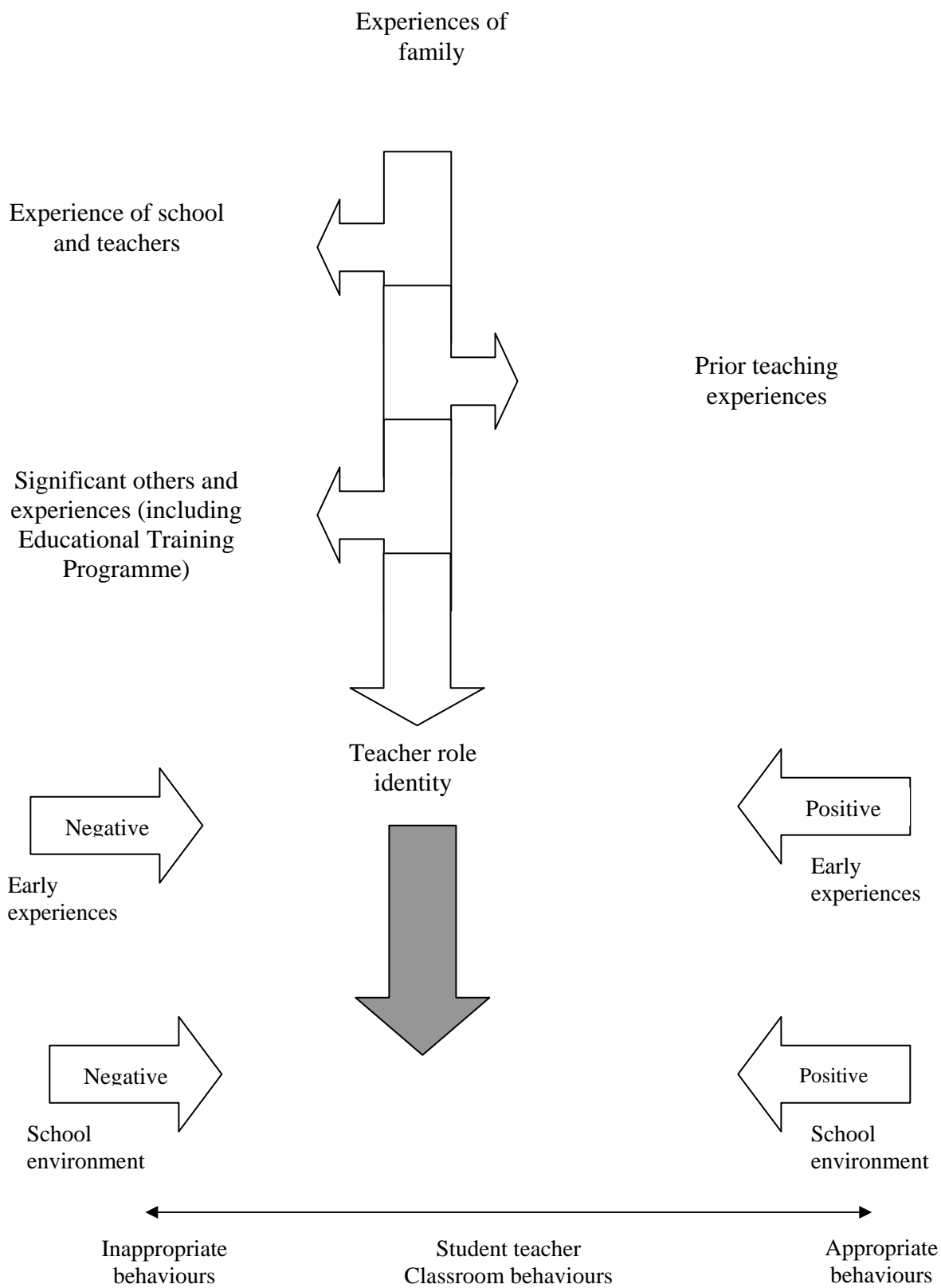
The relevance of this model is its connection with the ecological systems framework which considers the influences of families, school and community experiences. Knowles' model extended Bronfenbrenner's earlier theory that human development and environments are inextricably linked (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Additionally, Knowles (1992) provided a multi-faceted model for understanding pre-service and beginning teachers' biographies affecting how they think about teaching, the education process and their practices in the classroom. In exploring the notion further on how biographies impacted on role identity, Knowles' (1992) model focused on the two areas of problem-solving and coping strategies. Consideration of the nature of socialising influences may play a key role in the reflective practice of student teachers as they apply problem solving and coping strategies to their interactions with people with disabilities.

As a basis for the model, Knowles compared the two main contrasting views in the teacher socialisation literature. The first view stressed current and past contextual influences including the structure of the school, cooperating teachers, and the powerful ecological force of the classroom. The other view argued that the formal pre-service education and student teaching had little effect on the beliefs and practices of student teachers (Knowles, 1992). The dichotomy between these two views failed, however, to recognise the relevance of critical inquiry in linking values based on personal practical knowledge with theoretical perspectives designed to create a responsiveness to change as part of the teacher education program. Hence the model proposed by Knowles integrated the stages of development of teacher role identity with personal practical knowledge. It supported a critical constructivist paradigm and provided the lenses for viewing social reality (Anderson & Barrera, 1995).

Controversial issues of positive and negative relationships and change reflect the dynamic nature of teaching and learning. An established view among teacher educators is a commitment to life-long learning which depicts values relating to the fluidity of education as an on-going process of adaptations where:

> *… education exists, in the one sense, for the individual and collective life histories of future generations - to give them a sense of personal and social agency in engaging the realities of our current and future world (Butt, Townsend, & Raymond, 1990, p.255).*

The exposure of student teachers to cultures of teaching throughout their schooling distinguishes it as a profession in which prior experiences play a significant role. Such exposure through one's schooling is often referred to as *an apprenticeship of observation* which recognizes that students come to teacher education with preconceived theories about teaching based on their school experiences (Lortie, 1975). Knowles (1992) supports this influence of sustained prior learning with reference to studies by Britzman (1985), who argued for recognition of the *institutional biographies* that student teachers brought with them from their own education. Britzman expanded further on this notion and the need to expose cultural myths affecting teacher education (Britzman, 1985). The implications for preservice teacher education suggest that socialisation of student teachers into the profession requires both an awareness of cultural norms and the development of collegial relationships. Knowles (1992) challenged university programs to be sensitive to individual needs and backgrounds of student teachers by being aware of previous life experiences and beliefs about teaching. He cautioned teacher educators that failure to deal with the biography of

preservice teachers would lead to teachers who would be limited to teach in the same manner they were taught.

In deconstructing the influences of socialising experiences on student teachers, Knowles (1992) advocated that further research on teacher identities, their interests and biographies was needed to gain knowledge about how these experiences affected their careers. Notions of a macro self involved the influences of social, political and economic forces, whereas a micro self viewed the influences of family, friends and those close to the individual in an analysis of experiences. The macro cultural self included social class origins, religious experiences, and the social, political and economic climate. The micro personal self included experiences from home, parents, literature, art, school, teachers, and marriage. Providing opportunities for student teachers to explore these internal and external experiences of *self* was a way of challenging student teachers with dilemmas of multiple role identities. In so doing there was a clear need to consider the personal ecology of individual student teachers and the nature of their interactions and relationships with others.

Ecological perspectives taken in this study highlighted the interplay of factors, particularly the critical socialising influences of family, school, community and organisations. The ecology of the classroom and its contribution to curriculum is often open to wide-ranging interpretations (Waterhouse, 2004; Arthur et al., 2003). In a study on *Secondary School Teaching*, Grossman & Stodolsky (1994) noted that:

… more penetrating study of student beliefs, expectations, and conceptions of subjects matter… could provide one way of enhancing our understanding of the apprenticeship of observation (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1994, p.212).

These comments suggest that a closer examination of the biographical influences affecting student teachers' performance in the classroom may enrich a deeper understanding of their past experiences and assist with meeting their individual needs. The current study addresses an alternative way of overcoming a reliance on an apprenticeship of observation from past schooling experiences. As a consequence of previous observations in classroom contexts, student teachers' attitudes towards learners with disabilities have traditionally been influenced by the beliefs and expectations held by their school teachers and practicum associate teachers. An identified gap exists in investigating student teachers' own understanding of the socialising influence of their lives, thoughts and feelings in shaping individualised curriculum for learners with disabilities. This study examines processes of both past and present biographical influences as student teachers become familiar with the complexities of an inclusive educator's role.

5. BIOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

From a review of the literature on personal practical knowledge and prior experiences of student teachers, there was sufficient evidence to support the study of student teachers' biography as a methodology to link professional and personal experiences. Previous studies, which emphasised a qualitative approach to understanding student teachers' perspectives about constructing curriculum, were reviewed as possible approaches for this present study.

Garmon's study (1993) on eleven preservice teachers' perceptions of the first year of their training was examined because like the present study, the methodology involved the use of interviewing and journal writing. Garmon's investigation focused on ascertaining the perceived success of the training program and involved the use of structured and semi-structured interviews and journals as data sources. Results showed that the student teachers judged good training using criteria of whether they had a solid grasp of specific teaching methods and procedures. The focus of the training was on meeting the needs of prospective teachers. It was claimed that *good teachers are always mindful of the learner's perspective* (Garmon, 1993, p.19).

In Garmon's study (1993) the teacher educators had limited participants' learning to procedural knowledge which they considered would assist student teachers to survive on practicum, rather than combining this approach with an underlying conceptual basis. For there to be a real partnership in the teaching and learning process, there needed to be more negotiation of teacher education curriculum between the teacher educators and their students, as student teachers can only offer their formative views of what they perceive they need to learn. Given that student teachers often lack experience in the complexities of teaching, there will always be gaps in what student teachers consider they need in their preparation. Unlike approaches in Garmon's study, this investigation adopted the premise that teacher educators have a clear responsibility to induce constructive and critical change in their learners through a negotiated process of assessing needs based on student teachers' motivation, interests and the outcomes of their prior learning. Thus, the current study sought to identify the student

teachers' beliefs about individuals with disabilities and to enhance their commitment to bring about improvements in inclusive teaching and learning approaches.

In a case study concerning the influences on the development of three pre-service special educators (Renick, 1996), major categories of experience affecting socialisation processes of special educators were identified: namely, prior perceptions and teacher image; reactions to the school culture; and, issues concerning methods and strategies. The study showed prior images of a special educator as a *savior* influenced all three student teachers during the practicum and they extended the image to include advocacy for students with special needs (Renick, 1996). Given the helping nature of teaching as a profession, this simplistic notion of an inclusive education teacher as a saviour was to be expected; however, it is not the image that student teachers should retain. Ideally, they need to be exposed to more positive alternative metaphors.

Each of Renick's three participants had different interpretations of the role of a special educator as being a person who "saves" students. Participants' goals ranged from firstly, empowering students through a constant search for appropriate ways to teach them; secondly, establishing a caring classroom environment; and thirdly, ensuring that students with special needs had access to the entire curriculum and were treated with respect within the school environment. Renick's study attributed the influence of prior images as impacting significantly on student teachers' decision-making about curriculum experiences.

Renick's study explored the need for student teachers to understand the hidden or simply accepted rules and ways of being in addition to learning about the explicit role of special educators, such as knowing how to modify and adapt curricula for individual students within a school culture. The practicum experience exposed the accepted practices within the school context, and through processes of situated learning and confrontation with regular teachers' practices, the hidden curriculum was made explicit for the student teachers. Exposing the school culture meant focusing on notions of morality and values held by regular teachers about catering for students with special needs. While ideal inclusive notions may be unrealistic for a novice student teacher:

> *They came to believe this Special Education teaching role was defined by regular educators as one that has a different morality, different teaching skills, and a different view of special needs children than does regular education culture (Renick, 1996, p.134).*

Additionally, Renick's (1996) study found that each of the Special Education student teachers, in a similar way to their cooperating Special Education teachers, felt a strong sense of being a member of a separate culture from regular teachers. The implication of this finding was one of perceived boundaries between regular and Special Education teachers. In the current environment of inclusive placement of students with disabilities in regular classes, this lack of interaction between professionals needs addressing if curriculum is to include effective collaboration. Importantly, these findings suggested that when student teachers felt comfortable in the classroom environment they chose to act in autonomous ways and catered for and controlled the students' learning and behaviour. In contrast, in the communal life of the school, the student teachers chose to conform to others' expectations, stressing the

influence of the community of practising teachers and acknowledged the limited autonomy of student teachers in practicum placements.

Overall, Renick's (1996) study highlighted the conceptual framework of role identity as a special educator as generally applicable to that of all teachers in having three dimensions: the personal, the ecological, and the professional knowledge and skills. The limitation of the study was that it gave cursory coverage of life experiences and served mainly to reaffirm the contrasting values and attitudes held by experienced regular and Special Education teachers.

In another study of professional development of Special Education student teachers, Cambone (1996) investigated whether using prior experiences and self-examination assisted learning. An example was given of one student teacher and how she changed her thinking regarding the role of families in the education of their children. The student teacher had autonomously made visits to the home of a child with behavioural difficulties over a year as part of the coursework. Despite being discouraged by the school personnel from getting involved with the family because of the mother's past drug problem and her reluctance to interact with teachers, the student persisted with visits. As a result of her perseverance, the student came to respect and understand the mother's views about child rearing and questioned unfounded assumptions of blaming the parent for her son's school difficulties. The personal characteristics of this student teacher and her ability to build rapport with the family in the home environment meant that her actions were rewarded with deeper understandings of curriculum for children with disabilities.

This example reinforces the power of experience in transforming and changing beliefs and practices, and stresses the importance of questioning existing perceptions. It was the experience rather than any planned aspect of the professional development program, which impacted directly on the student teacher's learning. According to Knowles' (1992) model for interpreting the experience, the student teacher in Cambone's study, arrived at an understanding about the family as a context for the child's behaviour, by developing a framework for action that involved learning more about the nature of families and refuted unfounded negative assumptions.

Cambone's (1996) study found that student teachers needed freedom in order to use their personal ways of knowing and to make sense of becoming a teacher. The personal dimension involved two aspects: firstly, the students were required to complete activities involving prior studies and experiences and secondly, they were asked to write critical analyses which involved self-examination of personal values, ethics and biases, as a means of transforming implicit ways of knowing into explicit ways of knowing and working. The new insights showed that:

> *… the interaction between this changed self and the content of Course work alters their thinking so that they no longer accept theories, assumptions and perceptions without scepticism (Cambone, 1996, p.33).*

Thus, critical review and reflection on controversial social issues were shown to benefit students in linking personal and professional knowledge by examining student's own experiences.

Alternatively, it may be more realistic to recognise that the mutual reciprocity of teaching and learning arising from the experiences in the practicum context provided the vehicle for expanding the student teachers' understanding of the fluidity of curriculum. A particular limitation of Cambone's study was its sole reliance on a self-reporting rating scale as a measure of perceived opportunities to learn through the personal. Furthermore, it placed too much emphasis on the training component and in so doing, failed to articulate any in-depth analysis of the process of constructing curriculum. Unlike Cambone's research, the present study took a more socially constructivist approach (Vygotsky, 1978) to understanding the role of inclusive educators by considering situated biographical dimensions of student teachers' experiences during their teacher education course.

In creating professional identities, metaphors and images were often thought to give enhanced interpretations of student teachers' views about identity. In *Understanding Teacher Education*, Calderhead & Shorrock (1997), supported this more diverse personal perspective:

> *… given the diverse and contradictory ways in which teacher education is being shaped, a fuller understanding of what teachers do and the processes by which teachers learn to teach is evidently needed (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997, p.5).*

By providing a biographical framework to the current investigation, teacher educators may gain insights into better approaches for increasing student teachers' understanding of classroom practices and processes.

6. CONCLUSIONS ARISING FROM THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In conclusion, the review of the current literature showed that teacher education curriculum for student teachers, when viewed as a cultural construct, has a strong basis in analysing prior experiences. The gaps in current practices depicted in the review suggest that exploring influences on constructing identity through biographies may prove valuable for examining the journey towards personal and shared understandings of the role of inclusive educators. One of the assumptions behind this present study is the teacher educators' pivotal role in mediating and providing the context for student teachers to examine past and present experiences. Situated learning in community contexts gave practical opportunities for student teachers to reflect on and clarify their role understandings. Prior to this study, prospective inclusive educators have not fully understood their role in relation to children with disabilities and have yet to examine the biographical influences affecting themselves as teachers and learners. This study unfolded from the experiences and stories of student teachers on their educational journey and traced their evolving personal and professional philosophies as they grappled with issues affecting their perceptions of their role as future inclusive educators.

The following Chapter 3 reviews literature on key aspects of reflective processes of learning. In particular, the review focuses on the personal and social dimensions of reflection. Additionally, the analysis provides clearer definitions of reflective-inquiry and offers a comparative review of models of reflection used by teacher educators. The main purpose of

the next chapter is to link successful strategies for reflective inquiry to previously unexplored

ways of enhancing understandings of an inclusive educator's role.

CHAPTER 3: REFLEXIVE AND REFLECTIVE INQUIRY

In conceptualising this study, it was necessary to show how the process of reflexive and reflective inquiry grounded in life experiences, could facilitate the social construction of new understandings, while catering for the participants' diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and perspectives. An integrated notion of reflective and reflexive inquiry is examined in Section 1 as a paradigm to enhance student teachers' learning within teacher education programs. Recent literature is reviewed in the light of this background in Section 2 for approaches to facilitate reflective learning environments for participants' interactions among people with disabilities. Section 3 presents a rationale for adopting a socio-cultural constructivist perspective about an inclusive educator's role. The next Section 4 examines selected models to promote reflection, highlighting specific strategies which are incorporated in this current investigation to mediate participants' emerging understandings about their role. The chapter concludes, in Section 5, that, based on a review of the literature, there is a genuine need to investigate the educational journey of student teachers as they engage in biographical reflexive and reflective inquiry about their prospective role. A critical socio-cultural constructivist perspective is considered to be a viable theoretical orientation for conducting this study.

1. BIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTIVE INQUIRY AS A PROCESS TO ENHANCE LEARNING

Modern western deliberations on reflection originate in earlier work by the philosopher Dewey, who emphasised that teachers need to foster qualities of being open-minded, wholehearted and responsible (Dewey, 1933). According to Dewey, (1938), it is necessary for experiences to be both interactive and have continuity to be meaningful (Dewey, 1938). Current views in the literature on reflection have linked the characteristics of reflective practitioners to fundamental views on good teaching (Korthagen, 2004). Using reflective-inquiry to enhance the participants' learning, this present research about student teachers' perceptions of the role of an inclusive educator argues for a paradigmatic shift towards more socially mediated self-reflective inquiry. The present study promotes the reflective orientations of the student teachers in order to support human agency and more inclusive classroom practices, thereby moving away from traditional narrow views of society. Thus, the current investigation examines reflective practice about role perceptions from the perspectives of participants as a process in understanding their values, intentions and judgments (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

The complexity of teaching is well acknowledged in the educational literature (Korthagen, 2004; Hatton, 1994), in which there often exists no single right answer to difficult questions or problems faced by teachers in their classroom interactions. The uncertainty of how to improve one's teaching usually involves committed educators in continually grappling with the dynamic nature of classroom interactions, especially when catering for diverse learners.

This circumspect state is frequently a necessary component of reflection as teachers become aware of alternatives to deal with difficult situations. Reflective practitioners do this through processes of deliberation in order to adapt to the unique characteristics of the learner (Kame'enui, Carnine, Dixon, Simmons, & Coyne, 2002; Salend, 1998; Shulman, 1987). Thus, making connections across experiences involves awareness of a relationship between a context, a problem and its solution (Greenberg, 1992). A limitation in viewing reflective inquiry as merely a problem-solving strategy is its narrow focus which fails to recognise reflection as a process of making sense of experiences and linking theory to practice (Smith & Lovat, 2003; Smith, 1999; Sumsion, 1997).

A recent study designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning in teacher education connected how pre-service teachers engaged in the learning process by focussing on the development of deep learning approaches and effectively increased their personal self-efficacy (Gordon & Debus, 2002). Thus, broader biographical and ecological perspectives of reflection occur when practitioners reframe their learning to explore alternatives through questioning and raising concerns about issues. Instead of adopting a narrow problem-solving approach, this reframing gives reflective practitioners a fuller understanding of meaning through socially mediated processes. Reflection in this broader sense provides a means of transforming thinking into learning through engagement in problem-solving as well as reconstructing meaning through shared exchanges (Korthagen, 2004; Fisher et al., 2002; Copeland, Birmingham, & Lewin, 1993). Effective teachers are therefore able to draw on prior knowledge and real world experiences within a collaborative framework (Dettmer et al., 2002; Sternberg & Horvath, 1995). A collaborative approach provides different perspectives

to examine pedagogical implications. As Clayton (1996) suggests collaboration is a tool which:

> *when used effectively, will serve to overcome teaching practices devoid of joint decision-making, effective problem-solving and effective pedagogical practice (Clayton, 1996, p.41).*

A reflective orientation promotes self-monitoring and on-going reappraisals by educators to gain better understanding about their role and the needs of the learner. Expert practitioners are strategic, self-regulated, and reflective (Fortini & FitzPatrick, 2000; Ertmer & Newby, 1996), and develop their teaching expertise by progressively reframing in a social context their complex interactions with people and places (Bullough & Baughman, 1995). In other words, those teachers who combine their pedagogical learner knowledge (Grimmett & MacKinnon, 1992) with critical reflection in actual teaching situations are better able to demonstrate their expertise in connecting both theoretical and practical knowledge. Conversely, novice teachers may have foundations in theoretical and practical knowledge, yet they may be unlikely to make such connections spontaneously (Pultorak, 1993). Thus, student teachers often need more opportunity to reflect on classroom situations to refine their knowledge before they feel confident in their teaching decisions. These distinctions between how experts and novices use their theoretical and practical knowledge are relevant in understanding how reflective inquiry assists student teachers to achieve their goals. Reflective inquiry for the purpose of the current investigation was defined as:

> *an active and deliberate cognitive process, involving sequences of interconnected ideas which take account of underlying beliefs and knowledge. Reflective thinking generally addresses practical problems, allowing for doubt and perplexity before possible solutions are reached (Hatton, 1994, p.2).*

Thus, this current investigation supports a reflective inquiry paradigm that guides student teachers towards more personal reflection as a means of connecting their own insights about people with disabilities to the application of theory in practical learning situations. The present study is based on a belief that teacher educators have an important role in supporting student teachers to reflect on their personal learning experiences as a process towards becoming active, critical and progressive thinkers (Collier, 1999). Additionally, structuring participants' learning in real-life situations, allows for integration of theory and practice, which Korthagen and Kessels (1999) advocated as a *realistic approach* to overcome the problem of transferring knowledge from the teacher education program to the field. This present study combines a real-life approach with interactions involving people with disabilities and therefore links teacher cognition with teacher behaviour (Korthagen, 2004; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999).

Teaching is more recently depicted as involving ongoing reflective decision-making across all components of teacher education programs (Renzaglia et al., 1997). The process of learning to learn and learning conceptualisation of reflection is thought to provide student teachers with opportunities to self-evaluate their teaching practices. Such a process of reflective inquiry could be considered to be a metacognitive strategy which stimulates thinking and learning beyond prescriptive decision-making to engage the learner in exploring alternative perspectives towards more meaningful professional growth (Smith & Lovat, 2003; Leahy & Corcoran, 1996) Reflective thinking enables knowing about relational processes involved in teaching and education within conceptual, societal frameworks. Consequently, a focus on higher-order metacognitive thinking means that student teachers'

pedagogical learning needs to extend beyond a concern with the technical tools of the profession to more personal perspectives of caring for children's growth and welfare (Odom et al., 2004; Van Manen, 1990). This humanistic approach requires fostering empathy in teacher education (Villa & Thousand, 2000; McKenna, 1999).

Learning about reflective inquiry invokes learning to ask, listen and analyse (Webb, 1999; Trumball & Slack, 1991) as well as understanding the various elements that constitute a reflective orientation. A general trend in teacher education is to more reflexive approaches (Cole & Knowles, 2000; Calderhead & Gates, 1993; Canning, 1991) and more critical awareness of social and ethical practices (Christians, 2000). In relation to the concept of inclusive education, such awareness depends on recognising underlying principles of human rights, equity and social justice (Freire & Cesar, 2003; Hallahan & Kauffman, 1997). In the context of this current study, the nature of reflection concerns consideration of societal issues affecting individuals with disabilities, their families, educators and carers, as well as other more personal dimensions of the reflective process.

Reflective-inquiry assists participants to connect their personal and professional lives within both a time and an action framework. Schön (1987) conceptualised reflection as giving reason to action or practice. For Schön, any analysis of reflective strategies involved attention to timing, style, content, and actions that follow from deliberations. The timing of reflection and whether it occurred during the actual incident is referred to by Schön (1987), as reflection *in-action* meaning the action and reflection were intuitively linked (Schön, 1987). Additionally, Schön (1987) referred to a process of reflection *on-action* as

characterised when reflection occurred after the experience; thus, allowing more time for deliberations and learning. A further timing aspect of reflection is known as *for action*, in other words, reflecting after the experience and prior to further action, which becomes evident as a result of framing and reframing events (Schön, 1987). Arguably, these notions were not mutually exclusive and the present study incorporates these integrated notions of *in-action, on-action* and *for-action* within the context of participants' biographies and community experiences. Although the actual timing of reflective-inquiry may vary across individuals, the essential consideration is the impact of reflective processes on the student teachers' learning.

The participants' written and oral reflective comments are also categorised in the present study according to whether they demonstrate styles of writing which illustrate *descriptive*, *dialogic* or *critically reflective* strategies. Hatton and Smith (1995) defined the term *descriptive reflection* as a reportive style of writing in which an attempt is made to provide reasons or justifications for events or actions. In contrast, the term *dialogic reflection* was defined as a more circumspect way of thinking beyond descriptive reflection:

> *a 'stepping back' from the events/actions leading to a different level of mulling about, discourse with self and exploring the experience,...using qualities of judgement and possible alternatives for explaining and hypothesising (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p.37).*

A further type of reflection is *critical reflection* in which the writer demonstrates an awareness of broader historical and socio-political contexts and is influenced by more complex multiple views (Hatton & Smith, 1995). In the light of these definitions, the present study focuses on reflection as a mediating tool to enhance participants' learning from their

experiences with people with disabilities. Thus, by looking more closely at the timing, content and style of reflection employed by participants, the investigation examines how participants constructed their emerging understandings about the role of inclusive educators.

2. FACILITATING REFLEXIVE LEARNING

This current investigation is designed to facilitate reflexive learning by using strategies that explore participants' understandings from past, present and forward looking perspectives about norms and practices affecting people with disabilities. In particular, participants were asked to reflect on their formative memories about people with disabilities and locate experiences in family, school and community contexts. These conceptualisations of reflection as multi-dimensional social phenomena are intended to guide participants' self-learning and to stimulate questioning of embedded, unchallenged social practices as a process towards becoming critically reflective. LaBoskey (1994) held the view that a teacher educator's role is to prepare student teachers to:

> *adapt, apply and evaluate their knowledge of content and pedagogy to a particular learner in a certain context; ... teacher education programs need to incorporate goals and structures that accommodate and address the intricate interaction of emotions, values, beliefs and cognitions in student teacher learning (LaBoskey, 1994, p.136-137).*

Ultimately, these new perspectives may give teacher educators valuable insights about the influences that shape student teachers' lives and decision-making (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000; Brookfield, 1995).

Recent developments in the literature on reflection recognise the importance of personal, professional learning histories (Groundwater-Smith & Hayes, 2001) while still considering a broad socio-cultural framework (Salomon & Perkins, 1998). Such a change has led to an emphasis on a biographical perspective to make links between influences from personal and professional contexts. In particular, Cole and Knowles (2000) explained the distinction between the external professional focus of reflective inquiry and the internal personal nature of reflexive inquiry claiming that:

> *Reflective inquiry is an ongoing process of examining and refining practice, variously focused on the personal, pedagogical, curricular, intellectual, societal, and/or ethical contexts associated with professional work, perhaps, but not necessarily, from a critical perspective…. Reflexive inquiry, on the other hand, is reflective inquiry situated within the context of personal histories in order to make connections between personal lives and professional careers, and to understand personal (including early) influences on professional practice (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p.2).*

Cole and Knowles' distinction between reflective and reflexive inquiry suggests a need to expand notions of what constitutes a critical awareness of personal histories as the key difference. Thus, the design of the present study advocates connecting reflective inquiry with reflexivity to promote a critical awareness of biographical influences in situated community contexts.

Adopting a more biographical perspective increases opportunities for a reflexive method of inquiry in teacher education. A reflexive approach may provide a valuable tool for integrating student teachers' biographical experiences with on-going learning and for stimulating re-conceptualisation of former understandings (Pleasants, Johnson, & Trent, 1998). The salience of a reflexive orientation with a broader reflective approach is therefore

central to the present study in that it situates the context of personal and professional learning experiences and makes it possible to identify significant social influences outside of the teacher education program. According to Putnam and Borko (2000), the reality of teaching emerges from interactions in which student teachers:

> *construct a reality about teaching in the student teaching experience. They learn to access their personal belief through the important questions and answers needed for assimilating their role as teacher…These new ideas about the nature of knowledge, thinking, and learning – which are becoming known as the "situative perspective"* (Greeno, 1997) *are interacting with, and sometimes fueling, current reform movements in education (Putnam & Borko, 2000).*

Participation in dialogic reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1995) with others to explore and question possible reasons for how and why particular situations happen provides a scaffolding process for constructing understanding (Greeno, 1997). In relation to creating conducive learning environments in teacher education, this framing of the experience from a situative perspective is intended to guide individuals to consider what is taking place as a starting point to learning.

Ideally, student teachers are encouraged early in their teacher education programs to engage in open dialogue from multiple perspectives (Hamann, Rubenstein, & Georgi, 1999; Russell & Munby, 1992). Tutorial discussions provide a forum to challenge different views about teaching and learning through interactive peer discussions. In addition, these tutorial discourses present teacher educators with opportunities for expanding on individual interpretations of what constitutes effective teacher roles. These shared informal exchanges need to be structured throughout teacher education courses to create an appreciation of how

student teachers' individual and collective concerns may provide integrated notions of personal reflection together with broader socio-cultural contexts of teaching and learning (Korthagen, 2004; Collier, 1999). Furthermore, adopting a socio-cultural constructivist perspective locates reflections in a holistic biographical framework linking pedagogical learning with humanistic dimensions.

3. ADOPTING A SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

There is a need to conceptualise the role of an inclusive educator more fully within a socio-cultural context in order to identify to what extent notions of disabilities are socially constructed. Vygotsky (1993) argued that people with disabilities may be just as disabled by their social interactions as they are by their disability. Thus, there is an educational need to focus not on the disability but on changing social interactions and relationships (Llyod, 2002; Forman & McCormick, 1995). According to advocates of a socially-critical orientation to curriculum (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Kemmis, Cole, & Suggett, 1983), teacher educators must engage student teachers in social issues and give them experience in critical reflection, social negotiation and the organisation of action (Smith & Lovat, 2003; Kugelmass, 2001; Hatton & Smith, 1995).

A socially-critical perspective views knowledge as constructed through critical inquiry and social interaction, whereas a liberal-progressive orientation is more individualised with a

subjective focus on meaning and significance in a biographical context and culture (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Kemmis et al., 1983). By combining reflective-inquiry with a reflexive, personal approach, one is able to adopt a socio-cultural constructivist perspective and undertake considerations from both an individual, biographical awareness linked with the broader social bases of understanding (LaBoskey, 1994; Smyth, 1989). Both socially-critical and liberal-progressive orientations advocate liaison between individuals for mutual support. Thus, collaborative peer support may assist student teachers to deepen their understanding of notions of themselves as learners and practitioners, leading to further role clarification.

According to Skrtic, Sailor and Gee (1996), collaboration in inclusive education contexts means promoting educational equity by learning with and from persons with varying interests, abilities, and cultural and linguistic perspectives. A socio-cultural constructivist perspective is relevant in this present study as an interpretive approach in which participants engage in collaboration as a joint scaffolding activity. Participants are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to explore personal meanings beginning from a micro-level analysis, with initially only a limited and superficial understanding of the larger social, political and historical contexts (McKenna, 1999; Richardson, 1997).

Munby and Russell (1994, p.86) argued for the notion of *the authority of experience* in developing professional knowledge, by accepting both the authority of position and the authority of argument. Thus, their views on the authoritative influence of experience increased support for adopting a socio-cultural constructivist perspective in this present investigation. Understandably, student teachers will need regular practice in developing a

reflexive inquiry orientation for sustainable, self-regulated learning, given that a complexity of learning about self as an educator emerges over time through complex socio-cultural experiences. A long-term goal of working out a sense of professional identity may therefore serve to integrate educators' biographies so that distinctions between the personal and professional self become blurred. For many educators, learning is a life-long process of interpreting personal and professional interactions. Making sense of life experiences is the core of continuing professional development (Cole & Knowles, 2000).

Constructivist theories rely on an individual's willingness to question self, behaviour and knowledge (Meltzer & Reid, 1994). The present study uses a constructivist approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Zeichner, 1993), to explore challenges in interactions with people with disabilities and to expand individual participant's self-awareness about an inclusive educator's role. Constructing professional knowledge within a socio-cultural framework is often a difficult task in which student teachers need to interpret their changing cognitive and affective learning through socially mediated reflection. Effective methods of reflexive inquiry may concern practice, relationships and contexts (Cole & Knowles, 2000). These challenges of interpreting complex interactions involving people with disabilities as a feature of a teacher education program, frequently raise emotional, social, moral and ethical issues. However, such uncertainties may also be beneficial in identifying concerns which then generate alternative views, leading to broader understandings about the impact of diversity on one's own and others' lives. A contrasting view of society from alternative perspectives may contribute to student teachers' awareness of different disability agendas and deepen their understanding of an inclusive educator's role.

Traditionally, different agendas affecting people with disabilities tend to generate conflict perspectives in which social relations are strained by opposing interests and manifested by struggles for economic and political dominance. Situations of conflict frequently surface when those in positions of power dominate and exploit vulnerable minority groups. Mercer (1992) described this unethical practice of superiority over others as:

> *defining the language, behavior, values and life-style of subordinated groups as unacceptable, thus "disabling" many members of subordinate groups by making them ineligible for full participation in the most desirable roles in society. Viewed as inadequate, they are then treated as surplus populations (Mercer, 1992, p.19).*

In current debates about inclusive practices for children with disabilities, democratic principles relating to social justice and equity, challenge such biases in social relationships and the mistreatment of vulnerable, minority groups (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001; McKenna, 1999).

Importantly, a goal of the current research is to question conflict situations arising from undesirable social practices as a way of facilitating participants' understandings of their prospective roles. A reflective and reflexive inquiry approach was used to identify significant events or dilemmas in participants' past and present experiences as a means of analysing these as critical incidents (Tripp, 1999; Tripp, 1993). Participants in this current study were asked to reflect on issues, concerns and emotional reactions resulting from these critical incidents. Specifically, participants were encouraged to reflect on their values in relation to their observed consistencies and inconsistencies of situated practices, as a process towards

constructing a personal inclusive educational philosophy. Additionally, participants were asked to reflect in hindsight on possible alternative courses of action as a means of better dealing with critical incidents in the future.

The present study was designed to foster a non-threatening climate of collaborative dialogic reflection. Participants were encouraged to adopt a constructivist approach to consider possible alternatives when confronted with challenging experiences and feelings of inadequacies. As Brookfield (1995) noted:

> *a precondition of critical conversation is a willingness to make public one's private dilemmas, uncertainties, and frustrations. Too often, however, the institutional rhetoric that emphasizes the importance of "learning from our mistakes" is contradicted by the penalties that accompany admissions of failure (Brookfield, 1995, p.250).*

In accordance with Brookfield's (1995) approach of creating a trustful atmosphere, this current study allowed participants to admit to their own fallibility through providing opportunities to reflect openly and disclose feelings of discomfort and uncertainties.

Teacher educators need to scaffold learning for student teachers through building on their prior learning and socio-cultural experiences as a means of creating collaborative reflective and reflexive learning environments. For continuous personal growth to be achieved, grounding teacher preparation experiences in field-centred programs was advocated as a way to motivate reflective practice based on personal goals and objectives (Sileo et al., 1998). Ideally, innovative pedagogical techniques should stimulate learner motivation through active engagement of new knowledge and skills in real and relevant situations with others.

Criteria for selecting suitable experiences acknowledge each student's interests, motivations, goals, level of functioning and connections with pedagogy. In a teacher education action-research study about inclusive education, Lowenbraun and Bobbitt (1998) suggested that criteria for selecting placements need to be based on the premise that:

> *... since our students are to learn in a social context, participate in meaningful discussion and exploration, activate their extensive prior knowledge, and, above all, learn as we want them to teach, the emphasis had to (be) more on quality and intensity of experience than on quantity of material "covered" (Lowenbraun & Bobbitt, 1998, p.38).*

According to Lowenbraun and Bobbitt (1998), the challenge for teacher educators is to help student teachers learn to make more informed decisions based on the characteristics of the learner, the immediate environment, and the larger social contexts of school and society. Similarly, the opportunity to extend the social learning environment beyond traditional classrooms may give student teachers experience in identifying issues affecting macro ecological systems, including political, societal and cultural practices (Ainscow et al., 2003; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Constructing understandings about people with disabilities and the uniqueness of individuals within specific contexts, make critical reflection about the dynamic nature of social interactions a difficult task for student teachers in their formative years. Nevertheless, becoming an integrated reflexive and reflective practitioner is viewed as highly desirable in expanding beyond technical problem solving towards more descriptive and dialogic self-questioning. Such self-questioning leads student teachers to an awareness of biographical understanding in combination with concern for wider social implications of practice

(Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Knowles et al., 1994; Zeichner, 1993; Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991; Habermas, 1973).

In this current study with student teachers in the middle years of their teacher preparation, a more dialogic approach was emphasised to facilitate emerging pedagogical reasoning and understandings about an inclusive educator's role throughout their situated community experiences. Often the field of inclusive education necessitates flexibility and broader considerations beyond the classroom (Waterhouse, 2004). Accordingly, this circumspect reflexive orientation may assist the participants to construct a fuller appreciation of an inclusive educator's role and stimulate their engagement in higher-order cognitive skills of interpretation and adjustment. To date there are no published studies which consider the reflexive and reflective processes of student teachers within an inclusive education field in situated community contexts.

Anderson and Barrera (1995) argued for a multi-paradigmatic framework to expand an understanding of social reality and exceptionality in the area of critical constructivist research and Special Education. They depicted various theoretical orientations towards people with disabilities in a matrix adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1979). Four paradigms were presented by each of the quadrants in Anderson and Barerra's (1995) matrix; namely, 1) critical constructivist, 2) critical functionalist, 3) constructive, and 4) functionalist. The matrix highlighted historical, social and political dimensions of the Special Education field. In particular, their matrix contrasted consensus and conflicting societal views about disability and consequently raised issues which are relevant in the present study. Their matrix

presented in Figure 3.1, identified varying underlying assumptions about the nature of society

and theories related to the social construction of disability as follows:
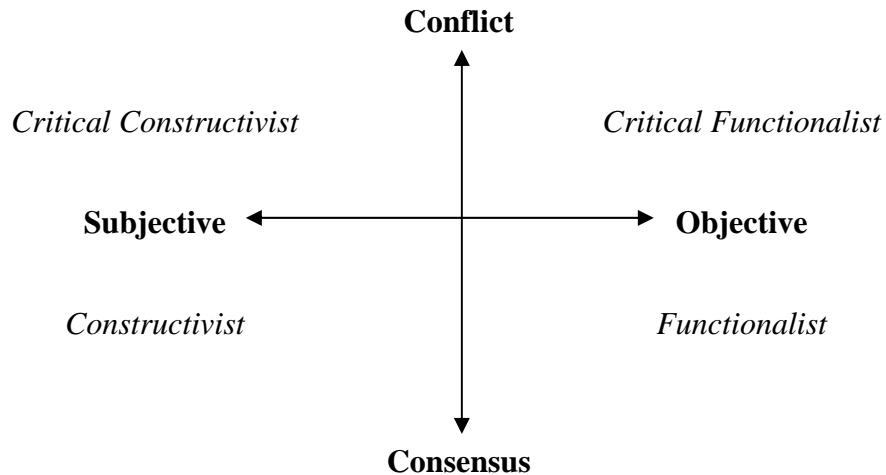
Figure 3.1. Matrix of scientific paradigms (Adapted form Burrell & Morgan, 1979), (Anderson & Barrera, 1995, p.143).

Historically, Special Education has focused on a functionalist paradigm, with an objective

epistemology and a consensus view of society. The field of Special Education then moved to

a more constructivist paradigm involving a subjectivist epistemology and a consensus view

of society, as special educators sought to give a qualitative dimension to their teaching

practices. More recently however, interest has shifted to a critical constructivist perspective

in supporting deeper understanding of diversity (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Both the

critical constructivists and the critical functionalists shared the view that there was an

unequal balance of power in society, which is intrinsic to social reality. Importantly, the

critical constructivists adopted more individualistic qualitative, subjectivist epistemologies,

viewing society as socially constructed, rather than defining society from the objective stance

of the critical functionalists (Schwandt, 2000).

Anderson and Barerra's (1995), matrix acknowledges a multi-paradigmatic approach to inquiry by contrasting perspectives on reality and society. The contrasting perspectives on one axis of reality were either subjective or objective, and on the other axis showed perspectives of society as either in conflict or consensus. Consensus views were characterised by values of societal homogeneity, stability, integration, and a general sense of unity and cohesion. In applying this view to Special Education, such theories suggested that people with disabilities were dysfunctional and interfered with society operating smoothly. Hence, treatments and interventions should make people with disabilities more functional for society's sake (Anderson & Barrera, 1995). From the objective scientific view, the reality of human nature was perceived as deterministic, being shaped by heredity and the environment. Such objective views assumed that disability was an entity that can be measured and labelled in the social world. Alternatively, constructivist perspectives identified phenomenological notions of social reality which were thought to be created over time. This subjective view recognised individuals, asserting that interpretations were constructed through human perception and cognition. Thus, it is the constructivist perspectives that are most suitable for the present study.

A critical social constructivist orientation was selected for the present study because of its humanistic dimensions in guiding participants' reflexive and reflective inquiry to focus on personal and social dilemmas about ways to respond to people with disabilities as individuals. A critical social theory is defined as:

> *concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p.281).*

This paradigm is chosen for its conflict and subjective theoretical basis about how student teachers interpret what they have accomplished and learnt through experiences, while still acknowledging the interaction between both internal and external forces. Additionally, this paradigm is used to explore how participants overcome various internal and external obstacles and through reflecting on their experiences enjoy opportunities to enrich both their teaching and their lives. The manner in which such reflection is structured, however, is very important.

4. SELECTED MODELS OF REFLECTION

Critics of the *reflective teacher model* of teaching argue that it is a very idealistic and an individualistic approach (Cole & Chan, 1994, p.10). Specifically, the limitations of this model are that it presumes that novice teachers are able to make sound reflective judgments about appropriate classroom strategies (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). Such criticisms are recognised in critiquing strategies purporting to guide the reflective processes of student teachers. Whereas earlier models of reflection, such as Smyth (1989), focused on cognitive aspects and often involved questioning to promote effective teaching practices, later models, such as McKenna (1999), depicted more awareness of reflecting as a means of connecting both personal and professional life-long teaching and learning approaches.

Smyth's (1989) teaching model aligned reflective strategies with questions requiring learners to:

> (a) describe (What do I do?) (b) inform (What does this mean?) (c) confront (How did I come to be like this?) and (d) reconstruct (How might I do things differently?) (Smyth, 1989, p.2)

A limitation of Smyth's model was its solely cognitive approach for involving student teachers in following a structured sequence to think about the steps in problem solving as a narrow interpretation of reflective practice. Although the model employed a hierarchy of reflective strategies of describing, examining, clarifying and redefining, there was limited attention to emotional aspects essential to reflexive learning in which student teachers ask themselves how they came to be like this (Sumsion, 1997).

In contrast with Symth's (1989) cognitive model, LaBoskey (1994) identified more expansive elements of reflective and non-reflective thinking. This model compared various levels of surface, non-reflective learning with a deeper approach showing that an alert novice was capable of a personal search for information and understanding. A feature of LaBoskey's (1994) model were the indicators of reflection highlighting the differences between the characteristics of a commonsense and an alert novice practitioner as featured in the following chart:

Table 3.1: Indicators For Initial Levels Of Reflectivity (LaBoskey, 1994, p..9)

COMMENSENSE THINKER (Unreflective)	ALERT NOVICE (Reflective)
Self-orientation (attention on self and/or subject matter)	Student orientation (attention on the needs of the children)
Short-term view	Long-term view
Reliance on personal experience in learning to teach (learn by doing; trial and error)	Differentiation of teacher and learner roles
Metaphor of teacher as transmitter	Metaphor of teacher as facilitator
Lack of awareness of need to learn; feeling of already knowing much from having been in classrooms as a student	Openness to learning; growth-oriented
Overly certain conclusions	Acknowledgment of need for conclusions to be tentative; need for feedback and triangulation
Broad generalizations	Means-ends thinking; awareness of teaching as a moral activity
	Strategic thinking
	Imaginative thinking
Existing structures taken as givens	Reasoning grounded in knowledge of self, children, and subject matter.

LaBoskey's model presents the process of unreflective and reflective thinking as dichotomies which rarely exist in a holistic continuum model of learning.

Alternatively, Sileo et al. (1998) used situated based learning activities, claiming that teacher educators concerned with the development and implementation of a series of learning activities, should adopt an experiential learning continuum for a more sustainable, longitudinal focus. Hence the Sileo et al. model for an experiential learning continuum

included a range of five different experiences. These involved simulated, spectator, exploratory, analytical and generative experiences. In particular, this model depicted the early developmental stages of reflective inquiry and linked these to relevant practical experiences. In the early phase of becoming reflective, Sileo et al. suggested that learners begin by engaging in role-plays, simulated technology and observing. The next phase of learning in this model, required exploratory experiences with more interactive service learning (Schine, 1997) and effective practices in journal writing.

A major consideration with the use of journals is that although they provide a way of knowing one's self better, limitations arise because of their subjective nature. Problems in making journal writing public may change what authors exclude in their writing and be influenced by who the audience is and how the reflective process is constructed (Richardson, 2000), as well as socio-cultural and gender factors. Other limitations may arise from the lack scaffolding sustained reflection, as Smith (1999) argues that writing about previous reflective writing is the most powerful reflective learning strategy (Smith, 1999). Despite these limitations with journal writing, Sileo's et al. (1998) model suggested the use of journal writing as an effective way to capture the process of exploratory reflective inquiry.

Thus, through reflective journal writing, Sileo's learners experienced open-ended real world activities and settings designed to develop an awareness of and create personal questions about the experience. The final phases of this experiential learning continuum model involved analytical experiences incorporating peer-assisted reflection and field-centered teacher preparation. Sileo's et al. (1998) model concluded with generative experiences

requiring student teachers to reflect more deeply. Thus, the experiential learning continuum model was designed to encourage student teachers to:

> *analyze issues critically as a basis for "stepping outside" their current understandings to "finding solutions" to problems that conflict with their own predispositions and self-interests. In essence, students must move their new learnings to "higher levels of understanding" (Sileo et al., 1998, p.192).*

McKenna (1999) further expanded on reflective processes in developing a Typology of Reflection model based on the assumption that there was a set of skills, knowledge and predispositions which comprised shared notions of reflective practice. This attention to student teachers' integration of learning led to contextualising reflection using critical incidents and social events to raise consciousness about issues. McKenna's (1999) model used descriptive reflective strategies to identify critical incidents initially to focus students' reflection on some dimension of their pedagogy. The next phase involved more comparative reflective strategies and sequenced reflective inquiry by exploring a variety of perspectives using techniques of reframing and reflective listening. In the final phase, evaluative reflective strategies were used to engage student teachers in shared dialogue to identify boundaries to their current perspective and to examine courses of action with more understanding of events, alternatives and ethics [See Table 3.2 Typology of Reflection, (McKenna, 1999)].

Table 3.2: Typology of Reflection, (McKenna, 1999, p.16)

Type of Reflection	Descriptive	Comparative	Evaluative
Definition	Describes the matter for reflection	Considers alternate views of the matter based on a variety of sources	Explains the reasons behind pedagogical decisions and elicits the values associated with these choices
Typical Questions	What is happening/has happened? What is the problem?	What are different explanations? How would the people involved describe the matter? What does the literature say about this matter?	Given my own ethical stance, what is the best choice for this matter? Who benefits/is burdened by this course of action? How has the problem been located? What (invisible) societal/structural forces are at work?
Typical Answers	I saw …, I did …, The students did …, The classroom was …	Students say …, My cooperating teacher/principal/administration/parents/ community/ other teachers suggest …, Research shows …	The choice I have made …, I recognize the limitations in …, The downside of this lesson is …, Historically …, Traditionally …, While this has been successful for these students …, I would change …

McKenna's model tended to over-simplify the reflective process to three main types involving descriptive, comparative and evaluative reflection. Scripted problem solving strategies were advocated for reporting, questioning and locating behaviours within a social justice framework, limiting metacognitive and reflexive learning. Nevertheless, a particular strength of McKenna's model was its emphasis on empowering a reflective nature as a way

for student teachers to engage in questioning social responsibility. It supported a critical constructivist approach and through reflective questioning promoted changes towards more ethical practices.

Essential features of these models of reflection include (i) a need for opportunities for student teachers to experience critical incidents and events which cause them to question and consider alternatives; (ii) both cognitive and emotional dimensions to knowledge construction; and (iii) recognition of the developmental stages of reflexive learning. These common aspects are incorporated in the present study for their potential to engage participants in reflective and reflexive inquiry. Although these models vary in how they prepared student teachers to reflect, the unanswered question remains for teacher educators about how pedagogy can be continually assessed to meet the challenges of diversity in evolving inclusive classrooms (Thomas, 2001; Webb, 1999). This current investigation into how learning may be increased through reflective and reflexive processes may provide new ways to address the challenges facing inclusive educators.

It is suggested from a review of these selected models of reflection that the development of reflexive and reflective orientations depend on structuring meaningful contexts for biographical learning within broader historical, political and societal frameworks. Thus, the many challenges arising from interactions with people with disabilities in situated community experiences may have benefits for the participants beyond the immediate context,

particularly if they are outside of the participants' regular life experiences and stimulate deeper insights.

5. CONCLUSION

This research adopts a critical social constructivist perspective to examine how engaging in reflexive and reflective inquiry, which places importance on individual interpretation, can transform student teachers' experiences and responsiveness to change, thereby enhancing their understanding of an inclusive educator's role. Additionally, the present study investigates the changing perspectives of participants with an assumption that as knowledge is transformed, an individual is strengthened and is in a stronger position to confront ignorance and doubts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). According to Meltzer and Reid (1994), teacher educators should adopt constructivist approaches in order to:

> *portray learners as active meaning makers who select, organise, connect, and otherwise make sense of new information and ideas on the basis of their prior knowledge* (Meltzer & Reid, 1994, p.338).

To conclude, a review of relevant literature suggests that reflexive inquiry offers a viable approach for exploring understandings about an inclusive educator's role. A number of strategies selected from previous research studies into reflexive and reflective inquiry are incorporated in the present study. Unlike previous studies, however, the present investigation makes both the reflexive and reflective processes explicit for those concerned with inclusive educators' roles. It is timely that the focus of this research should be proactive in identifying

insights and implications for teacher education as recent directions within the field of disability and inclusive education have turned towards critical socio-cultural constructivist approaches. Changing perspectives may provide insights for both participants and teacher educators that increase their awareness of advocacy issues affecting the quality of life for people with disabilities. Through reflexive and reflective inquiry, it may be possible for participants to develop a deeper understanding of their teaching and learning processes. Participants may perceive a greater sense of control about their role as inclusive educators whereby:

> *Change is facilitated as individuals develop greater insights into the existing state of affairs and are stimulated to act on it (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.115).*

A further reported purpose of examining integrated reflexive and reflective processes is to enhance a pedagogical culture for how teacher educators can grow both personally and professionally. In attempts to provide better learning environments for student teachers we, as teacher educators, are often trying to improve the quality of our own as well as their lives. The paradigm shift in this investigation towards interconnected reflexive and reflective inquiry within a socio-cultural context has created a focus on changing both teacher education practice and ourselves as learners. In engaging in biographical reflexive-inquiry as teacher educators, we may experience opportunities for change and be drawn into dialogue about what should be advocated for higher levels of metacognitive learning in teacher education.

There is a wealth of literature on reflection in teacher education, however, there are no previous published studies that have applied this powerful learning tool to the field of inclusive education to examine how student teachers construct an understanding of their role. The review above serves as a rationale and framework for undertaking such an investigation. The following chapter outlines the methodology employed in conducting the study. In particular, this next chapter focuses on refining the research questions, addressing decisions affecting the research method used, explaining procedures for the recruitment and selection of participants, and outlining the data collection methods involved in gathering, analysing and presenting the data. Thus, the following chapter provides the methodological framework for data collection strategies about participants' biographical experiences and explains the procedures adopted for investigating the conditions and resources which influenced their role understanding.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

This chapter re-presents the research questions already presented in Chapter 1, with a rationale for the research framework and the methodological decisions taken in light of the research purposes. The research questions and the methodological framework are presented in Section 1. The community settings selected for the contexts of the study offered participants spontaneous real-life experiences with people with disabilities. A description of the contexts for situated learning is provided in Section 2. Section 3 presents information on ethical considerations and data on participants. Data collection procedures are presented in Section 4. Data sources included semi-structured interviews conducted throughout the investigation. The interview protocols are provided in Section 5. Section 6 presents the procedures used for reflective learning journals. Data from each participant were analysed using content analysis and Section 7 describes the coding principles adopted. A conclusion in Section 8 summarises this chapter and leads into the following chapter in which data results are presented.

1. METHODOLOGY

Methodological decisions were guided by a conviction that student teachers entering teacher education bring a range of perspectives and individual experiences of people with disabilities (Putnam & Borko, 2000). The current research focuses on identifying the critical biographical influences that contributed to changes in participants' perspectives (Ainscow et al., 2003; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The research questions provided in Chapter 1 are

revised following the review of the literature, to integrate notions of reflexive and reflective

inquiry presented in the previous chapter. The research investigates:

1. Can we identify the critical biographical influences that shape understandings of participants about their role as inclusive educators of children with disabilities?

2. In what ways do the different situated contexts of voluntary course-related field experiences with people with disabilities contribute to participants' insights and understandings about an inclusive educator's role?

3. What understandings do participants construct through reflexive and reflective inquiry on their experiences with people with disabilities in situated community contexts?

4. What are the curricular implications for teacher educators in preparing student teachers for inclusive environments?

Methodology was selected from qualitative research paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and involved a multi-site case study (Stake, 2000). Community contexts were selected to provide the sites depicting social phenomena across lifespan issues affecting people with disabilities. Research interest in situated contexts as multi-sites of social phenomena is congruent with the current shift towards more qualitative self-discovery paradigms (Cole & Knowles, 2000). This expanded notion of biographical reflection, which integrates notions of reflexive and reflective-inquiry, is presented as a viable approach for exploring participants' interpretation of their role as inclusive educators.

Proponents of case study approaches point out that qualitative research is often based on a holistic view depicting the nature of cases as situational and influenced by many different events (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The flexibility and openness of qualitative biographical case study inquiry are pertinent in this research for capturing the

concerns faced by individuals grappling with ideas and issues which they feel deeply about (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). The use of a multi-site case study approach offers a naturalistic qualitative method for exploring unique personal perspectives and for linking understandings with social phenomena in order to understand what is common and particular to the case (Stake, 2000). Thus, case study method assisted with verification of instances of distinctive personal dimensions of biography, revealing the nature of meanings that people construct (Schwandt, 2000; McPhail, 1995) and illuminating the kinds of challenges faced by the participants in clarifying their role understanding (Beach & Pearson, 1998).

Case study method was employed in the current research to understand and learn from phenomena in the three contexts jointly rather than to make generalisations (Stake, 2000). In defining a case, distinctions need to be made so that a case can be considered as a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Proponents of case study advocate that:

> *with even less interest in one particular case, researchers may study a number of cases jointly in order to inquire into the phenomenon, population, or general condition (Stake, 1994, p.237).*

In the present study phenomena were bound by distinct situated community contexts involving a recreation context, a respite context and an independent living centre context. The sites themselves were chosen to enable the exploration of social phenomena, implicit assumptions held by the student teachers of people with disabilities and connections between the community experiences and participants' emerging philosophies of their role as inclusive educators. Furthermore, case study method was intended to facilitate *understanding of complex social phenomena* (Ogawa & Malen, 1991, p.271) from the perspectives of the

individuals (Miller, Nelson, & Moore, 1998). The characteristics suggested by Ogawa &

Malen (1991) as bounding a case were considered for analysing biographical influences

using an individual approach so that each of the participant's perspectives could be

distinguished.

In understanding the nature of the case, Tierney (2000) asserts the challenge facing

researchers:

> *in a world that we view as constructed on multiple levels by multiple parties is*
> *to seek some sense of voice and agency that enables action (Tierney, 2000,*
> *p.544).*

The current research framework applies a case-centred approach to biography involving

multiple perspectives using temporal chronological structures (Tierney, 2000) and contextual

experiences (Knowles, 1992). Thus, the resulting phenomena examine beliefs and

assumptions underpinning the participants' subjective understandings about people with

disabilities prior to, during and as a result of community experiences. A case study approach

is often viewed as a struggle for qualitative researchers who grapple with case boundaries

among individuals, settings, issues and concepts (Yin, 1994). Case boundaries are established

in the present study by using community settings providing home-based and centre-based

services for people with disabilities.   Exploring diverse perceptions about people with

disabilities with a focus on social phenomena is relevant to the current research in that:

> *All attempts to penetrate the meanings of human life must be situated within*
> *the flow of natural life experiences ... It is in the everyday world that human*
> *beings constitute the meanings that guide their actions ... among the patterns*
> *that may emerge may be the relationships of self and world, means and ends,*
> *and power (McPhail, 1995, p.162).*

Thus, in the current study an emphasis on identifying biographical influences was applicable for understanding participants' practical reasoning and connecting experiences across persons, places, events and time.

Various assumptions about traditional case study research are made in claims that investigators can objectively establish facts of the case, prefer theory-driven inquiry and use multiple-case studies which replicate the logic underlying the research design (Yin, 1994). In the present study, cases of social phenomena relied on participants' subjective interpretations and were enabled by their reflexive learning in situated contexts. A genuine concern in the use of cases involving more than one variable of interest is the difficulty of adhering to rigid procedures for case study methodology on account of the continual interaction among design, data collection and analysis (Yin, 1994). The present study uses cases as a research approach to capture the multiple variables as well as gleaning unique and shared understandings from participants' biographical situated experiences.

2. CONTEXTS FOR SITUATED LEARNING

This investigation was conducted in a rural, regional Australian community in New South Wales. The community contexts chosen for participants to engage in practical experiences with people with disabilities were intended to situate learning opportunities (Putnam & Borko, 2000). These community contexts included two centre-based organisations and

individual home-based respite services for families receiving early intervention services. The centre-based experiences included local non-profit making, government-funded organisations catering for people with disabilities. The home-based respite experiences were provided in private family homes of young children with disabilities. The function of each of these community settings was to give caring support to specific age groups of people with disabilities. The respite home-based services were offered for young children with disabilities aged from birth to 6 years and their families. Recreation services catered for school children aged from 8 to 18 years and independent living skills and post-school options were provided as a service for adults aged from 18 onwards.

Initially, staff informed the people with disabilities who were attending their service as clients, and their families, about the confidential nature of this investigation and sought their willingness to be involved in the study. Following this initial agreement, the Directors from each of the community organisations spoke with groups of interested volunteer student teachers before the commencement of the out-of-course practical experiences. The purpose of the introductory talks was to familiarise the student teachers with their roles as volunteers and to inform them about the service and what to expect during their visits. These talks covered procedural information, however, the student teachers were advised on strategies for managing difficult situations. A more detailed description follows of each of the community settings.

RECREATION PROGRAM

This service was selected because its focus was on providing enjoyable recreation activities in various community contexts for a cross-section of school aged children with disabilities and thus would offer a non-threatening environment for volunteer student teachers. The after-school recreational program catered for children with disabilities, aged from 8 to 18 years who were enrolled in several local public schools. Children who attended the program were drawn from local schools including two primary schools, a high school and a special school for children with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities. The program operated after school over 3 days during 3-hour sessions. Children were grouped by age into a young 8-10 years group, a 10-12 years middle group and a 12-18 years older group. Activities included games, art and craft, video watching, trips to the local park for ball games and outings to take-away food venues. The staff requested that a limit of 2 volunteer student teachers should come at any one time, on a weekly basis. The Director was a qualified psychologist and the other staff members were experienced carers who had no formal training.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS CENTRE

This service was selected to increase the volunteer student teachers' awareness of post-school lifespan issues for people with disabilities and their families. The independent living skills centre operated two services for adults with moderate and high support needs, referred to as post-school options and independent living skills. The post-school options service catered for adults with disabilities, aged from 18-25 years and the independent living training service catered for those aged from 25-60 years. Activities included personal hygiene, leisure and

craft activities, and community integration. The Director held nursing qualifications, while the other three staff members had no formal qualifications and had been trained in context.

EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES FOR RESPITE EXPERIENCES

Home-based respite experiences involved interactions with young children with disabilities and their families. This experience was intended to increase volunteer student teachers' awareness of family-centred practices and sensitivity to the impact of disability on the family. An early childhood intervention service operated on the university campus for young children with disabilities and developmental delays aged from birth to 6 years and their families living in the surrounding rural communities. Approximately 30 children and their families attended the service on a weekly basis for individual and small group early intervention educational programs. Activities focused on developing the child's independence and learning through play and self-help skills. The Director of the Early Intervention Service held postgraduate Special Education teaching qualifications and the staff included a qualified early childhood teacher and a child-care worker.

Of the 30 families of young children with disabilities enrolled in the Early Intervention Service who were approached for this research study, only 4 families consented to participate and agreed to have student teachers visit their homes for a respite experience. Consequently, additional families of young children with disabilities were located by contacting several other early childhood intervention services in the community. These networks included liaison with staff working in a local special school, a teacher of an early childhood

intervention support class in a regular school and the Director of another community government-funded early intervention service.

In total, 16 families of young children with disabilities agreed to have student teachers provide a practical respite experience in their homes. Of the 16 families, 9 families consented to be involved in the current research study. Participation in the respite experience meant that families had one or two volunteer student teachers interact and play with their child in their home over the 13 weeks university session for a total of 10 to12 hours. Parents negotiated individual arrangements about times and activities with their assigned volunteer student teachers and parents were given the option of staying at home or going out during this respite time.

3. ETHICAL ISSUES AND PARTICIPANTS

Significant ethical issues in this study included the relationship between the researcher and participants, and the nature of their interactions with people with disabilities. In designing the study, the researcher held a genuine desire to create a collaborative atmosphere, conducive to a naturalistic-inquiry approach, with mutual benefits for all those involved. A viable researcher-participant relationship needed to be informal, non-threatening and devoid of any perceptions of imbalances of power with the student teachers, which might have occurred as a consequence of the researcher also being a teaching member of the Faculty academic staff. The researcher decided to take leave from her usual Special Education teaching duties during the data collection period for this study as a way of preventing participants from feeling

threatened by perceived conflicts of interest or competing agendas about the researcher's academic teaching and assessment role.

Another more sensitive, often overlooked, ethical consideration concerned the intimate nature of interactions between the participants and the individuals with disabilities in their care. Participants were generally unfamiliar with adults and children with high support needs who were non-verbal and dependent on others for their daily personal care routines. In providing appropriate support for the person with a disability it was important that participants were both mindful and respectful of the individual's rights, human dignity and privacy. Unlike in regular teaching situations which can rely on verbal, visual or written instructions, in contrast, when interacting with a person with a severe disability, additional assistance in the form of touch is often necessary. In recognition of the sensitive ethical practices associated with touching, it was important to provide participants with strategies to ensure appropriate physical contact because of the person's dependency factor. Physical shaping was suggested as a suitable technique to prompt the person with a disability to engage in the task or to help them carry out personal care routines. Thus, participants were encouraged to shape the person with a disability through the task by using their hand on top of the person's hand as a strategy for promoting independent functioning.

All participants were asked to protect the person's identity by using only a first name or a fictitious name in their learning journals and during interviews with the researcher. The personal biographical nature of the study was acknowledged from the outset in that participants were made aware that they had discretion to report and reflect selectively on

their learning. The researcher encouraged all participants to write and discuss their relevant life experiences without the added fear of being identified, embarrassed or portrayed in a negative way by others.

Before the commencement of the research study, the Human Ethics committees from the relevant universities gave their approval to conduct the current investigation (See Appendix 1 -The University of Sydney's Ethics Approval,) and Charles Sturt University (See Appendix 2 - Charles Sturt University's Ethics Approval). Included in this approval was information and consent documentation for participants (See Appendix 2.1 - Subject Information Statement and Appendix 2.2 - Participant Consent Form). Additionally, the families involved in the Early Intervention respite experiences received an invitation to participate in the research study (See Appendix 2.3 - Parent Invitation, Appendix 2.4 – Parent Information Statement and Appendix 2.5 - Parent Consent Form). Data were collected over a 13 weeks semester in which the researcher was on special study leave from her university course coordinator role in Special Education. This meant that the researcher was released from all academic teaching roles and was not involved in any assessment of the student teachers in this present study. All participants were asked for their informed consent and assured that pseudonyms would be used to protect their identities (Christians, 2000). Participants were provided with a research information statement and each participant gave his or her written consent to participate in the study.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

The participants for this study were drawn from student teachers enrolled full-time at a regional university in New South Wales in Bachelor of Education Primary and Early Childhood courses. Two different groups of student teachers in the Bachelor of Education course were invited to participate in practical community experiences involving people with disabilities. Group 1 consisted of student teachers completing a mandatory introductory Special Education subject in Year 2. Group 2 were Special Education student teachers studying an elective early intervention subject in Year 3.

The structure of the teacher education course requires student teachers to complete a mandatory Special Education subject in Year 2 and to concurrently elect an area of specialisation from the several available options, one of which is Special Education. A major in Special Education consists of eight subjects completed over Year 2 to Year 4. The 12 participants for this study consisted of two groups. There were 6 participants in Group 1 who were drawn from the 89 Primary student teachers in Year 2. Some of these students were undertaking their Special Education elective at the same time as completing the mandatory Special Education subject. In Year 3 of the course, student teachers in the Special Education major choose either *Early Intervention* or *Diagnostic Teaching of Maths*. The *Early Intervention* subject is designed to bring a family-centred perspective to an educator's role with young children aged from birth to 6 years. As a practical component of this *Early Intervention* subject, students teachers were given the option of either providing respite in a family's home involving caring for and interacting with a young child with a disability, or

choosing to work with adults with disabilities at an independent living skills centre. Of the 31 students enrolled in the subject, 21 volunteered for the practical component. Six participants from the volunteers formed the basis of Group 2.

Practical experiences with people with disabilities in community contexts were offered as an alternative to traditional assessments in both subjects. This practical experience involved interactions with a person with a disability for 10 to 12 hours on a volunteer basis in a community setting undertaken over the 13-week semester. All volunteers who chose to do the practical experience, including the participants for this investigation, were provided with guidelines to scaffold recording their reflections in a reflective journal (see Section 5, Procedures). Additionally, participants were asked to write an analysis of entries in their reflective journals as a further learning strategy designed to enhance their insights (Smith, 1999), while also fulfilling the requirements of an alternative course assessment. These overall analyses were included with the student teachers' reflective journals as data sources for the current study.

Participants

All volunteers who undertook the community experience were invited to be participants for the present study. It was anticipated that volunteers for this study were likely to differ systematically from the total group, in characteristics such as their empathy with and positive attitude towards people with disabilities and in their preparedness to be involved in a range of

challenging contexts. Additionally, in order to be able to inform the research questions, volunteers needed to be willing to reveal insights into their understanding about the role of an inclusive educator.

The process for selecting participants consisted of, student teachers' willingness to be interviewed on two or three occasions; agreement to release their reflective journals and analyses for research purposes; and, participation in one of the available community contexts involving interaction with a person with a disability over the course of the semester. Of those student teachers in the Special Education subject approximately one-third volunteered for the community experience, whereas in the early intervention subject approximately two-thirds of the student teachers volunteered for the community experience. From the volunteers in the Special Education subject approximately half agreed to release their journals and only one-third agreed to be interviewed. From the volunteers in the early intervention subject, half agreed to release their journals and one-third agreed to be interviewed, showing the same pattern as the Special Education subject.

When all the data were collected, there were only limited numbers of volunteers who had completed every component of the research procedures. A total of twelve participants self-selected for the current study and consisted of four participants from each of the three situated contexts. Selection was made to ensure equal numbers across the three community settings, according to subject availability, and to provide maximum variation in sampling for gender and age variables, as depicted in the following tables:

Table 4.1: Participants

Group 1

Subject*	Students Enrolled	Volunteers	Journals	Interviews	Context**			Participants		
					ILS	Res	Rec	ILS	Res	Rec
Spec Ed	89	24	13	8	7	NA	4	2	NA	4

Group 2

Subject*	Students Enrolled	Volunteers	Journals	Interviews	Context**			Participants		
					ILS	Res	Rec	ILS	Res	Rec
Early Int	31	21	15	10	4	9	NA	2	4	NA

*Spec Ed = Special Education   Early Int = Early Intervention
**ILS = Independent Living Skills   Res = Respite   Rec = After School Recreation Program
NA = Not Available

Table 4.2: Profile of the 12 Participants Including their Community Context

Participant	Gender	Age	Cohort	Course*	Entry Year	SpEd Major	Interviews	Context**
#1	F	24	1	PR	2	Y	2	Rec
#2	F	19	1	PR	2	Y	2	Rec
#3	F	19	1	PR	2	Y	2	ILS
#4	F	22	1	PR	2	Y	2	Rec
#5	M	19	1	PR	2	N	2	Rec
#6	M	20	1	PR	2	N	2	Rec
#7	F	20	2	EC	3	Y	3	Res
#8	F	20	2	PR	3	Y	3	Res
#9	F	44	2	PR	3	Y	3	Res
#10	F	31	2	PR	3	Y	3	ILS
#11	F	30	2	PR	3	Y	3	ILS
#12	F	21	2	PR	3	Y	3	Res

*PR = Primary   EC = Early Childhood
**ILS = Independent Living Skills   Res = Respite   Rec = After School Recreation Program

Thus, 12 participants involving two cohort groups (n=6 participants from Year 2 primary student teachers; n=6 participants from Year 3 early intervention student teachers) were identified from volunteers who consented to participate in the research study.

- **Cohort 1 – Group 1**

While recognising the limited extent to which findings can be represented as characterising the teacher education group, the following 6 participants were selected as Cohort 1 on the basis of having completed all components of the research procedures. These participants chose one of two community contexts from which potentially valuable insights relating to the research questions might be derived. The participants in Cohort 1 did not have the opportunity to select the respite situation. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure confidentiality.

Table 4.3: Characteristics of Cohort 1

Pseudo Name	Age	Gender	Special Ed Major	Number of Interviews	Context
Kim	24	F	Y	2	Independent Living Skills
Rene	19	F	Y	2	Recreation Program
Shelley	19	F	Y	2	Independent Living Skills
Judith	22	F	Y	2	Recreation Program
Michael	19	M	N	2	Recreation Program
Raymond	20	M	N	2	Recreation Program

Characteristics of the participants in Cohort 1 show that there were 2 mature-age students who were a few years older than the typical age of 19-20 of a second year student teacher. Of the participants in Cohort 1, those student teachers undertaking a Special Education major were female while the two males were non Special Education major students. The two male participants chose to go to the recreation program situation together as they believed this would offer mutual peer support throughout the experience. Of the available two contexts offered, four participants selected the opportunity to work in the recreation program with school aged children with disabilities, while the remaining two participants chose to work with adults with more severe disabilities in the independent living service.

- **Cohort 2 – Group 2**

A group of 6 student teachers from those who undertook the practical component of the Early Intervention subject in the Special Education Major were selected as participants for this research study (Cohort 2). Participants chose either a home-based experience or a centre-based independent living skills experience. The recreational experience was not available for participants in Cohort 2. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure confidentiality.

Table 4.4: Characteristics of Cohort 2

Pseudo Name	Age	Gender	Special Ed Major	Number of Interviews	Context
Tina	20	F	Y	3	Respite Experience
Narelle	20	F	Y	3	Respite Experience
Ruby	44	F	Y	3	Respite Experience
Kerry	31	F	Y	3	Independent Living Skills
Chris	30	F	Y	3	Independent Living Skills
Anna	21	F	Y	3	Respite Experience

While three participants in Cohort 2 were within the typical 20-21 years age range of Year 3 students, three of the mature-age participants were several years older. The participants in Cohort 2 were all female which is typical of the student teachers studying Early Childhood Education and all were in the Special Education Major. Of the two available contexts, four chose a respite experience and two chose the independent living centre. The two participants who chose the independent living centre situation expressed the desire to have the same setting for peer support.

A comparison of the two cohorts shows that Cohort 1 had two mature-age student teachers and four student teachers of typical age whilst Cohort 2 consisted of three mature-age student teachers and three student teachers of typical age. Of the 12 participants, 10 were in the Special Education Major and all were female while the two male participants were not in the

Special Education Major. This predominance of female participants over male participants reflected the gender balance in the larger student teacher population in Special Education. Each of the three community contexts had four participants. In the recreation program four participants were in the second year of the course; in the independent living skills service, two were in the second year and two were in the third year of the course; and in the respite experience, all four participants were in the third year of the course. Such even distribution of the number of participants across the community contexts provided the opportunity to make some initial explorations as to which of the settings was more influential in promoting biographical reflective processes.

4. PROCEDURES

Sources of data included interview transcripts and participants' reflective learning journals with their summary analysis. The strengths of interviews as data sources for case studies are that they focus directly on the research topic and the insights may provide causal inferences (Yin, 1994). On the other hand, limitations of interviews are that they can have biases due to weak question construction and response bias (Yin, 1994). Overall, Yin (1994) asserts that documents such as journals as data evidence, have benefits in that they are more likely to be stable, unobtrusive and have broad coverage while their main limitation is the reporting bias of the author. A benefit of using multiple data sources in the current research was for triangulation to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomenon (Flick, 1998). Thus, combined data sources from 12 participants were used to examine similarities, differences and incidents portraying social phenomena.

Participants were encouraged to share reflections with their peers, particularly in relation to their practical experiences in schools and in the community experiences. The length of time required for participants to visit the community contexts was approximately 10 to 12 hours over the 13 weeks university session. Flexibility was given to participants to negotiate suitable days and times for the practical component on a weekly basis, with the staff in the community organisations and with families for those in the respite context. Most participants chose to undertake weekly visits for one to two hour periods.

Data collection methods involved the use of reflective journals in which participants were asked to record their reactions to their community experiences. A main purpose of the reflective journals was to encourage participants to focus on analysing their reactions to experiences and situations which concerned them as a way of exploring their understandings about the role of an inclusive educator. All participants were provided with written guidelines which are shown in the following tables and depict the types of reflection they were requested to carry out in their learning journals and a process for identifying critical incidents as a focus for interpretations rather than report on descriptive accounts of their experiences (See Table 4.5 Types of reflection related to concerns and Table 4.6 Criteria for the recognition of evidence for different types of reflective writing drawn from Hatton and Smith (1995), and Figure 4.1 Critical incidents, (Tripp, 1993) for guidelines; also see Chapter 3 for more detailed discussion of these references).

PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES

The specific guidelines below were presented to all participants as handouts to facilitate their learning and reflective processes. Participants were encouraged to read these guidelines and seek any clarification from the researcher if needed during their semi-structured interview sessions. Participant guidelines were distributed at the initial meeting with the researcher, along with the procedural research information presented in the appendices, as follows:

Table 4.5: Types of reflection related to concerns [Smith & Hatton, 1993; Valli, 1992; Fuller, 1970], (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p.45).

Reflection type	Nature of reflection	Possible content
"Reflection-in-action" (Schön, 1983, 1987) addressing IMPACT concerns after some experience in the profession	5. **Contextualization of multiple viewpoints** drawing on any of the possibilities 1-4 below applied to situations as they are actually taking place	Dealing with on-the-spot professional problems as they arise (thinking can be recalled and then shared with others later)
Reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983: Smith & Lovat, 1990; Smith & Hatton, 1992, 1993) addressing TASK and IMPACT concerns in the later stages of a preservice program	4. **Critical** (social reconstructionist), seeing as problematic, according to ethical criteria, the goals and practices of one's profession	Thinking about the effects upon others of one's actions, taking account of social, political and/or cultural forces (can be shared)
	3. **Dialogic** (deliberative, cognitive, narrative) weighing competing claims and viewpoints, and then exploring alternative solutions	Hearing one's own voice (alone or with another) exploring alternative ways to solve problems in a professional situation
	2. **Descriptive** (social efficiency, developmental, personalistic), seeking what is seen as 'best possible' practice	Analysing one's performance in the professional role (probably alone), giving reason for actions taken
Technical rationality (Schön, 1983; Shulman, 1988; Van Mannen, 1977), addressing SELF and TASK concerns early in a program which prepares individuals for entry into a profession	1. **Technical** (decision- making about immediate behaviours or skills), drawn from a given research/theory base, but always interpreted in light of personal worries and previous experience	Beginning to examine (usually with peers) one's use of essential skills or generic competencies as others applied in controlled, small scale settings.

Hatton and Smith (1995) illustrate the developmental process of reflection as moving beyond a concern with *self* and *task* to an awareness of the *impact* of one's actions. Early stages of reflection are shown as a feature of being familiar with the tools of the profession, referred to as *technical rationality*. From this entry stage there is a progression to a position of *reflection-on-action* as a way of considering the *task* and its *impact* within a broader

ecological framework of interaction among self, peers and society. This thinking about the effects of one's actions was a focus of the current investigation into exploring the extent to which participants engaged in different reflective approaches in situated contexts. The final stage of *reflection-in-action* depicts automatic expertise in addressing impact as evident in a highly skilled professional and is considered as achievable only after experience as a professional (Schön, 1987).

Such awareness of multiple viewpoints is usually outside the scope of student teachers' reflections and consequently this current investigation targeted *reflection-on-action* as an achievable type of reflection relevant for participants in their formative preservice programs. The following information was provided to the participants in this study as an elaboration of the types of *reflection-on-action* terms in which the authors, Hatton and Smith (1995), further clarify the nature of reflection as *descriptive, dialogic* and *critical,* as indicated:

Table 4.6: Criteria for the Recognition of Evidence for Different Types of Reflective Writing (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p.48-49).

Descriptive writing	*Not* reflective
	Description of events that occurred/report of literature.
	No attempt to provide reasons/justification for events.
Descriptive reflection	Reflective, not only a description of events but some attempt to provide reason/justification for events or actions but in a reportive or descriptive way.
	e.g., 'I chose this problem solving activity because I believe that students should be active rather than passive learners'.
	Recognition of *alternate* viewpoints in the research and literature which are reported.
	e.g., 'Tyler (1949), because of the assumptions on which his approach rests suggests that the curriculum process should begin with objectives. Yinger (1979), on the other hand argues that the "task" is the starting point."
	Two forms:
	(a) Reflection based generally on one perspective/factor as rationale
	(b) Reflection is based on the recognition of multiple factors and perspectives.
Dialogic reflection	Demonstrates a 'stepping back' from the events/actions leading to a different level of mulling about, discourse with self and exploring the experience, events and actions using qualities of judgement and possible alternatives for explaining and hypothesising.
	Such reflection is analytical or/and integrative of factors and perspectives and may recognise inconsistencies in attempting to provide rationales and critique, e.g., 'While I had planned to use mainly written text materials I became aware very quickly that a number of students did not respond to these. Thinking about this now there may have been several reasons for this. A number of the students, while reasonably proficient in English, even though they had been NESB learners, may still have lacked some confidence in handling the level of language in the text. Alternatively a number of students may have been visual and tactile learners. In any case I found that I had to employ more concrete activities in my teaching.
	"Two forms, as in (a) and (b) above.
Critical reflection	Demonstrates an awareness that actions and events are not only located in, and explicable by reference to multiple perspectives but are located in, and influenced by, multiple historical and socio-political contexts.

Participants were encouraged to extend their perspectives by stepping back from situations and exploring possible reasons and engaging in self-talk as a means of dialogic reflection for explaining their thought processes. The researcher also gave participants information on critical incidents derived from Tripp (1993) to assist with identifying situations in context to reflect on. Similarly to Hatton and Smith (1995), Tripp (1999) defines the genre of reflective writing in terms of whether the focus goes beyond technical and practical aspects towards more diagnostic, reflective and critical judgement. The term, *critical incident,* (Tripp, 1999) was used with participants and was explained as an incident or event which prompted them to think about the reasons why a particular situation had happened, what it meant for them and what alternative courses of action they might adopt in future. The following extracts were provided to participants to assist their understanding of critical incidents in teaching situations; namely, Figure 4.1 Creating a critical incident, Table 4.7 Kinds of judgement and analysis and Figure 4.2 The diagnostic teaching cycle (Tripp, 1993).

Incident	Describe incident.	*Mary raised her hand and asked to sharpen her pencil.*
	Suggest explanation and meaning within the immediate context	*It is the way she is supposed to ask the teacher if she can do so* *.* *It means Mary is conforming to the rule that in this class children are not allowed to decide for themselves when to sharpen their pencils.*
Critical Incident	Find a more general meaning and classification/significance of incident	*It is an example of the limits to student autonomy, initiative and responsibility that exist in schools*

Position: I think students should be more responsible for their behaviour in school.

Figure 4.1. Creating a critical incident (Tripp, 1993, p.26)

Identifying and analysing a critical incident was intended to encourage participants to reflect on their situated biographical learning. Participants were told that an incident was considered critical when the person involved, either as a participant or as an observer, critiqued a particular episode to understand wider meaning and multiple viewpoints. Participants were asked to use this approach as a basis for their reflective learning in analysing situations.

Table 4.7: Kinds of judgement and analysis (Tripp, 1993, p.27)

Kind of judgement	*Kinds of analysis*		
	Information required	*Questions asked*	*People involved*
Practical	Procedural	What should I do? How? When? Where?	For and/or with whom?
Diagnostic	Descriptive	What happened?	Who was involved?
	Causal	What made it happen?	Who acted?
	Effectual	What does it do?	For whom?
	Affectual	What does it feel like?	For whom?
	Semantic	What does it mean?	To whom?
	Explanatory	Why did (does) it occur?	With whom?
Reflective	Personal Evaluative Justificatory	Do I like it? Is it a good thing? Why	Do others like it? For whom?
Critical	Classificatory	What is it an example of?	Whose classification?
	Social	Is it just?	For whom?

PHASE	ACTION	
Interpretation of needs	**Observe** Situation →	**Create** Critical incidents
Meeting of needs	**Implement** Response ←	**Plan** Response
Review strategy and re-assess needs	Effects of response **Observe** < New needs →	**Create** Critical incidents etc. ↓
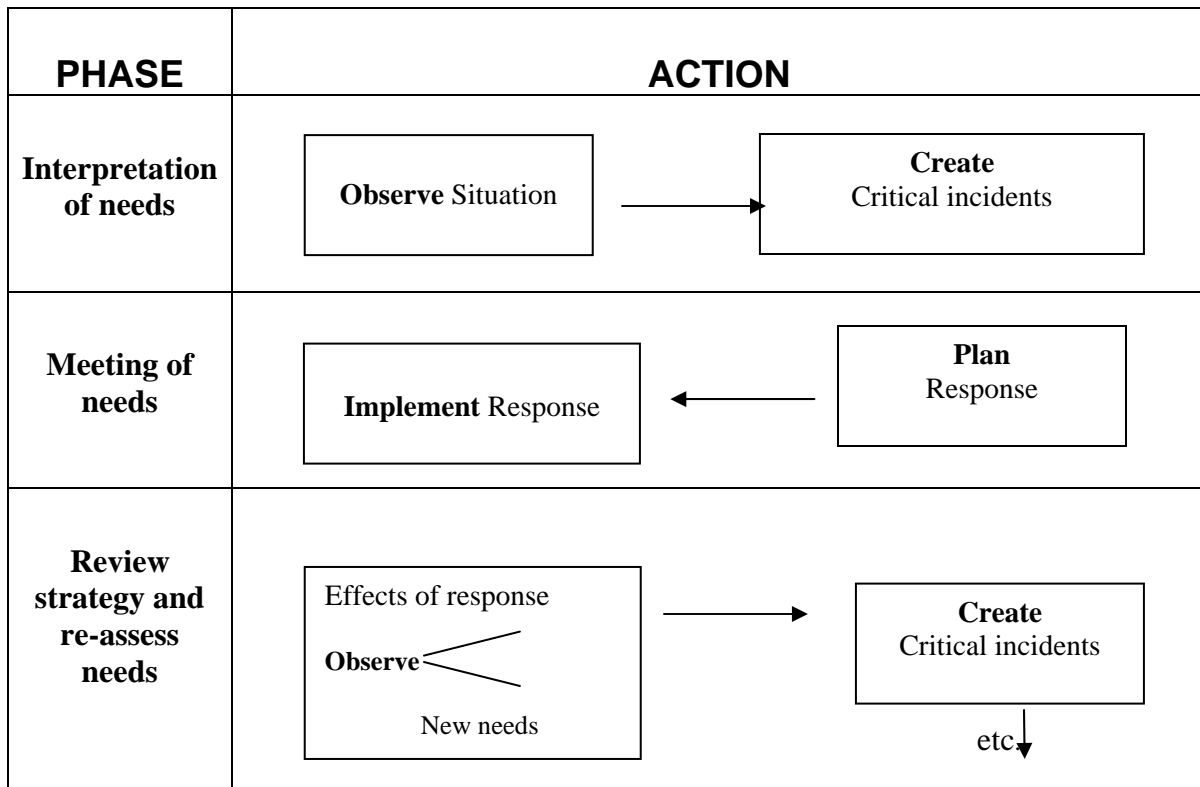
Figure 4.2. The diagnostic teaching cycle. (Tripp, 1993, p.32).

Tripp (1993) advocated analysing a critical incident as a way to improve teaching practice. He encouraged student teachers to look closely at what they do and to suspend their regular way of teaching by being more conscious, deliberate and thoughtful about implications of their responses (Tripp, 1999). Tripp's model of analysing a critical incident involved critiquing commonplace events as a way to encourage a reflective disposition. While Tripp's (1993) model was not followed explicitly in the present study as critical incidents were located outside of a classroom context, the model did provide guidelines for participants on ways to identify an incident. It also allowed the researcher to adopt an analytical process of seeking meaning to interpret the incident in a wider social context. Thus, in this current study a critical incident

was conceptualised as an event which triggered a dilemma for participants and prompted them to reflect on possible meanings, particularly in relation to their personal and professional responses, and to plan alternative courses of action. Subsequently, the researcher reinterpreted incidents in the process of analysing data from interview transcriptions and learning journals, and was able to discover more general meaning when more than one member of the cohort identified incidents.

5. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted as negotiated text which meant that the interviewer was an active participant in interactions with the respondents (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The role of the interviewer was to establish genuine rapport with participants and to project an atmosphere of interest in their responses. Fontana and Frey (2000) advocate using Schwandt's (1997) notion of an interview as a form of discourse involving negotiated accomplishments which acknowledge that the meanings are contextually grounded and jointly constructed. The interviewer encouraged elaboration on relevant points and perspectives to enhance both cognitive and affective dimensions and to locate participants' reflections on actions in a social context as a process of understanding their behaviour (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1991). As a feature of a semi-structured context, the interviewer had opportunity to uncover beliefs held by participants by spontaneously questioning each participant to reflect further on their experiences with people with disabilities. Thus, the role of the interviewer was to be an active listener and to guide the

participant to process meaning in a supportive, non-judgmental and culturally sensitive manner.

Data were gathered from semi-structured interviews to seek accounts of biographical experiences using the framework of the Biographical Transformation Model (Knowles, 1992). A semi-structured interview situation was adopted as a method of collecting data by sharing feelings and thoughts as a process towards establishing rapport with participants. It was recognised that some participants would be more able to express their views freely while others needed additional prompting to assist them to reflect further. Interview techniques were thus varied to promote informal conversations with each participant and to maintain a relaxed tone. Each interview was of approximately 30 minutes and was scheduled individually with each participant during the university teaching session. It was recognised that the researcher's academic office, although conveniently located on the university campus, might create feelings of unequal power and be uncomfortable for some participants. An adjacent interviewing room was offered as an alternative to all participants; however, each of the participants chose to meet with the researcher in her office. Each participant was asked whether he or she would like the door closed or left open during the interview.

The researcher conducted all interviews, employing the power of language in providing unsolicited and solicited accounts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1991). An informal atmosphere prevailed as both the researcher and participant shared conversational exchanges (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992), while sitting comfortably on low padded armchairs. A recording was made of all interviews with participants' consent. The interviewer placed a small unobtrusive battery

operated audiocassette on a coffee table between the participant and herself. Before the interview commenced, participants were told that they could stop or rewind the audiocassette tape player at any time if they did not want their comments to be recorded. There were several advantages in using an audiocassette tape player to record interviews particularly because it allowed the researcher to watch the participant's body language and maintain eye contact rather than interrupt the flow of conversation by taking notes (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992). Importantly, the audiotapes of interviews provided permanent data sources which allowed for full text transcriptions as well as being available for the researcher to replay. Thus, the process of being able to re-listen to interviews assisted the researcher in developing a formative understanding of key themes. Despite the possible disadvantages of adding to participants' initial interview nervousness or distracting their concentration, the major advantages of using an audiocassette player to record interviews clearly outweighed any minor disadvantage.

The scheduling of the interviews to occur at the beginning or prior to the experience and again during or towards the end of the community experiences was intended to allow time for ongoing reflection about participants' biographical insights (Smith & Lovat, 2003). Cohort 1 participants took part in interviews 1 and 2, while Cohort 2 participants took part in an additional third interview which was conducted at the commencement of the following university session after the practical component was completed. Participants in Cohort 2 were all in the Special Education major strand and in Year 4 of the Bachelor of Education Course at the time of the third interview. In contrast, the Cohort 1 participants were not

available to the researcher for a third interview due to their different course structure in Year 3, which did not include enrolment in a Special Education subject.

Interviews were conducted to inform the research questions (Brookfield, 1995). Each of the interviews sought to identify the critical biographical influences shaping participants' understanding of the role of an inclusive educator. More specifically the focus of interview 1 was to gather information about participants' past biographical influences and experiences with people with disabilities. The purpose of interview 2 was structured to examine how each of the situated contexts contributed to participants' understanding using a process of biographical reflective inquiry. This second interview was specifically linked to the research questions to address in what ways the different situated community contexts contributed to participants' insights about an inclusive educator's role and to discern what understandings they constructed through reflexive and reflective inquiry (Cole & Knowles, 2000). Interview 3 was designed to examine how participants viewed their own learning about the role of an inclusive educator and to investigate the curricular implications for teacher educators in preparing student teachers for their future role with children with disabilities.

The researcher constructed the interview questions to reveal the participants' perspectives about the situated experience, the reflexive and reflective inquiry processes employed and their perceptions about the impact of their university course, in developing their understanding about the role of an inclusive educator. Sources of the semi-structured interview questions were informed by the interviewer's own knowledge and experiences with people with disabilities and relevant literature on biographies (Knowles; 1992), reflective

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practices (Brookfield, 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Tripp, 1993) and frameworks for constructing understandings of inclusive educational perspectives (Anderson & Barrera, 1995; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Initially, the piloting of the questions was undertaken with the non-participant student teachers involved in the community experiences to check for reliability and validity. As a result of the pilot, the researcher further refined the questions to ensure their clarity and appropriateness before conducting semi-structured interviews with the research participants.

INTERVIEW 1

Interview 1 had two foci, namely, to explore understandings from both a past and a current perspective and questions were designed to address the first research question concerning the critical biographical influences that shape understandings of participants about their role as inclusive educators of children with disabilities. The four main questions were general in nature and follow-up questions were spontaneously asked based on Knowles' (1992) model, as a means to engage participants to elaborate further on the kinds of previous experiences encountered. The following questions (See Table 4.8) were asked to determine each participant's motivation and interest in interactions with people with disabilities in the community contexts and their reflections on previous biographical experiences. The final question in interview 1 was designed to gauge their emotional responses prior to and at the commencement of the experience.

Table 4.8: Protocol for Interview 1

Main Questions	**Samples of Follow-up Questions**
What do you want to get out the experience?	*Do you see yourself working across age groups?* *How's it linking with the subject you're doing?* *What else do you want to get out of it?* *Do you see yourself as being a mainstream teacher first?* *What outcomes do you want for yourself as a learner?*
Why are you interested in the experience?	*When did you decide you wanted to do your minor in Special Ed?* *What made you volunteer? Are you interested in all the areas of disability or any particularly one?* *How do you see your career developing? Do you see yourself in a regular class catering for children with disabilities?*
What experiences have you had with people with disabilities?	*How did he react? What changes did you notice after the accident?* *Do you think it would be difficult for the family to keep a child like that at home?* *What about on your prac? Have you had classes with children with disabilities?* *Did you find you could relate to them ok?* *What do you feel you're able to offer from your own prior knowledge and practical understanding about the disability field?* *So, how did you build up a rapport with that person?* *... and you're not worried about that kind of physical contact?* *What would you do differently for younger ones based on that experience?*

Main Question	Samples of Follow-up Questions
How are you feeling now at this stage?	*How do you feel about the parent aspect?*
	Any concerns or anything else you can relate?
	So, feeling that you've been thrown in from the deep end. What happened then?
	It'll take time I think. There's a bit of rapport building first. And what would you describe as your feelings about it?
	Do you have any concerns that you'll try to gather that information without it sounding like you're intruding in privacy areas?

INTERVIEW 2

The reflective process provided the link between Interview 1 and Interview 2 by promoting an ongoing awareness about participants' perceptions of their role in relation to people with disabilities. Specifically Interview 2 questions concentrated on research question two by exploring in what ways the different situated contexts of voluntary course-related field experiences with people with disabilities contributed to participants' insights and understandings about an inclusive educator's role. Interview 2 also engaged participants in responses to research question three as their understandings were captured through processes of reflexive and reflective inquiry. The interview situation was intended to foster the sharing of personal dilemmas, emotional responses and uncertainties in order to facilitate understandings about inclusive classroom dynamics (Arthur et al., 2003; Brookfield, 1995). The second interview focused on these emerging understandings and was designed to elicit a

broader perspective beyond the immediate contexts. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their volunteer experiences and their learning in conjunction with their university course as a process towards deepening their understanding of their future role as inclusive educators. Questions were asked to investigate participants' reactions to critical incidents (Tripp, 1993) and to explore the strategies adopted when faced with dilemmas.

The interview protocol took a backward, current and forward looking perspective and was interspersed with probing questions for further elaboration, as indicated in Table 4.9:

Table 4.9: Protocol for Interview 2

Main Questions	**Samples of Follow-up Questions**
How have you found the experience?	*What were some of the highest emotional moments for you?*
	What were some of the lowest emotional moments for you?
	What gave you the greatest difficulty or concern?
What have you learnt from the experience?	*Has the involvement changed your views on people with disabilities?*
What is your understanding of the role of an inclusive educator?	*What are you writing about in your reflective journal?*
How has your university course contributed to your understandings?	*How could the teacher education course be improved?*

INTERVIEW 3

Interview 3 was conducted in the year following the community experience with participants in Cohort 2 only. Although having only the one group reduced the source of data and the capacity to comment across all participants, it was more relevant to participants in Cohort 2 who had elected to proceed with a Special Education specialisation and were in their final year of the course. The interview focussed on research question four which inquired into the wider curricular implications for teacher educators in better preparing prospective inclusive educators.

Questions mainly probed participants' understandings about their role as future inclusive educators using an open-ended style. The intention was to elicit changes in participants' expectations about their role as future inclusive educators, their knowledge about themselves as learners, their awareness of influences beyond the classroom and their emerging educational philosophies (Anderson & Barrera, 1995). The order of questions varied in the light of participants' responses, however, all aspects were covered. The general scope of the questions was as follows:

Table 4.10: Protocol for Interview 3

Main Questions	Samples of Follow-up Questions
Looking back what assumptions did you have prior to the experience?	*How did you change your expectations of the role?*
What did you learn about yourself?	*How has your personal practical knowledge changed?*
What have you learnt about people with disabilities?	*What might transfer into the classroom?*
What does a career in Special Education mean to you now?	*What do you think are the challenges facing inclusive educators?*
Can you identify the major critical influences that have led you to a clearer understanding of your role in teaching children with disabilities?	*What beliefs do you have about the role?*

Overall, interviews were shaped by participants' responses as a form of shared discourse focusing on framing real-life events (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Reflective learning journals were introduced as another data source to complement the data from the semi-structured interviews. Thus, a variety of mediums was a feature of gathering ongoing accounts of participants' perspectives and linked the reflective oral discourses from interviews with reflective written expression in the journals.

6. REFLECTIVE LEARNING JOURNALS

Participants were asked to record their ongoing learning experiences and interpretations relating to their out-of-course work in a reflective learning journal, detailing critical incidents from both the past and present. Additionally, participants were asked to write a short

reflective analysis about their understanding of the inclusive educator's role at the end of the practical component, as an interpretation of their learning experiences.

In relation to their journal writing, some participants reported waiting a few days to reflect over time before writing in their journals (Richardson, 2000; Brookfield, 1995). At the commencement of the study participants were given guidelines (See Section 4 Procedures - Participant Guidelines), (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Tripp, 1993), designed to encourage them to think about the broader social and political issues involved and to consider multiple perspectives in their interactions with people with disabilities. Journal writing was employed in this study as a way for participants to examine community practices with people with disabilities and to reflect on the impact on participants' lives.

Journals provided participants with the opportunity to explore physical, temporal and psychological ideas and events and to enhance their development as inclusive educators and to articulate their thoughts, values and beliefs about teaching (Cole & Knowles, 2000). An ecological framework was encouraged in accordance with Knowles' (1994) claim that:

> *The power in journal writing within the context of learning to teach is primarily located in its usefulness for recording... reactions to some of the pervasive and central issues surrounding education, such as racial and gender inequities, financial and resources inequities, political and social influences and demands, issues of empowerment, authority and autonomy ...* (Knowles et al., 1994, p.33)

Thus, participants were asked to record their reactions and reflect on influences as a form of personal discourse. Reflective journals provided a permanent product of each participant's educational journey and served as a valuable data source for the current study.

Participants were also requested on completion of their journal entries to undertake an overall analysis of their journal writing to identify major themes, issues and concerns, and to summarise their views in a short 500 word analysis statement. These summaries provided the researcher with an additional data source which accompanied participants' reflective learning journals.

7. THE PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Content analysis of data gathered from the participants was undertaken to identify social phenomena as a unit of analysis while relating it to its situated community context. Features of the phenomena consisted of identifying unique conceptual structures (Stake, 2000) including the nature of persons, places, events, responses, issues and outcomes which contributed to participants' understanding of their future role as inclusive educators. Data were analysed to determine the nature of changes affecting participants' biographies and themselves as learners, as well as their changing perspectives about people with disabilities through the various stages of the investigation. In particular, the research examined the way different participants explored and made connections with their personal and educational history (Cole & Knowles, 1995; Knowles, 1992).

Data collection included interview transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews with each of the 12 participants. These consisted of 12 Interview 1 transcripts, 12 Interview 2 transcripts and 6 Interview 3 transcripts. Additional data sources included the full text of participants' reflective journals and their overall analysis of their journals. The research questions provided earlier in this Chapter were the basis for content analysis of data sources and were used to guide the development and refinement of the categories for coding. Content analysis commenced with an examination of the reflective journals and summary analyses to gain a general impression of participants' insights and interpretations of their biographical experiences with people with disabilities.

Chunks of texts were analysed (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) to determine major themes using content analysis for inductive coding (Forman & McCormick, 1995) and constructing concepts about the phenomena being studied (Krippendorf, 1980). Coding commenced by marking texts to identify themes in an approach adopted by grounded theorists in which the researcher looks for processes, actions, assumptions, and consequences (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Different sources of themes were based on literature reviews, general professional constructs, theoretical orientation, researcher's prior experiences and values (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Coding of data sources was undertaken to identify emerging themes as a process towards discovering the bounding of cases as previously indicated (Yin, 1994). The purpose of such coding was to establish case boundaries for phenomena of interest in terms of who was involved, the location and temporal aspects and to allow the researcher to analyse data for meaning relating to commonalities and differences about processes under investigation.

Themes emerged from an initial analysis of participants' journal reflections and were used as a preliminary means of organising categories for coding across the full body of data sources. The main themes were personal histories relating to people with disabilities, expectations of field experience, commitment, becoming acquainted with the learning environment, establishing relationships with people with disabilities, their parents and community workers, negotiating a role, grappling with theory, dilemmas and tensions, responsiveness to individual needs and understanding the complexity of issues. Sub-themes included family, school, community experiences; understanding the influence of prior experiences; goals, interests, concerns and feelings; connecting personal and professional lives; assumptions, ideal practices and reality; overt and covert communication; confidentiality and trust; passive and contributing roles; adapting to constraints; and recognising what hinders and promotes learning.

The full transcripts of all participants' first interview were then analysed to verify and further refine initial themes recognised from the analysis of the written reflections and to add new themes. These new themes included motivation, emotional reactions and understanding the role of an inclusive educator. The total set of themes that emerged from both written reflections and the first interview were then organised into the following categories and then used to analyse all of the data. These categories were philosophy, student beliefs, emotional development, level of enthusiasm, emerging confidence, coping with dissonance, motivation and commitment, expectations and assumptions, understanding of the inclusive educator's role, nature of reflection, learning outcomes such as dealing with communication difficulties,

placement issues, staff relationships, range of experiences including prior experiences, different lifestyles and course improvements.

The model depicted in Figure 4.3 entitled Biographical Reflective Pedagogy (Bentley-Williams, 2000) shows the main coding categories and includes a temporal structural aspect which traces the participants' educational journey in relation to the situated community experiences.
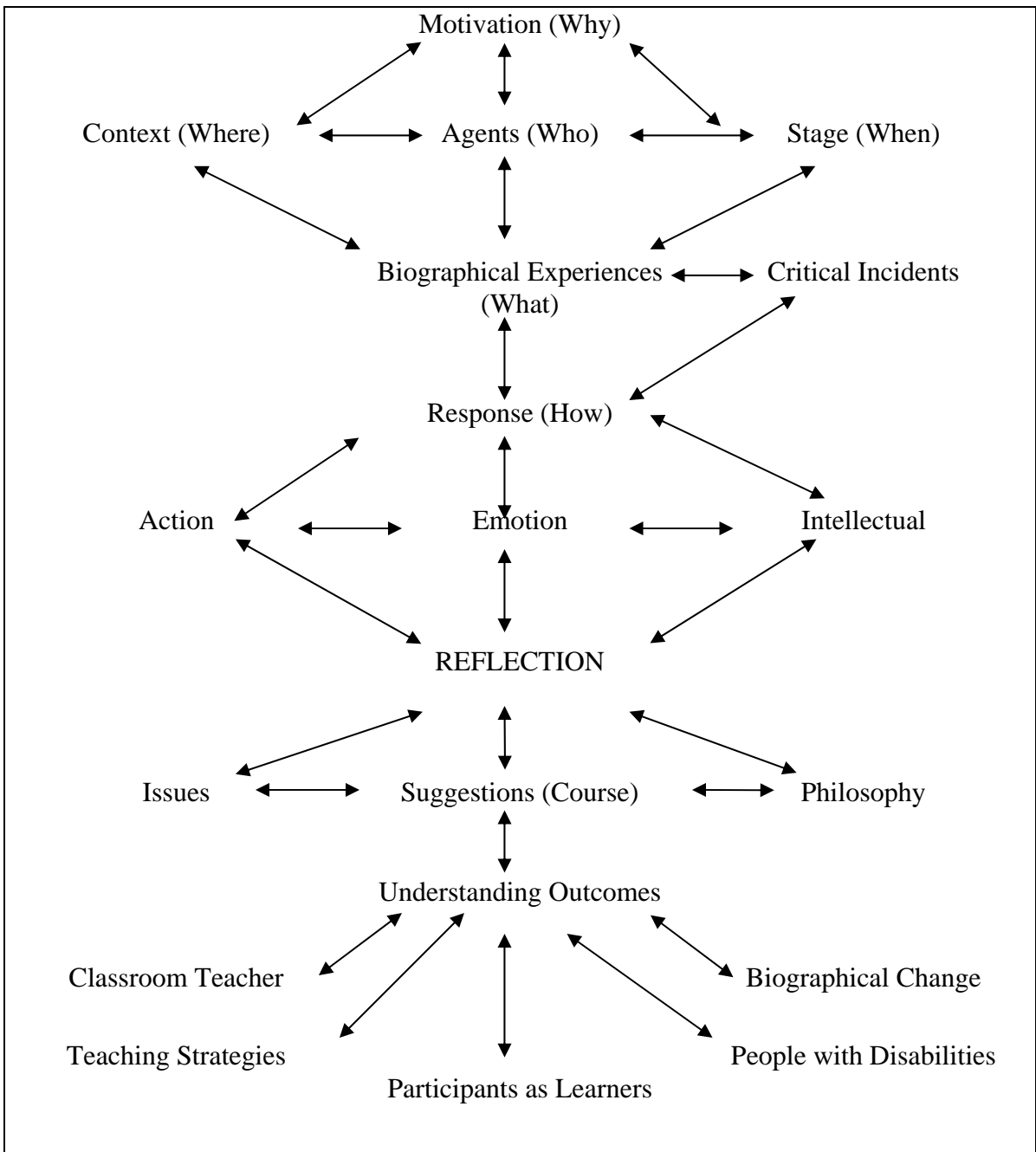
Figure 4.3. Model of Biographical Reflective Pedagogy

The model was developed by addressing the questions of "why", "who", "when", "where", "what", "how" and "under what conditions" and provided a framework for coding and data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). An analysis of the full set of data depicted personal and social relationships and interactions with people with disabilities in terms of the context of the situated experiences, the events and activities which the participants engaged in, and the understandings that emerged.

Using a variety of data sources enriched content analysis and confirmed the relevancy, conciseness and appropriateness of main constructs and sub-categories. Further data analysis was conducted with a research assistant who independently marked the text of several transcribed interviews and assigned coding categories as a process towards establishing reliable inter-coder agreement. Any ambiguous and confusing categories were discussed and resolved by changing the coding category or by creating new categories to create mutually exclusive conceptual categories. Although each coding category was designed to be exclusive, data were analysed and coded for a number of conceptual categories. Once the categories were identified the researcher developed a theoretical model to establish how these concepts were linked to each other (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Each case was coded to name a location, an agent as the person of focus and a stage at which the reflective process occurred. The method of inquiry involved three temporal stages of, "prior to the community experience", "during the experience" and "after the community experience" (Bassey, 1999). Coding categories were confirmed in the process of entering the

coding across the full body of data sources using NVivo software as a data management tool (Richards, 1999). The coding report (See Appendix 3 – NVivo Coding Report) shows the main constructs listed first, such as the term, **Agents**, which was defined as persons, followed by sub-categories of this construct; namely, *family*, which was then further refined to distinguish between family members as *extended* and *nuclear*. Other agents coded under this construct included *friend with a disability*, *government, participant, people with a disability, respite parents*, *society, staff carers, teachers, teacher's aide* and *uni peers.* Further categories for coding included **Contexts,** which included location sub-categorie*s*, for example *independent living centre* and other relevant *contexts* such as *schools* and *homes*. **Critical incidents** were coded for the contexts in which they occurred, additionally other categories of coding were used to depict the *agents, responses, issues, stage* and other relevant features.

Coding for **Issues** entailed sub-category aspects affecting *context, educators and carers, parents and families,* and *pedagogy.* Further categories related to perceptions and focussed on **Motivation** about why the participant had sought the practical experience. Coding relating to the participant's emerging **Philosophy** in relation to people with disabilities included sub-categories of *attitudes*, *beliefs* and *expectations*. The nature and type of **Reflection** participants engaged in were coded to show the genre of reflection as *descriptive, dialogic* and *critical reflection*; and the timing of whether it occurred *on-action, for-action* and *in-action.* Additionally data were coded which related to the reflective process itself. **Responses** were analysed in relation to their sub-category dimensions of *physical, emotional* and *intellectual*.

Further categories related to participants' insights and were categorised as **Suggestions** for improvements in the teacher education program, **Teaching Strategies** which participants had identified in their interactions with people with disabilities and **Understanding Outcomes** were grouped into outcomes affecting *biographical changes*, *self as learner*, perceived roles as a *classroom teacher*, and understandings about *people with disabilities*. All coding included a temporal aspect for the **Stage** that it occurred whether *prior* (before)*, current* (during) or *post* (after) the community experience.

8. CONCLUSION

The multi-site case research design focussed on identifying social phenomena which meant it was possible to examine participants' views concerning personal philosophies and individualised aspects of teaching and learning. The model of Biographical Reflective Pedagogy (Bentley-Williams, 2000), allowed an examination of further aspects of an inclusive educator's role including the nature of the learner, background knowledge, learning outcomes, teacher's role, teacher-student relationships, organisational issues, control, and decision-making issues. Categories identified from the data focused on exploring constructs relating to motivation, persons as agents, stages, responses, critical incidents, reflections, issues, philosophy, teaching strategies, suggestions and understandings about biographical experiences; in terms of who influenced the participants, when, where and in what ways. Thus, coding for both cohorts of participants were coded as individual cases to form an entire

data pool. NVivo (Richards, 1999) software was used which allows themes to emerge for case distinctions and commonalities.

Coding of data sources showed that participants' emerging understandings about their role as inclusive educators were formed through relationships and interactions with people in a range of contexts over time. Thus there was a need to code all selected transcripts and interview data for these core dimensions to reveal the nature of biographical experiences as cases of social phenomena. The following chapter presents the results of the current investigation in which participants' voices raise several issues and insights that may prove valuable for teacher educators and others interested in understanding the complexities of the educational journey travelled by these participants.

CHAPTER 5: PRIOR UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The next four chapters report the data and findings of the research. This chapter sets the scene for the situated community contexts. Initially participants' past biographical influences and experiences with people with disabilities, including their understandings and motivations at the commencement of the study are presented. Interview transcripts and reflective journals were analysed to determine the nature of participants' understandings about people with disabilities at different stages of the investigation. Subsequent chapters contain data gathered about participants' interactions and understandings during and following the situated community experiences.

The initial interview data were analysed to examine the participants' prior experiences with people with disabilities and to identify emerging themes. The findings revealed cases of individuals making meaning from opportunities to interact with people with disabilities and in doing so:

> *these nongeneralizable tales of identity (are) generating meaning for individuals and small educational communities (Danforth, 1997, p.301).*

As Danforth (1997) suggested, each participant reported on his/her unique experiences and sought an opportunity to engage in interactions with people with disabilities in community contexts for personal and professional motives rather than for any generalisation of learning.

As already outlined in Chapter 4, results were critiqued from a constructivist research paradigm (Anderson & Barrera, 1995) designed to investigate participants' initial perceptions of people with disabilities. Data presented in Section 1 show aspects of biographical influences identified in family systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1997; Bronfenbrenner, 1977), occurring as outcomes of previous experiences and introduce participants' emerging understandings about people with disabilities before the commencement of the community experiences. These earlier experiences raised a number of concerns and tensions for participants which are alluded to in selected extracts. Interview questions were constructed to encourage participants to reflect on their biographical experiences with people with disabilities. Participants' background perspectives were collected during Interview 1 and data suggested that most held unchallenged views about people with disabilities. Overall, the nature and type of reflections in which participants engaged prior to the community experiences were descriptive and backward-looking, reflection on-action.

Varying motivations, discussed in Section 2, show the driving causes for why participants chose to be involved in the situated community experiences with people with disabilities. Desired outcomes of the community experiences focus on participants' desires to overcome negative feelings of uneasiness and gain confidence in their interactions with people with disabilities. Emerging themes arising from Interview 1 data, in Section 3, depict participants' identified biographical influences, previous experiences, motivations and desired outcomes. Community contexts were viewed as having the potential to contribute to participants' understandings about people with disabilities. Conclusions and links are made between this

chapter and the interpretations of participants' insights from the situated community experiences, presented in the next chapter.

1. PARTICIPANTS' PERSONAL HISTORIES IN RELATING TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Participants' initial perceptions of people with disabilities at the commencement of this study and prior to their situated community experiences varied according to the extent and nature of family experiences, their own schooling and relevant community work experiences. The diversity of individual stories included first hand accounts of living with a personal disability from one participant who revealed her own emotional disorder to another participant's parent who had a stroke resulting in brain injury. Others had less intense social interactions with family members' friends and relatives with disabilities, while a few recalled school experiences or had previous work experiences in a helping or caring role, such as experience as a youth worker and nurse's aide in a dementia ward.

All of the participants knew a person with a disability to some extent prior to the commencement of the study and it is relevant to note their use of disability labels and conditions to capture a person's identity through a deficit vocabulary (Danforth, 1997). The following extracts reveal the subjectivity of the individual's personal interpretation and are categorised to contextualise each participant's prior biographical influences in relation to Bronfenbrenner's family system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1997; Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Participants' backgrounds are grouped to characterise the type of biographical influence from

social environmental networks into four nested levels known as *microsystem* involving the person with a disability and his/her close family associations, *mesosystem* referring to relationships between families and professionals, *exosystem* involving interactions with service providers in community agencies and *macrosystem* involving ecological influences from wider societal, political and cultural environments.
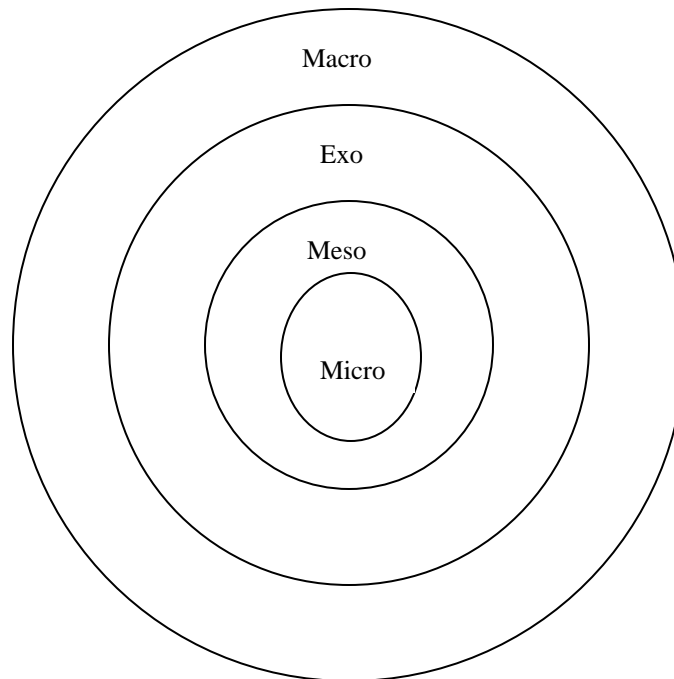
Figure 5.1. An adaption of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) model depicting the four nested systems levels of environment influences.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), *microsystem* is the setting where the person spends most of their time. The *mesosystem* refers to relationships among *microsystems* and to interactions between known people, such as a parent and a professional. At the next level, *exosystem* refers to concrete societal structural environments which are external to the developing person, such as community environments. The *macrosystem* involves broader legislation, societal attitudes, values and ethics (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner's

ecological model provides an organising framework for professionals working from the individual outwards to understand influences from each system level, particularly for those working in the early intervention field (Bailey & Wolery, 1992). A more recent dimension adopted by Bronfenbrenner (1997) involves *chronosystem* which relates to the influence over time in the person's environments and includes transitions that interrupt regular family processes.

LEVEL 1: MICROSYSTEM WITH EXAMPLES OF NUCLEAR FAMILY AND CHRONOSYSTEM INFLUENCES

A microsystem refers to personal ecology and concerns the relations between the developing person and the significant environment for that person. For example, Ruby discussed her own physical limitations as a result of her recent recovery from a nervous breakdown and linked it to her challenging experience as a youth worker relating to children with emotional disorders:

> *The only problem I have is physically in that I get very tired and that is a nuisance but I have to learn patience and to give in to my tiredness and rest when required. I haven't got a great wealth of experience to communicate to you but many years ago I was a youth worker and I came across a lot of children there who were not physically disabled but disabled of the mind and who were emotionally disturbed (Ruby, 44 years, Group 2, Interview 1, 24/5/00).*

Ruby's descriptive awareness of her physical limitations in adapting to environmental pressures showed her microsystem focus on herself as an individual. In a similar way to Ruby, Kerry recalled her relationship with her father which was unfortunately affected by the impact of his stroke, changing the nature of her interactions:

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my dad's just had... he had a stroke 2 years ago so he's had brain damage and everything so from an active life role he's gone right down to brain damage, day care and everything. But just from talking with him, like he's lower level now, but just the things he says (Kerry, 31 years, Group 2, Interview 1, 18/8/99).

The impact of coping with a disability at a microsystem level was described as affecting personal relationships. For one participant, Chris, the effect of losing the primary carers' support provided by her grandparents, was described as devastating as she remembered her family experiences with her uncle with severe intellectual disability:

My uncle. He was ... I think my grandmother had kidney failure when she was giving birth. She was 42 when she had him, heaps of complications and lack of oxygen to the brain caused him to be severely intellectually disabled. The whole family... we grew up calling him sub-normal. I don't know why. It was just something the whole family came about doing ...when my grandparents died it was devastating because he had no one. He had no one to care for him, you know, like his lifeline was just pulled and he's actually out at the nursing home because he just doesn't fit the criteria for anything else (Chris, 30 years, Group 2, Interview 1, 18/8/99).

Each of these participants had experienced the impact of disability on the immediate family at a microsystem level. Interestingly, Ruby, Kerry and Chris were all mature-aged student teachers in the Special Education elective which suggested that they had more life experiences to draw from in making sense of their biographical influences and experiences. Bronfenbrenner (1979) postulated that changes in one level can affect other levels, influencing the nature of interactions and relationships across systems. Ruby's encounters at both a personal and professional level, demonstrated influences across both microsystem and mesosystem ecological frameworks, indicating that the environmental systems were not mutually exclusive.

LEVEL 2: MESOSYSTEM WITH EXAMPLES OF FRIENDS AND EXTENDED FAMILY' INFLUENCES

Outside of the close microsystem inner circle are the mesosystem influences of extended family and friends. According to contextual theories like Bronfenbrenner's, a person's development may be affected by altered social patterns particularly when a person becomes disabled. For instance, one participant, Judith, recalled her friend's experience in a wheelchair and the physical barriers limiting social interactions:

> *a friend of mine who's in a wheelchair... I've been noticing especially doing Special Education as my minor [Major], I've been noticing just little things that aren't accessible for him. Like you know he has a lot of trouble getting around and you just don't realise until you start thinking on that level what they don't have access to and what they can and can't do and it cuts out a lot of things (Judith, 22 years, Group1, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

Participants' accounts of social interactions at a mesosystem level suggested that people with disabilities experience potentially more difficulties in belonging to social groups than their peers. This situation is further illustrated by Michael's experience. He had grown up with a family friend's daughter with cerebral palsy and had a friend with a brother with Down syndrome. He reported:

> *my mum and dad's good friends like they've got a daughter with cerebral palsy and she attends a special school. And she's 19, and I've known her since we went to school all the way through school together in primary school. She's about the only one really in my life that I've had with a disability ...I've got a friend another friend who has a Down syndrome brother. I haven't had a lot to do with him though, but he's a lovely kid. Oh, I shouldn't say kid, he's like 20 years old. But he's a lovely yeah a lovely guy but I don't know him very well at all. I don't think I've really had much experience with children (Michael, 19 years, Group 1, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

Social interactions between participants and people with intellectual disabilities tended to be

more limited in comparison to interactions with people with physical disabilities. Raymond's experience illustrated how an intellectual difference affected the development of his relationship with a family friend with Down syndrome, when he said:

> *there was one autistic or actually Down syndrome family friend not that we were that close and I have seen him a fair bit and he'd be about 14 now I guess but that was about really the only one (Raymond, 20 years, Group 1, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

From an ecological perspective it was evident that environmental factors such as segregated educational services for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, restricted the nature of social interactions with participants. Anna mentioned that she had a second cousin with autism and had undertaken volunteer work at a special school:

> *I go there every Friday with the kids and my second cousin who's got autism. He goes to the special school not Early Intervention but he goes to the special school there (Anna, 21 years, Group 2, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

Participants referred to categories of disabilities and the incidences cited highlighted social imbalances and support dependency in relationships. For example, Rene knew a girl who was blind and in her brother's class:

> *a girl in my brother's class who's blind I know, my brother, he's in Year 6, there's a little girl in his class who's blind. She has a special aide working with her sometimes (Rene, 19 years, Group 1, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

From an ecological system perspective, it is interesting to note that most participants referred to interactions with people with disabilities that came from family and extended family contacts. Narelle spoke of her childhood memories of visiting her aunty with Down syndrome in a hostel:

I've got an aunty who has Down syndrome and I've got a cousin who has physical disabilities. One of my aunties is a deputy principal in a Special Ed school so I've had like a lot of contact with especially with my aunty. Like she lives in the hostel and quite often when we were younger, not so much now, but we went there nearly every weekend and spent time with everyone in the hostel so I was exposed to it all the time (Narelle, 20 years, Group 2, Interview1, 20/10/99).

Influences operated across systems and in particular two participants, Anna and Narelle, had experiences interacting across both mesosystem and exosystem environments which showed the interplay of extended family and professional situations. Moving outwards from personal relationships, the exosystem level is made of societal structures such as schools, neighbourhoods and communities.

LEVELS 2 AND 3: EXAMPLES OF INTEGRATION OF LEVELS 2 MESOSYSTEM EXTENDED FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEVEL 3 EXOSYSTEM PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCES

Bronfenbrenner's model assumes that all behaviour is a function of the relationship of an individual and the context of the environment. The social interactions in exosystems, such as school classrooms and holiday camps, provided participants with exposure to people with disabilities through confronting social situations. A participant, Kim, recalled her diverse background experiences including her volunteer work experience overseas with children with disabilities:

yeah I had a real ball and um another thing is it doesn't really worry me cause um I've got an uncle with a disability, a severe handicap, and also my mother was a house manager and my brother works with people with a disability so I've had a lot of experience and just working with the children over there it was from severe to mild like ADD to kids that couldn't talk or move or do anything. It was an experience. My first two weeks were horrible but it was only because I wasn't used to it. I did get I got attacked by one girl

but she was 15, Down's Syndrome, and um she wanted to go outside at 9 o'clock but it was lights out bedtime at 9 o'clock and I stood at the door and I said no you've got to go to bed and I was actually quite firm but I didn't yell or anything. I just said no you're going to bed. The next thing I know this fist came at me and split my lip. I still stood there and then she thought 'Oh that's not going to work'. She went to bed and I didn't have a worry with her for the rest of the week (Kim, 24 years, Group 1, Interview 1, 25/8/99).

This incident demonstrates Kim's awareness of the need to set limits and teach socially acceptable behaviour rather than lowering expectations because of a person's disability. Similarly, Shelley mentioned that she had numerous experiences in the disability field including having two cousins with disabilities. Her mother's role as a teacher's aide had given Shelley opportunities for volunteer work in schools. Shelley's career interest was prompted by spending time with her cousins and led to work experience in Special Education classes. She commented:

I've had lots...I've had lots. I started in Year 10. I've got actually... got two cousins who have a disability but I don't see them much but they actually... that's where I got interested in it cause I spent a weekend with them. Then in Year 10 I did a week's work experience in the special unit at the primary school. I did a week there and ... then my mother's a teacher's aide up at the high school so I did voluntary work at the high school with the special unit up there (Shelley, 19 years, Group 1, Interview 1, 25/8/99).

Interestingly, a number of participants claimed to have family associations which stimulated them to become involved in Special Education. Although these students were in formative stages in their teacher education course they openly sought experiences which were outside of traditional classroom curricula. In some cases these experiences had occurred prior to commencing in the teacher education course. For instance, Tina had experience with a child who was blind in her mother's preschool, and reported:

[I]… suppose it was partly to do with my mother when she was working in a preschool because it actually started off with a child who was blind in the

centre and I thought you know the kids teasing this person. I don't think that's right. They need more help. And just from probably only a few encounters with that child I thought this was something I want to do (Tina, 20 years, Group 2, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

As this experience shows, issues of social justice and intolerance of unacceptable social interactions provided the stimulus for considering a career of working with children with disabilities. Recalling past experiences with people with disabilities engaged participants in examining their beliefs and interests in becoming inclusive educators. The influence of social networks contributed to participants' range of experiences with people with disabilities. Several participants had actively identified appropriate strategies to adopt in interactions with children with disabilities.

There were no examples of Level 4 macrosystem influences at the commencement of the study which suggests that participants at this stage of their careers were constrained by limited life experiences and were unaware of the implications of political, societal, and cultural contexts from previous interactions with people with disabilities. Each participant had first hand experience with a person with a disability and the types of disabilities included intellectual, physical, sensory and psychological disorders. Participants' prior understandings about people with disabilities tended to be constrained by a lack of Special Education knowledge and were mainly based on limited social contact through personal family networks, school experiences and work opportunities.

Participants' comments showed their views that people with disabilities needed additional care and support from specialised community service provisions. In relation to this, another

participant engaging in both descriptive and dialogic reflection discussed how her extended

family was faced with unexpected life span issues:

> *Barry well he's 53 now. I think this is the thing that's tricking everyone now is, is their life expectancy. It's just growing. Like they told grandma when he was born ... um, they said 'Oh, you're better off institutionalising him because he's not gonna live past 7 and if he does, he'll be lucky to hit 1'4 and then I don't think they ever expected him to outlive ... like... Yes, which was...which was really sad. But, yeah when grandad, like he used to get up and shave himself and get himself breakfast and get himself... um... off to ... he worked at the sheltered workshop and loved it. Loved it! You know, like a lot of people... Oh I don't know, I'm probably wrong too... a lot of people say 'Oh, they work them day in day out and give them just the pension', but I think they're doing something. I think it's somewhere to be and he, he never ever thought it was work. It was his job and he loved it. And he could be as sick as a dog but get up and go. And you couldn't keep him home. No way (Chris, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

Although participants raised a number of issues based on past experiences with people with

disabilities, their responses showed that biographical influences were limited to their social

networks and their real-life experiences needed to be extended. According to contextual

theories, in order to be effective in the role of inclusive educators participants would be

expected to operate across broad ecological systems. Participants' experiences were mainly

grounded in daily routines in familiar environments, however, the role of inclusive educators

often depends on being sensitive to a variety of contexts.

Based on participants' intuitive understandings of people with disabilities and given their

openness to improving their professional practice, it appeared that to widen their

understanding about organisational contexts operating in communities and societies, which

was one of the main purposes of the present study, was highly relevant. These previous

experiences emerged as motivating the participants to become involved in the present study as a way of gaining practical knowledge from the situated community volunteer program.

2. MOTIVATIONS FOR BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

Participants reported that their previous biographical experiences had created a climate of potential awareness of issues affecting people with disabilities and that they wanted to learn, adapt and grow in their roles (Gardner & Boucher, 2000). Participants' motivations and expectations of the community experiences revealed insights about their goals, interests, concerns and feelings. Motivations divulged by participants included their desires to establish genuine relationships with people with disabilities and to communicate effectively with them as a way of understanding their needs. Additionally, participants wanted to learn about the various types of services provided and to develop productive relationships with parents and community workers. Participants' desired outcomes were linked to motivations, identifying their individual learning needs and goals for developing their self-awareness.

One of the main motivating factors for participants was an eagerness to understand people with disabilities through interacting with them. It was not surprising that several participants undertaking their elective in Special Education in Group 2, wanted to confirm their career choice as the following comments illustrated:

> *I just think it'd be a really good experience just in general ... I mean so it's*
> *something you know you might not have a chance to do again ... and as the*

opportunity's there I feel I should take it. So, I mean I'm interested really interested in it and I've always ... since I started doing primary teaching I've wanted to go into like Special Education because I've got a family history in that area you know because of Michelle and my other cousin, I'd like to help people like that as much as possible so that they can get as much out of life as I have (Narelle, Interview 1, 20/10/99).

Understandably, participants were keen to interact with children with disabilities to prepare them for their future role as classroom teachers. As one interviewee commented:

The reason why I have chosen Special Ed is because I believe that I will in a normal class setting... and be teaching children who have... who are special children you know who do... and I don't particularly want to be in a position where I can't service those children properly. Um... I don't think I want to be a Special Education teacher at this stage (Ruby, Interview 1, 28/4/00).

However, not all participants felt certain about their future careers. In particular, one participant commented about her feelings of ambivalence:

it's a bit like anything is .. Jeez I don't want to do this and then on other days it's the only thing you think you ever want to do (Chris, Interview 1, 18/8/99).

Another participant wanted to make a difference in the life of a person with a disability. She felt if the person greeted her or remembered her name, then these social interactions would demonstrate that she had made an impact. Thus:

I hope I can make a difference. I hope ... I know we're not there that long but ... um ... I hope I can help out and mmm ...probably you know. I'd like to be able ... if you walk past them again for them to just remember your name ... mmm or just say hello and just think that you made that little bit of difference (Chris, Interview 1, 18/8/99).

Other participants from both Groups referred to their desire for a 'real', 'hands-on' experience. Given a choice of learning options, many participants preferred the practical experience in the field to more traditional academic study modes. Interestingly, several chose

to participate in the community experience because they felt the hands-on experience afforded other personal benefits. As one commented:

> *I suppose it's really just hands-on experience so I think I'll gain a lot more out of this than writing the essay which is one reason why a lot of people chose it. But, I mean, it's not the only reason why I chose to do this. I just think it'd be more valuable and beneficial to me (Rene, Interview 1, 24/5/00).*

Another participant described the community experience as similar to her practicum and sought the opportunity to learn from actively talking with experienced staff, rather than engage in more theoretical essay writing. She felt that participating in the experience would increase her employment prospects:

> *I think for me I learn best ... rather than from a book ... mm ... like I learnt a lot more on prac than I actually do here by writing the essays and things. Well I learnt a lot more and speaking to the people and the teachers and Oh, partly for experience, partly because I want a job when I finish Uni and the experience. You pick up a lot talking to the teachers and that sort of thing (Kerry, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

A further motivation concerned the opportunity it afforded participants to gain more confidence from engaging in activities. One participant valued interactions occurring over a period of time as a practical way to consolidate learning:

> *I just want to learn a lot more hands-on things. I did last term for Special Education and it was good but I mean a lot of it you lose once you move on to the next stuff and I think I'm more of a hands-on person anyway. I learn a lot more and it will make me more confident in my position as a teacher interacting with other adults (Judith, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

More personal motives included expectations that the experience would be rewarding and interesting. Several participants wanted to make sure that they had suitable personal qualities for interactions with people with disabilities. For example, one participant wanted to test his patience for working with children with disabilities and he commented:

> *I also think that's another reason why I wanted to do this program is to develop some patience cause I'm not sure I'll handle it. I think, I think I'm fine cause I'm a patient person but I just want to get a feel of it to see how I'd go (Michael, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

Other less common personal and professional motivations included increasing understanding of parents' feelings through respite experiences, having an opportunity to try out some strategies and learning how to cater to all children in a regular class.

Motivations were linked to outcomes desired from the experiences. Several participants in the respite experience expressed their hope to learn more from the parents' perspectives. They wanted to understand and be aware of a parent's feelings towards a child with a disability as a way to understand situations. The respite care in a family's home was generally viewed as a totally unique experience which was outside of most participants' previous experiences. One participant was eager to know both how the parent would feel. As well, she was unsure of her own reactions when she said:

> *If somebody asks me what is respite care, I'll be able to tell them. You know what it involves and try and understand how the parents are feeling you know, if I was in that situation, I don't know how I'd feel. Actually being a parent is different than a relative. But being the actual parent is a totally different experience, especially if it's a first child (Narelle, Interview 1, 20/10/99).*

Another mature-aged participant obviously felt empathy for a parent of a child with a disability as she dwelt on her own biographical influences and the daily effort of dealing with emotional hardship. She likened her past experience to the intensity of feelings a parent of a child with a disability might endure:

> *Well, one, to understand people's anxiety and pain that they obviously go through and how it affects their lives. To have a deep understanding, and*

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I'll just use this maybe to understand what she must go through in her daily life in having, I don't want to say the added burden because I mean I'm sure she loves her daughter like I love my daughter. Just because M has a disability it's not it doesn't mean a parent loves their child even less. Maybe she harbors a lot of disappointment about her position with her daughter (Ruby, Interview 1, 28/4/00).

Generally, participants wanted to broaden their experiences and learn about individual differences. As one participant claimed it was an opportunity to gain both knowledge and background experience:

I think that is the main thing I want out of it is a bit of experience and a bit of knowledge on these children cause I don't have much of a background in it. I don't know enough about it and I'd like to know more (Michael, Interview 1, 18/8/99).

The community experiences were viewed as the chance to learn an appreciation of individual differences and to focus on one person's specific needs. One participant considered interacting with a person with a disability on a one to one basis as less daunting than catering for an entire class. She commented:

it's sort of knowing a child on one-on-one. Like at the special school you just know them as a sort of general class you don't know this one, this one, this one. Like they're all there's specific needs like probably dealing with one child with specific needs will probably help with my teaching actually sort of dealing the one child to know what to do and what things to set and where they're heading and what the parent thinks and more of a one-on-one basis (Anna, Interview 1, 18/8/99).

In summary, Interview 1 data disclosed that participants' motivations for involvement in the present study were diverse. They mainly included 'gaining confidence' and 'wanting the real experience'. While some participants held expectations that the experience would be rewarding, others felt that the experience would confirm their career choice in Special

Education. A few participants hoped the experience would help them to develop deeper understandings about people with disabilities.

3. EMERGING UNDERSTANDINGS FROM PARTICIPANTS' PAST EXPERIENCES

Participants' personal histories relating to people with disabilities at the commencement of the study showed attributes of acceptance, although it is evident that participants had not considered the broader educational, political, cultural or societal issues affecting a person with a disability. In some cases, such as Kerry's and Chris' situations, family networks had exposed them to low expectations of a person with a disability as being dependent on others for personal care. The networks of some participants, including Anna, Narelle and Shelley, had also maintained perceptions about traditional community practices of segregation. A number of participants, in particular, Ruby, Kerry, Chris, Michael, Anna, Narelle, Kim and Shelley, showed awareness of the existence of institutions and specialised services for people with disabilities, such as special schools, classes and residential homes. The following accounts give descriptive backgrounds of participants' awareness of available support services. Shelley reported her practicum experiences in a primary school context which had both segregated special classes as well as some children with disabilities in regular classrooms. She recalled:

> *I did some prac and I had some children with disabilities in the classroom and also 'cause it was at the primary school ... the same primary school that I did the prac at ... it was across the hall from the special unit ... so I had a lot of contact with people with kids in the playground and I knew them from when I did the placement in Year 10 (Shelley, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

In contrast to Shelley's awareness of integrated practices, another participant, Kerry, referred to her special school practicum as an introductory process of *starting my time*. Kerry expected that children with disabilities would live in institutions and mentioned her surprise that children with disabilities actually lived at home with their families:

> *I think when I did start my time at the special school I didn't realise how many were actually still in their homes with their families. I thought they were like in like government homes, like the orphanage type thing. I didn't realise that most of them were in their families (Kerry, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

Unlike Kerry's assumption that families would want the government to accommodate their children with disabilities, Narelle knew the typical role that a residential facility played in the lives of adults with disabilities and the predictable security it offered. At the same time, she appreciated how unsettling the closure of the hostel over Christmas was especially as it left her aunt along with the other residents, without a familiar home. She expressed her concern:

> *They have to close down the hostel at Christmas time so she'll come home ... but that's all of them are like that. They have to close it down so they actually leave the place. Cause it's their ... like it's where they live. It's their community and that's where they feel safe and they function. It's their normal ... sort of ... like their environment and so they you know they don't see the outside world as being any different. It's you know what they see inside that matters (Narelle, Interview 1, 20/10/99).*

Such comments that cite incidences of people with disabilities being denied basic human rights of secure accommodation indicated that these participants had encountered less than ideal interactions of others with people with disabilities. These participants expressed outrage because of how the impact of the disability affected the way others treated an adult with a disability as an eternal child. In relation to this, Narelle commented:

> *... 'cause on dad's side ... he's really talking about it ... he sees it as not a problem. But then my other aunty and uncle... well they treat her like she's a child. Like they talk to her as a child. They act as if she's deaf. Yeah, I was*

even … when I was younger I was going, 'Oh, why are doing this?' (Narelle, Interview 1, 20/10/99).

Participants struggled to use their knowledge about people with disabilities to make sense of encounters that generated undesirable portrayals of social living problems and conflicts. Tensions and concerns were ignited by the social implications affecting a person with a disability and contained themes of teasing, ridicule and rejection because of abnormal appearance. For instance, Judith recalled her experiences of witnessing children being teased and felt her role in protecting them was based on her conviction that such treatment was inappropriate. She said:

> *… in the school there was a special class but in the playground, on the bus we interacted with them you know. They used to get picked on and we used to stick up for them. I didn't believe that it seemed right (Judith, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

Being judged by appearances was also raised when another participant recalled a parent's heightened concern with her daughter's Down syndrome physical appearance and her obsession with cosmetic surgery. As a mature-aged student, the participant was able to align the experience with her own family situation. She felt empathy knowing that her husband had reacted in a similar way to their son looking different, and commented:

> *I know a girl who had a little Down's daughter and she went and got her eyes cosmetically opened more so that she didn't look like she had Downs and it didn't matter whether you seen her when she was 2 months old and had the smaller eyes or 3 and had them fixed, you knew that little girl had Downs and I think it made her feel better. She'd been from school, to school, to school and* every *school said 'No we can't accommodate your daughter'… obviously her state is in that denial stage…probably fear of ridicule as well… my husband, he's the type… my eldest boy looked like he needed glasses …'Oh no, he can't wear glasses!'(Chris, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

Clearly, this incident demonstrated the parent's fear for her daughter's acceptance was reinforced by the repeated rejections of school enrolment, however, her reliance on cosmetic surgery to improve her daughter's appearance and prevent ridicule, was seen by this participant as an indication of the parent's non-acceptance of her daughter's disability. A further perspective of misguided parent reactions was offered by a participant's experiences of imposed dependency in a situation in which inappropriate age practices were the norm, claiming:

> *They do talk down to him like a baby. You know there's just no dignity and they give him things like finger printing to do which is just ridiculous (Kerry, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

These participants' responses suggested that they had some awareness of how people with disabilities were treated differently to non-disabled people and on occasions were possibly unwittingly mistreated by their family members, peers and professionals caring for them. One participant raised a concern arising from societal pressures that may adversely affect parents of children with disabilities, when she said:

> *But I think some parents feel they have to have their children integrated in with normal children (Anna, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

Although most participants were unaware of the broader social and cultural issues, most were committed to developing their knowledge about how a disability impacted on a person's life and thought the practical experience would be highly useful for their teaching career. Prior experiences depicted feelings of apprehension, enthusiasm and nervousness. Some participants were unsure of what to expect from the experience, while others were keenly looking forward to the challenges and saw the opportunity as invaluable. An overarching theme was the desire to learn to relate to people with disabilities.

4. CONCLUSIONS

At this beginning stage of the investigation, data from participants' personal prior experiences indicated that a number of key people had influenced their emerging understandings of people with disabilities. The actual person with a disability was portrayed as a major influence for most participants in a positive light. The reason for this finding may well be based on notions of general acceptance of family members and relatives. In most cases the person with a disability was someone a participant had known over time and had grown to accept in his or her life often without questioning the impact of disability beyond the immediate contexts. Although participants had witnessed both appropriate and inappropriate practices with people with disabilities, they tended to give descriptive accounts of interactions providing reasons for ideas or decisions but with only minor evaluative comments, rather than engage in any dialogic or critical reflection. It is evident that at this preliminary stage of the investigation participants were not influenced by contextual factors to any great extent, nor were their comments specifically related to the types of tasks that promote learning for people with disabilities.

An analysis of participants' prior biographical influences and experiences with people with disabilities indicates that there were limited opportunities for active decision-making which would affect the lives of people with disabilities. Given this lack of experience in engaging in responsibility for interactions with people with disabilities, participants were understandably

not in a position to take account of a variety of perspectives at this stage of their professional development. It was clear from the initial interviews that participants wanted to explore their relationships with people with disabilities beyond their past experiences so that they would have a better understanding of their future role as inclusive educators. Their existing values and interests were underpinned by professional motivations for extending their experiences with people with disabilities.

The next Chapter 6 examines participants' changes in understandings about people with disabilities as they engaged in situated community contexts. Importantly, the following chapter traces the crucial role of reflective processes as a way of facilitating personal and educational knowledge and values in these situated contexts. Reflective inquiry was used as a tool to draw on previous and current biographical experiences and served to integrate and link actions with learning.

CHAPTER 6: PARTICIPANTS' REPORTED EXPERIENCES IN COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

This chapter investigates the impact of participants' situated perspectives (Greeno, 1997) on their experiences in the three community contexts of people with disabilities. These community contexts, described earlier in Chapter 4, included a recreation program for school-aged children, an independent living centre for adults and respite babysitting of young children receiving early intervention services, provided in families' homes. The influences of these different contexts were examined for the ways in which they contributed to the student teachers' understandings about people with disabilities and emerging perceptions of their future roles as inclusive educators. Contributions were a result of interactions in both high and low quality service provisions. Biographical influences arising from interactions in these community contexts provided opportunities for participants to reflect on their experiences and knowledge resulting in finding extended meaning about their beliefs (Dewey, 1933) and enhancing their behaviour (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1991).

Data were gathered from participants during their involvement in the community contexts through semi-structured interviews and through their reflective learning journals. Findings were analysed following the constructs of the model of Biographical Reflective Pedagogy, (Bentley-Williams, 2000), discussed in Chapter 4. The value of reflective and reflexive practices (Cole & Knowles, 2000) was evident as participants constructed their learning about their professional and personal beliefs. Section 1 reports separately on Group 1 and Group 2 participants' experiences for each of the different community contexts. These

biographical experiences in contrasting contexts allowed participants to question observed practices and adapt their behaviour to particular situations with people with disabilities, their families and carers.

Section 2 illustrates examples of participants' involvement in unique critical incidents (Tripp, 1993), which enhanced their personal perspectives in each of the three community contexts. Critiquing of incidents was valuable in stimulating participants' reflective and reflexive processes. Various types and kinds of reflection, including descriptive, dialogic and to a lesser degree critical reflection, were evident. Extracts present data gathered during interviews and journal writing based on criteria as already indicated in Chapter 4. These practices provided useful tools for encouraging participants to discover and synthesise their learning, moving them to a more informed personal worldview (Canning, 1991).

Although from the outset, the majority of the participants engaged in descriptive reflection, data revealed that in writing about experiences in situated contexts, most participants adopted more dialogic and reflexive processes. The data collected during these community experiences demonstrated that participants were initially circumspect in their reactions to people with disabilities, yet when subsequently reflecting on experiences they became more responsive and open-minded in their voluntary role of providing support. Conclusions arising from experiences are made in Section 3, leading to Chapter 7 which outlines the significant issues student teachers raised in relation to their enhanced understandings about people with disabilities and their future role as inclusive educators.

1. PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES IN SITUATED CONTEXTS

Participants' experiences with people with disabilities varied across and within each of the community contexts. Individual responses depicted a range of emotional, physical and intellectual reactions. Participants' emotional reactions in each of the situated community contexts included both 'highs' and 'lows'. They included feeling *nervous, uncomfortable*, *frustrated*, *guilty* and *finding it hard*. In contrast, other incidents contributed to building participants' *confidence*, made them feel *comfortable*, *relaxed* and led them to *enjoy the experience*. Generally, participants' biographical reflections showed that as they gained more understanding about how to communicate with people with disabilities, their feelings of confidence increased and they were more responsive in their situated interactions.

GROUP 1 PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES

The six student teachers in Group 1 were in two different community contexts with four participants at the recreation program and two at the independent living centre. Because Group 1 participants were unfamiliar with practices in Special Education contexts and unsure of the expectations of people in these contexts, their initial concerns were understandably with technical skills. Interestingly, although all of Group 1 participants had prior experiences with people with disabilities, they were still anxious about interactions with unknown people with disabilities.

On commencement at the recreation program, Michael, Raymond, Rene and Judith reported

a predominant feeling of nervousness, combined with a sense of anticipation. For example,

Rene stated in her comments that:

> *I was a bit nervous I suppose, going there. Like I didn't ... like I've never*
> *worked with special needs students before so I didn't know what to expect*
> *... to what degree they'd be to [in severity] (Rene, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

Rene's comments implied that not knowing the severity of the person's disability was

relevant for her and may have added to her feelings of uncertainty. Similarly, Michael,

expressed his reluctance when discussing his coping strategies of distancing himself during

the first week. Feelings of intimidation were evident as Michael reflected on his initial

hesitation:

> *Well. I suppose because ... um before I was there, I didn't really know how*
> *to react around children who had disabilities. Even in the first week I was*
> *very intimidated and I was sort of standoffish. I wasn't ... I didn't try to get*
> *too involved ... say if a child said something I wouldn't know what to say*
> *back or whatever ...(Michael, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

However, Michael looked back on how he had overcame his fears and increased his ability to

interact with the children successfully:

> *But now ... like this week my fourth week there I feel like I can hold a*
> *conversation, I can do things like that whereas before in the beginning I*
> *would have had no chance whatsoever (Michael, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Michael acknowledged the change in his behaviour and the increase in his confidence as a

result of being able to communicate effectively.

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Like other participants in her Group, Judith expressed both feelings of nervousness with added excitement. She was also somewhat scared of encountering aggressive behaviour, however, she managed to allay her fears:

> *I felt nervous but at the same time excited ... Previously, I had been a little unsure of how I would adapt to working with the people with disabilities at the recreation program. I did not know what they would be like and was a little afraid that if any of them became aggressive, that I would not know how to deal with the situation (Judith, Interview 2, 13/10/99).*

Judith attributed her fears to:

> *my experience of working in the dementia ward at a nursing home two years ago ... My fears were forgotten and diminished (Judith, Interview 2, 13/10/99).*

She had assumed that people with disabilities would behave in a similarly unpredictable way.

Judith was obviously relieved when her fears were unfounded.

Raymond, who partnered Michael for mutual support, found it was a situation of not knowing what it would be like to be with people he assumed were quite different to himself. Raymond's journal reflection was dialogic, as he questioned how he would act:

> *It sounded like a great opportunity for people in our course to interact with those who have disabilities. However, I didn't think that it was something I would be participating in. Why not? I am not sure, except to say that I felt uncomfortable with the thought of so many strangers around me who were so different to myself. How would I act? Would I make a fool out of myself? More importantly, would I make a fool out of them? (Raymond's Journal, 12/8/99).*

He considered the different negative scenarios. Then, Raymond admitted that his peers' interest influenced his decision to become involved:

> *The amount of interest showed by my peers in the program led me to think... think that if they were willing to give it a go, maybe it would be 'safe' for myself to have a go as well (Raymond's Journal, 12/8/99).*

Although prior to the community experience Raymond was wary about people with disabilities, once he actually became involved in the situation, like the other participants in his Group, he gradually overcame his fears and concerns. Surprisingly, both Raymond and Michael had not expected to feel so at ease in their role but by the end of the fourth week, their confidence and perceptions of people with disabilities had changed.

Participants found having background knowledge on the person's disability was important early on in the experience. Two other Group 1 participants, Kim and Shelley, were cautious on account of not knowing about the person's type of disability. Like their peers, they displayed similar initial nervousness followed by increasing comfort as the experience unfolded at the independent living centre. Kim said:

> *... even though I've had experience with people with disabilities ... I'm always hesitant because I don't know what their disability is because I'm not an expert and um how they will react to certain stimulus and I'm very unsure about it ... (Kim, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

Kim was concerned about causing changes in routines that might stimulate undesirable behaviours in clients and decided to look to the staff for their expertise. Her comments also revealed that like Michael, she refrained from getting involved until she had observed the interactions of more experienced staff as a way of becoming familiar in her role. Thus, Kim commented:

> *... so I stood off a little bit but the staff were great (Kim, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

Because of her uncertainty, Kim appreciated having the staff as role models.

In contrast to Kim's reservation, Shelley adopted a more direct open approach and described the experience enthusiastically after only one session:

> *I wasn't sure how it would run. I'd never worked with adults before. I didn't know how it worked or anything. I didn't know anything about it so I went in there with just an open mind and ... um, it was just great (Shelley, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

Both Kim and Shelley felt they were novice learners. However, they were eager to fit into the situation and readily established congenial relationships with both the staff and adults with disabilities. In their first impressions, they commented favourably about their experiences at the independent living centre.

Collaborating with peers was valuable for several participants in helping them adjust to their roles in the community experiences. Some participants planned to share their experiences by pairing with a partner. In Judith's case, it meant comparisons across the two different community contexts. She reported:

> *my partner's at independent living centre so we'll be able to compare notes (Judith, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

Judith was keen to share her experiences in the recreational context with her university peer at the independent living centre. Thus, ongoing communication with peers provided participants with informal support.

Overall, the reflective comments by all participants in Group 1 indicated that despite initially feeling unsure of themselves as might be expected, contact and interaction with individuals with disabilities helped to alleviate fears and build their confidence. They were generally highly motivated and wanted to interact effectively with the people with disabilities. Their

comments indicated that they felt they had successfully built rapport with people with disabilities and the staff. Typically, their reflections focused narrowly on their own reactions to people with disabilities, whereas Group 2 participants were more critical of their experiences within a broader social context.

GROUP 2 PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES

Group 2 student teachers from the outset showed more confidence, deeper emotions and adopted wider perspectives in their responses, in comparison with participants in Group 1. These participants went individually to one of the two community settings, either the independent living centre or respite in families' homes. Typically the nature of reflective comments from the Group 2 participants portrayed their own perceived shortcomings and at the same time, identified specific service areas needing improvement or strengthening. Reflections from Group 2 participants indicate that the student teachers gained a deeper understanding of the complexities and difficulties in the situated contexts more readily than participants in Group 1.

On their first visits to the independent living centre, Chris and Kerry were horrified by the general lack of structure and the types of uninteresting activities being undertaken by the adults with disabilities. Their attitudes contrasted with the reactions of the two less experienced Group 1 participants, Kim and Shelley, who had immediately accepted the situation without questioning whether staff practices were appropriate. Kerry claimed that the activities were of little benefit for the clients:

... this place is just a schmozzle. It's a disgrace ... and their craft must be like recreational skills or something that they have ... just pointless craft activities. Just stupid finger painting and ...(Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

She was outraged by the staff's non-interactive supervisory approach, commenting:

It is boring though. They [the staff] just stand there against the wall and do that for 2 hours or 2½ hours. It's very boring, extremely... It's just their pay cheque. They're not interested at all. It's just a little bit of money for them ... Just the whole attitude ... like the staff attitude (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

Kerry was especially critical of the staff's poor attitude to their role and was unimpressed with their apparently low expectations of the capabilities of people with disabilities. Kerry reflected on what she perceived was an unproductive environment because of this apparent lack of structure and direction:

Well, on my first visit initially I just walking in ... um ... it sort of lived up to my expectations sort of just people wandering around but I thought they would be more structured in what they were meant to be doing. Um ... then talking to the staff I realised that no one actually knew what they were meant to be doing really (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

Kerry was concerned that not only did the staff appear confused about their roles, they also demonstrated inefficient record keeping practices and with no evidence of monitoring the client's individual progress. She reflected:

No one seemed to know what they're doing and I asked to look at some programs and no one could seem to put their hands on one to show me and I asked the staff there have they got individual programs cause they've got all different needs and ... um ... I don't think they have from what I've gathered. I haven't, still haven't been able to look at a program and they seem to be doing a lot of filling-time activities and I can't see any structure with benefit for the individuals ... (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

She considered the lack of formal policies and programs needed addressing. Kerry discovered that the staff's views of the university were negative, commenting:

When I asked to see their policy ... I thought well if I have a look at the policy I have a look like what are the objectives of this organisation but they couldn't locate that either... And I don't know whether they just don't

want to show ... but with the staff to a degree this is where a negativity
between ... like their views of Uni and ... (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

In short, the staff's low motivation, apparent time wasting and lack of written documentation,

appalled Kerry.

Sharing Kerry's concern about the lack of structure, Chris described her initial sense of

desperation during her first visit to the independent living centre. She indicated that there was

no one to give her support:

> *... I found it obtrusive um ... chaotic. For the first 10 minutes I thought 'Oh*
> *my God what am I doing here!' Um ... it was um ... not another dimension*
> *but it was like ... a different world, stepping into a different world um ...*
> *and I felt out of place and probably "sinking" the right word because um ...*
> *I didn't know how to communicate. I didn't know um ... what I should say,*
> *who I should say it to...(Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Chris was inexperienced in interacting with adults with severe disabilities who were non-

verbal. Despite not knowing how to communicate with them, Chris immediately warmed to

the clients, commenting:

> *... and the participants [clients] were great. They didn't make you feel at*
> *all uncomfortable (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Understandably, Chris' unease was further exacerbated when staff appeared unsupportive

towards her. Chris reported that the staff appeared resistant to her involvement:

> *The staff were a little bit defensive and I am still finding that and I think ... I*
> *am convinced they think we're there to have a go at their work (Chris,*
> *Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

The situation became more untenable for Chris when a staff member's derogatory comment

implied that she was rather sceptical of people with theoretical knowledge who had no

practical experience:

... the second visit when we took a lady for a walk I went with this woman and she said 'Oh I see people like you all the time you know with these great theories and textbook knowledge and just have got no idea when it comes to working in the field'. Um ... and I thought Yeah well that's probably right but I think that Independent Living Centre'd probably gain a lot if their staff had a little more training and provided more structured activities like I found that ...(Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

However, Chris in acknowledging the staff's negative attitude towards her also reflected from a deeper concern for improving the quality of experiences available for clients. She was keen to adopt an educational model as a basis for structuring more enriched learning activities. Thus, Chris decided to take a more positively active role and was willing to introduce some new learning experiences, commenting:

... I actually offered next time I go to do a lesson, you know, just a basic craft lesson or an art lesson because I found we're just sitting there folding papers or we're watching them or we're taking them for a walk and I just think if ... I could give just that little bit of enrichment then I'd feel better for it (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

Stepping back and reflecting on the incident convinced Chris to think beyond the immediate context. She realised that with training, the staff would probably be better equipped to provide more structured activities.

In a similar way to the shocked reactions of Kerry and Chris, the participants at respite, Narelle, Ruby, Tina and Anna, were all faced with unexpected challenges in their interactions with the children and their families. For example, Narelle found being left alone with the child on her first visit very difficult, yet appreciated that the mother urgently needed time to herself. Narelle described her emotional turmoil:

... I mean I don't mind ... you know her going off and doing whatever she wants because that's the whole point of it ... but when she leaves me alone like I'd ... I actually cringe. I was cringing so ... and then ... because I didn't know how to handle M and I only learnt through my own mistakes.

> *Well I mean everyone does that but straight up it was hard and it was raining and ... (Narelle, Interview 2, 20/10/99).*

She recalled a specific incident reflecting her initial reactions:

> *... like we went outside for a little while and I had to try and get M back inside because it started to rain. And that was tough. That was a huge task in itself, trying to get her back inside ... (Narelle, Interview 2, 20/10/99).*

Narelle's comments indicated that left without support, she felt overwhelmed and was forced to rely on her own initiative. She adopted a less than ideal trial and error approach in order to cope with the non-compliant behaviour from the child.

Like Narelle's difficult respite experience, Tina was also left to her own devices when the parent's way of interacting with the child was less than ideal in providing her with a positive role model. She described her reluctance to follow the parent's manner of threatening the child:

> *... if he wouldn't do what D said to do, she would say ... she would actually pick up his chin and look in his eyes like that, cause he would wander all over the place... and tell him ... and she'd threaten him but if he didn't do or whatever he would ... would make him do it, and that was her partner. So it was made out that this guy was this big scary monster ...(Tina, Interview 2, 12/10/99).*

Tina showed dialogic reflection in considering other possible alternatives to the mother's reprimanding approach:

> *... but when I needed to really take control, I didn't know what to do. Cause I was in a spot and I thought 'Well, do I yell at him or do I grab him by the hand? What do I do?' Because I hadn't seen D do it (Tina, Interview 2, 12/10/99).*

Her disappointment in not being shown more encouraging behaviour management strategies left Tina feeling apprehensive. Clearly, Tina, along with some of the other participants, felt that she needed more guidance during the early stages of the community experience.

Ruby, like her peers Narelle and Tina, readily immersed herself in dealing with confronting encounters during the respite experience. However, her approach as a mature-aged participant showed more empathy and understanding from the parent's perspective. The notion of "reality" became clearer for Ruby while she was actually caring for a child with a disability. Ruby reflected favourably on her memorable role in a real-life experience. She stated:

> *Well, it is reality. What we've done is reality. Sitting in a lecture theatre and discussing a textbook that talks about care of a disabled child is not real. But this experience was real. So you really are dealing with reality in my opinion ... (Ruby, Interview 2, 17/5/00).*

Ruby found she learnt more from the practical experience. Her reflexive learning was evident as she commented:

> *... And, I mean, I'll never forget my experience. It's well and truly ... because it takes you, you know, your confidence, and your time and your organisation to get there. So it's significant from that point of view (Ruby, Interview 2, 17/5/00).*

The intensity of the experience impacted holistically on Ruby in physical, emotional and intellectual ways, making the situational learning all the more meaningful for her.

Anna's expectations prior to the experience were less critical than the other Group 2 participants in that her thoughts about her role were more superficial than her peers. Anna was concerned mainly with the physical demands associated with toileting and she tended to categorise the level of functioning of children with disabilities in a somewhat stereotypical fashion. For example, she reported:

Oh, I was sort of nervous when I first started. I guess and I said ... oh ... you know I sort of found like maybe changing nappies or them slobbering over me sort of feel maybe I might not like that but really it doesn't bother me at all. You know, it's just like ... I don't know. It's sort of like they're like babies. Even if they're older and big and you've got to change their nappies, it's just like they're little kids (Anna, Interview 1, 18/8/99).

Anna's perceptions that *it's just like they're little kids,* suggested that her first reaction was based on her unchallenged assumption that children with disabilities would be unlikely to achieve independence in toileting.

Despite their fears and initial reservations, reflective comments from both Group 1 and Group 2 participants showed that they were genuinely committed to acquiring practical skills during participation in their situated community experiences, that would better prepare them for their current and future role with people with disabilities. As the experience unfolded, participants overcame their feelings of uneasiness and concerns, and became more relaxed and comfortable in their roles. Several themes emerged from incidents in each of the community settings, some of which were context specific. Overall, reflexive and reflective processes enlightened participants' deeper understandings. The next section outlines the impact of critical incidents on participants' situated learning.

2. CRITICAL INCIDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

As already discussed in Chapter 4, critical incidents of social phenomena are referred to as '*vivid happenings that for some reason people remember as being significant (Tripp, 1993;*

Woods, 1993)' (Brookfield, 1995, p.114). By critiquing commonplace events, participants

created critical incidents which facilitated their understandings (Tripp, 1999). According to

Tripp (1999), firstly the incident is described and then it is critiqued from a broader

perspective:

> *The critiqued incident is created by seeing the incident as an example of a*
> *category in a wider, usually social, context (Tripp, 1999, p.3).*

Various examples of perplexing incidents were noted for each of the situated community

contexts. Although the incidents appeared to depict routine behaviour, the participants'

reflective accounts showed that the situated community experiences were a trigger for

exposing deeper underlying values, prompting wider perspectives. According to Brookfield

(1995):

> *The critical incident technique can easily be adapted to serve as the focus*
> *of conversation. Teachers can be asked to bring to the group descriptions*
> *of high and low moments in their practice, or details of significant*
> *incidents that stand out in their lives as teachers (Brookfield, 1995, p.147-*
> *148).*

In some cases, critical incidents stimulated participants to consider their reactions to both

verbal and non-verbal communication strategies used by people with disabilities and wider

social norms of behaviour. Critical incidents led to emerging themes about social phenomena

in each of the situated contexts, as a common perspective became evident from the

participants' reflections.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS IN RESPITE EXPERIENCES

Throughout the respite experience all four participants became increasingly interested in wanting to know more about the child and his or her disability and how the child's disability affected the family's functioning. Hence, there was one main theme of family sensitive practice that emerged from participants' reflections on critical incidents in the respite situation. Participants deliberately sought out the individual family's perspective as a way of better preparing them with relevant knowledge and strategies that might assist them in their interactions with the children.

Critical incidents in the respite experiences were depicted which dealt with the difficulties of understanding the child within the family's context. Two participants, Narelle and Tina, presented evidence of increased understandings gained in conflict situations when they reflected on critical incidents arising from not knowing how to communicate with non-verbal children with disabilities. The following example traces the reflective process Narelle adopted in describing a distressful experience with a child who used signing and physical gestures to indicate her needs. She reported:

> *I was in the kitchen getting M a drink of water and I could hear a constant banging. I went to see where it was coming from. To my absolute horror I found M throwing herself against the French doors in the sunroom. My immediate reaction was to grab her hand and pull her away from the doors, as she was really throwing herself against the doors... (Narelle's Journal, 10/9/99).*

Narelle was uncertain as to what to do to stop the child's aggressive behaviour. For Narelle, the frustration of looking after the child's safety was tied to her concern for her own reputation if the child injured herself. She expressed this as:

I was frightened she was going to hurt herself, then I'd be in trouble. This was not the very successful strategy. As soon as I let go of M, she immediately went back to the door, I continued to bring her away from the door, but she would return a few seconds later... (Narelle's Journal, 10/9/99).

The situation required Narelle to find a way to manage the child's significant behaviour problem and she commented:

To eventually get M to stop banging, I took her out to the swings to play. It was like I was with another child; she was laughing and making noises. I could tell by M's facial expressions and laughter that this was an activity she really enjoyed ...(Narelle's Journal, 10/9/99).

Narelle's comments on the critical incident indicated that although emotionally she felt exhausted in trying to understand the child's attempts at communication, she had persisted. Through an analysis of the incident, she gained a deeper appreciation of how much more intense it would be for the parents to be faced with similar frustrations on a daily basis. As a result of thinking more deeply about the incident Narelle identified the disproportionate time demands a child with a disability might make on family members. She commented from a broader perspective:

... How frustrating this must be for a parent to deal with, and try to eliminate the behaviour especially when there are other siblings to consider. It will take a lot of time on the parent's behalf to extinguish this aggressive behaviour. This may result in the parent not spending equal amounts of time with other siblings, which may lead to family conflict (Narelle's Journal, 10/9/99).

Consequently, the break down in communication between the child and herself had drawn Narelle's attention to the added pressures placed on the parents. As she said:

Finally, something that has gone right today. It is so hard for an outsider to come in and be able to immediately get a positive response from a child with a disability, even a child who has had contact with a lot different people over her life (Narelle's Journal, 10/9/99).

She recognised the difficulty she and others faced in establishing positive rapport. Narelle adopted a reflexive process which captured the confusion she felt, increasing her awareness about the complex nature of disability, thus:

> *Her [M's] response shocked me even more than the kick did. M moved her head from side to side as if she was figuring out what had just happened. Then she came and sat next to me as if she was sorry for her actions. I did not know what to think I was so confused, her not being able to speak and me not being able to sign made it all the more frustrating ... A child's mind is so complex; to understand a child with a disability I find is even more complex (Narelle's Journal, 17/9/99).*

Narelle's reflections showed her responsiveness to the child's non-verbal cues which eventually led to successful communication between them.

In another incident, Narelle reflected on how effective communication between the mother and the child, contributed to M's progress. Narelle wrote in her journal:

> *The most amazing thing that happened during this visit was during lunchtime. D was signing what the food was as she usually does, and when she asked M what she wanted, M signed for it. This was the first she has used any signing since she fell ill. The joy that it bought for D was indescribable; finally M was beginning to make progress again ... (Narelle's Journal, 8/10/99).*

Narelle had witnessed both the set backs and milestones in the child's learning. She was keen to build on the child's accomplishments using signing to enhance their communication, commenting:

> *I had the opportunity to try using some of the sign language that I have learned during my respite experience. To my surprise and enjoyment, M responded to my signing with signing of her own. What an achievement for me! I informed D that I used some basic signs with M and she was very impressed, as D knew that I did not know any sign language at the beginning of my respite experience...(Narelle's Journal, 8/10/99).*

In recalling her positive communicative interactions, Narelle reflected on the incident and the elation such an experience would bring the child's parents. Narelle had successfully taught the child a basic communication skill and through the interactive teaching and learning process, had demonstrated her capability in the role of an educator. She wrote:

> *I felt so good and proud of myself and M, this must be how M's parents feel when M demonstrates a new skill or partial skill. It makes everything seem worthwhile... It is so rewarding to see a child with a disability achieve something that we might see as something "so mundane" (Narelle's Journal, 8/10/99).*

Her comments show that the child's new learning gratified Narelle.

Narelle's further understanding of the child's communication needs became more explicit from observing her interactions across community contexts. An incident outside of the home environment, prompted Narelle to question to what extent the child was able to understand her directions:

> *... Before we had left the house the troubles began. M would not hold my hand, so I had to grab her arm, as the family lives on a very busy main road. When it was time to cross the road, we got half way across and M kept tying to sit down. It was obvious that M had not crossed the road very often ... (Narelle's Journal, 21/10/99).*

She paused to reflect on the possible reasons for the child's behaviour, commenting:

> *... or it could have simply been that she did not want to walk and she thought that by sitting on the road, which was dangerous, I would pick her up and carry her. Either way I managed to get M across the road. Before we moved on I stopped her and tried to explain that sitting on the road was dangerous as I was pointing to the cars driving by. How much she comprehended I do not know ... (Narelle's Journal, 21/10/99).*

Narelle had assessed the danger involved in the child's unsafe behaviour and had chosen to adopt an incidental teaching strategy. She then critiqued the incident for its relevance to her as an educator as:

... It must be hard trying to teach a child who can not speak or use sign language very well, new things. You just don't know whether they understood it or are confused, or simply want to ignore anything new. I would find this very frustrating, but I would be determined to find a way to know whether the child understands what they are learning. I know that this would be a huge task in itself, but it would need to be one of the initial steps in order for any future progress to be made (Narelle's Journal, 21/10/99).

In her reflections, Narelle identified the critical instructional skill of communicating effectively with the child at the level of her comprehension. She believed that checking the child's understanding of her explanation was an essential foundation for effective teaching and learning.

Narelle became more relaxed as an outcome of her problem-solving ability. She decided to observe the child in a typical play situation. She reported:

Whilst we were outside, I decided to sit back and observe M playing. I noticed that she loved watching her shadow. M was laughing constantly and making a range of noises and sounds. She was actually moving her mouth when she was making these sounds. This was an amazing experience for me. M was making sounds that I had not heard her say before. This went on for about ten minutes ...(Narelle's Journal, 28/10/99).

The child's vocalisations and responsive play behaviour surprised Narelle. In her dialogic reflections, she openly questioned the role played by environment influences on the child's learning. Importantly, she considered the pivotal role involved in sustaining ideal conditions:

As this was happening I thought to myself 'Does M need an enjoyable environment to bring out these actions?' If M was provided with these environments all the time then her development may increase. However it would probably be impossible to provide her with these learning conditions all the time (Narelle's Journal, 28/10/99).

The process of analysing her personal views from everyday incidents had alerted Narelle to become more conscious of the obstacles and challenges she might face in the future, as an educator with a major responsibility for developing a child's potential.

By the end of the respite experience, Narelle had not only a more sophisticated understanding of the complexities of the role of an inclusive educator but also a deeper appreciation of the sense of achievement that teachers and parents would share when a child with a disability mastered a new skill. Narelle's critique of the respite incidents enabled her to construct a deeper understanding of her own capabilities. In doing so, she had also discovered what the impact of living and interacting with a child with a disability meant for the family. This was illustrated by:

> *This respite experience has been both challenging and in the end rewarding. I have learned many things about the affects of a disability on the home unit. I have had first hand experience in the emotional department, having just a taste of the frustration, heartache, joy and sense of achievement are just unexplainable. To think these people will feel these intensified emotions for the rest of their's and M's life (Narelle's Journal, 29/10/99).*

Narelle found that the experience had increased her understanding of the intensity of the parents' emotional reactions. She acknowledged that her views were based on just a small *taste* in the carer's role, which in her mind paled when compared with the ongoing life-long responsibilities of the child's parents.

In a similar way to Narelle's respite experience, Tina's situated learning helped her to grasp that children with disabilities were more demanding than she had previously realised. Alarmingly, she encountered extremely challenging behaviour from a young child during a

respite incident at the local park. The situation became more distressing for Tina when she experienced a break down in communication with the child's foster parents. She commented:

> *... I told them that you know he wouldn't come home and he was lamming into me and ... and it didn't seem to bother them it was like he does it all the time and I thought afterwards I thought maybe they didn't know how to deal with it happening to someone else like ... I'm not sure. (Tina, Interview 2, 12/10/99).*

Tina was surprised by the foster parents' response to the child's behaviour and through her reflection became acutely conscious of the hidden pressures on families. In her journal extract Tina revealed her heightened awareness of the extent that a child with a disability affects the family's functioning. Her reflections were sensitive to the stress on family, when she wrote:

> *I tried so hard to get to know the family, but they were more interested in taking the opportunity to complete tasks that were virtually impossible with A there. I can understand this now that I have spent 17 hours with A, but I am still disappointed with the way I was treated (Tina's Journal, 6/10/99).*

Unfortunately, because of the demanding situation in the home, Tina felt that the foster parents had not taken the time to communicate effectively with her. Despite her disappointment in this particular context, Tina's journal comments indicated that she valued a shared communication with families.

Tina had experienced the demands and disruption to routines that a child with a disability can cause. Recalling the incident some months later stimulated her deeper learning. She reflected:

> *... it was just an occasion where we were actually going each week over to the park to play with the ball ... um ... and at one stage he decided that he didn't want to come home once I'd confronted him. Um ... the only way to get him home was to piggyback him home ... like physically take him and he just ... he just snapped and started grabbing and kicking me, biting into my neck and just a full physical tantrum ... (Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Despite the tense circumstances, Tina's reflexive comments showed how she, like Narelle, grappled with conflicting personal and professional dilemmas:

> *Um ... but even at that stage I knew my responsibility was still to get him home. After he'd ripped my antique necklace from my neck ... um ... which I was really ... it was a case of balancing how distraught I was about having to find this chain, but then I saw the responsibility was to get him home safely ... (Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

The child had obviously caused Tina unexpected physical and emotional hurt, yet she remained in control as the child's carer.

Arguably, Tina was able to identify the child's inappropriate behaviour as his pragmatic form of communication, accepting *that's just part of him.* Consequently, she viewed his non-verbal behaviour as his unique way of expressing himself. In retelling of the incident to her peers, Tina became even more committed to her role as an advocate for the child. She illustrated this commitment:

> *...I recall in my journal after the incident at the park, I was a bit shaken up. And friends were going 'Oh you could get him for ... you know physical abuse' and things like that and I thought ... under the circumstances 'No!' Because that's just part of him. That's something that has to be worked on. It's one of his needs ... (Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

As a result of understanding the child's behaviour from his perspective, Tina became strongly committed to her role in supporting him. Ultimately as a result of critiquing the incident, Tina experienced a renewed passion for her career and was willing to step back and critically question her actions:

> *... it made me think well maybe I'm not doing the right thing or I'll have to better that and work out why it happened (Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Reflecting on her learning, Tina found that the challenging incident had better prepared her for her role in becoming an inclusive educator, commenting:

I think after accepting that .. that incident and a few things since I've had it's enabled me to go into like working at the special school and possibly other jobs that I'll have in the future. Being aware of what could happen and preparing myself... (Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

Tina indicated that she would be more adaptable in her career and able to work in a variety of contexts with children with disabilities.

Valuable learning occurred for Tina and Narelle through engaging in problem-solving strategies and reflecting on critical incidents. Data from student teachers provide evidence that reflexive and reflective processes stimulated deeper understanding about their roles in supporting children with disabilities and their families in broader social contexts. Their analysis of situated experiences led to the development of a genuine appreciation of the importance of respite and ongoing advocacy for children with disabilities. Family sensitive practices were foremost for these participants as they constructed richer understanding from their situated experiences. Importantly, they projected insights of how professionals need more awareness of the impact of children with disabilities on the family's capacity to function effectively. Their expanded awareness culminated in a resolve for supporting both the child and his or her parents. As a result of the situated learning the participants had gained a sense of the enormity of their responsibility as inclusive educators working in partnerships with families.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS AT THE INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTRE

In contrast to the family dynamics in the home-based respite experience, a key theme emerged at the independent living centre which was primarily concerned with age-related

issues. The situated experiences prompted all four participants to question aspects of what they observed and to reflect more broadly on underlying assumptions. In their analysis of incidents, the student teachers were critical of the staff's age-inappropriate interactions with the clients. Their concerns focused on the low level nature of activities at the centre, their perceptions of the staff's inadequate roles and inappropriate social exchanges which occurred during community outings. Data arising from critical incidents provide evidence that participants noticed that the staff's prevailing attitude was patronising towards the adults with disabilities, treating them as eternal children. Reflective comments highlighted the participants' unease in situations where the adults with disabilities were being denied basic choices in aspects of their everyday lives.

As a strategy for targeting reflection, Chris asked herself a specific question each time she visited the independent living centre. In the following critical incident, she addressed the question *Are stereotypical views of intellectually impaired apparent at the centre?* Chris cited a situation which worried her because in her opinion, it showed the staff member's condescending manner towards the client. She described this as:

> *... they were having morning tea and the hot drinks were made and there were two girls helping out and anyway ... this other young fellow wanted a drink. So she came in and grabbed a cup and made cordial and took it out there and I thought ... you know nothing of that. And then it was her turn to have a coffee and I couldn't get over what she was doing. Like, she ratted through the cupboard for about ten minutes, 'looking for a decent cup she called it'. So she got a cup out and then she ran the boiling water over it and then she washed it and then ran boiling water and it was just this huge ... (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Chris was annoyed by the inappropriate practices she witnessed between the staff member and the client, especially the staff member's inconsistent actions in not affording the client

any choice in the type of drink he might prefer and her failure to check whether the cup was clean. The aspect of the interaction which shocked Chris the most was her interpretation that the staff member showed a double standard in her behaviour:

> *... and she probably didn't even realise she was doing it but I thought this is just so hypocritical. You just took a cup off the sink and made this guy out here a cordial without a second thought ... without a rinse of cold tap and you made such a huge deal out of making yourself a cup of coffee and I thought ... yeah, well ... (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

She was convinced that reform to improve society's regard for people with disabilities needed to begin at a direct service level:

> *I mean for things to change they have to start in the centre you know (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Chris had observed a simple daily routine that clearly had different standards regarding what a person in a position of power considered was socially acceptable codes of behaviour. This incident was significant for Chris on account of the authoritarian role adopted by the staff member. The incident had depicted the person with a disability being denied any involvement in making fundamental decisions about independent living choices. Chris' wider concern was that the staff member unconsciously held biased attitudes that negatively stereotyped people with disabilities.

As a result of critiquing her observations, Chris reflected more broadly on quality of life issues affecting the clients. Her comments suggested that she was disturbed by the lack of educational practice:

> *I've been really questioning ... um ... probably in ... OK now ... where's the education for these guys now. It seems to have left them. You know, they're 30 and... and I found out at I.L.C. ... there's no ... there's activities, but there's like you say 'OK so what are we doing this for?', like the child*

*protection thing and ... um ... and there was no real answers like ... you
know you get the book, you follow what it says and then that bit's done for
the afternoon ... (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Chris was concerned that there was no rationale behind what happened at the centre. In her

opinion, there were missed opportunities to promote the clients' independent functioning. For

example, she commented:

*Um ... and that's what I thought with the craft activities or something we
might be able to provide some enrichment and ... I just noticed the craft
down there you know they squeeze up bits of paper and stick it on
cardboard. It's already cut out you know ... (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Her comments indicated Chris' annoyance that the staff were building dependency in their

narrow approach to completing the activity, with little consideration given to the potential

learning outcomes for the clients.

The experience in a low quality environment reaffirmed Chris' belief in life-long learning:

*... I don't think learning should ever stop and particularly when someone's
in care ... I just don't think that we should stop that. Um ... and I found
myself coming away from I.L.C. thinking ... um ... is this you know ... this
the die [sic] end of it all (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Chris' despair convinced her of the importance of fostering people's independence. Critical

reflection featured in Chris' analysis of her journal entries when she reached the conclusion

that society has a long way to go in overcoming the inequity shown to minority groups, such

as people with disabilities. She wrote:

*In compiling this synopsis I have combed all previous entries and reviewed
the questions I set myself and the only solid conclusion I could come to is
this: "There are no quick fixes or cures with regard to inequality in society
and its treatment of the disadvantaged." (Chris' Journal, 2/11/99).*

She reflected at a macro level, on the paramount need for long-term, sustainable approaches

to overcome injustices shown to disadvantaged sectors of society. Significantly, her analysis

gave Chris an enriched view of the unique traits of people with disabilities, evident in her

comments. For example, she wrote:

> *... Their overall acceptance make the time spent with them one of delight,*
> *how refreshing it is to interact with people who are selfless and unique*
> *(Chris' Journal, 2/11/99).*

Thus, Chris came away from the experience with personal insights that celebrated the

exceptional dispositions of people with disabilities.

In another participant's case, a critical incident occurred on her first day at the independent

living centre. Kim described the situation:

> *... we had a morning tea first up where we sat around and had coffee and*
> *biscuits so we actually got to know the people as well, like having a chat to*
> *them and like I said before, one lady I was chatting to... I thought she was a*
> *carer and she was actually one of the clients ... (Kim, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

Kim was shocked by her discovery that the person with whom she had shared social

exchanges, was actually a client. She recalled:

> *... We were talking about going out to the pub and she was telling me how*
> *she was married and she's got a husband or something and they're*
> *separated but she's still seeing him on the sly and I said 'Oh good on you.'*
> *I was going 'Go girl' like this and next thing the lady that was running or*
> *in charge, she said to me 'You're with Karen' and I thought 'Okay I'm with*
> *Karen and who are we looking after?' (Kim, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

Kim had readily built rapport with the person and was horrified when she realised her

confusion, commenting:

> *... and then I realised that Karen was one of the clients. It was, oh, it was a*
> *shocker. I just hope I didn't show it on my face, the shock, when I finally*
> *clicked to it (Kim, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

Unwittingly, Kim had assumed that people with disabilities would have obvious physical characteristics which would distinguish them. Her reflections indicate that she felt guilty of judging people with disabilities superficially.

Having learnt from her initial set back, Kim continued her interactions with the clients and found that the situated experience made her feel more relaxed. In describing another critical incident, she observed the client spontaneously displaying initiative and problem solving. Kim reflected on how the client's resourcefulness had impressed her. Choosing her words carefully, she said:

> *Well, it's helping me ... um ... understand them a lot more. Like, I shouldn't say that. I hate classing them together but it's hard to explain it without saying that. But, like I said, with problem solving skills and things like that, they can get around a lot of tasks different ways to I suppose to the conventional ways of doing things. You know ... (Kim, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

Kim was learning first hand about the nature of people with disabilities, from a general perspective as well as appreciating them individually. She commented specifically on one client:

> *... one lady when she was doing the photo frame, we had the set idea, you know that you glue your cardboard on and then your foam, then you cover it with the material. Well ...um ... she had a lot of problems with the glue, sticking the glue and the cardboard on first and took a lot of time to dry. We were all sitting there waiting for it to dry and talking and just having a good old time ... (Kim, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

Kim had comfortably settled into her role when she noted the client's unique way of problem-solving. She remarked:

> *... Well, she jumped ahead and she decided to stick the frame to the to the ... you know we'd never even thought of that but we could have been doing the next task sticking the foam to the fabric and then stick that all together*

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> *eventually and she just went ahead and she said 'Well I'll do this now and...' but they think in a different way ... (Kim, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

Thus, Kim's critique of the incident illustrated her new awareness that individuals with disabilities were more capable than she had previously realised. Her surprise at observing the client's successful alternative strategy led her to appreciate the person's independent way of completing the task. Kim's deeper understanding of people with disabilities' hidden potential for problem-solving helped her to feel more reassured in her role, illustrated by her reflexive comment ... *I think it's helping me relax too (Kim, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

In reflecting on her learning about people with disabilities, Kim wrote about her new awareness of hidden, less apparent disabilities:

> *What an experience! For one of the first times in my life I had a truly new perception of people with disabilities. Previously I had the idea they stood out and were noticeable. Never had I thought that I would mistake a client from a caregiver. This had made me feel not only ashamed about how I had assumed all people with disabilities fell under the same stereotype (Kim's Journal, 3/9/99).*

Kim's reflection showed the significance of the community experience in challenging her assumptions. She readily admitted her own naive impressions about people with disabilities as stereotypes. Her reflexive approach enhanced a deeper understanding of people with disabilities as individuals rather than simply viewing them as a single homogeneous group.

Like Kim, Shelley encountered a situation on her first day which led her to reflect on broader social considerations affecting the privacy of adults with disabilities at the centre. She identified an incident which involved working with an adult who needed assistance with personal care routines. The incident was significant for Shelley mainly because she was taken

by surprise and had not expected to be asked to undertake such an intimate personal care role, before establishing any rapport with the client. Shelley's response suggested that she was probably more uncomfortable about the experience than the client. She commented:

> *I wonder how the client felt having me help to place her on the toilet only having known me for a maximum of half an hour. Her self-respect must have disappeared ... (Shelley's Journal, 16/8/99).*

Her dialogic reflection, although evoking sensitivity to the person's feelings, was not grounded in a true perception of how the client felt. Shelley was inadvertently projecting her own perspective onto the client. She commented reflexively:

> *... I know that I would have felt very uncomfortable if I had someone who I had only known for half an hour toileting me. She must feel very frustrated that she needs to have someone do things like this for her. I worry that her self-respect is suffering because of it (Shelley's Journal, 16/8/99).*

Shelley expressed genuine empathy with the client.

Reflecting on a more positive personal interaction, Shelley was amazed by another incident which demonstrated the unexpected capabilities of a person who was blind. She reported:

> *There's one client who has really taken to me actually and she's just like me and one who remembers my name. I went in there on Monday and she said 'Hi Shelley, how are you?' I went 'Oh my goodness' (Shelley, Interview 1, 25/8/99).*

Shelley had assumed that a person with multiple disabilities, who was blind and had an intellectual disability, would not be capable of such a high-level memory skill. The personal interaction with the client had lifted Shelley's responsiveness and respect towards people with disabilities.

In contrast to Shelley and Kim's more personal reflections, Kerry commented from a wider professional perspective on her experiences with the adults in the community. Kerry was concerned that the staff had overlooked opportunities for incidental teaching. For example, she cited an incident at a local cafe which worried her because of the inappropriate way the adults with disabilities were treated. She described this as:

> *... one afternoon we took them ... we took a few of the women to Annie's. They weren't even given the menu. It was just all decided what they'll be having, each person... (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Kerry was shocked that the staff denied the women their basic right to decide on what type of drink they preferred. She considered how she would have approached the situation differently:

> *... So, I mean, they could have been given the menu and then like they have pictures of the different milkshakes. They could have been asked 'What one's that?' 'It's a brown one.' 'What do you think that will be?' or 'That's a pink one.' But there was just nothing there. But then I don't think the staff understands that. That's why I think there should be some ... a little bit of training so they're clear what they should be doing (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Kerry acknowledged that the staff, being untrained in teaching strategies, were not accustomed to developing independent functioning and would not have understood their broader role in facilitating learning. Critiquing the incident reinforced Kerry's belief in the value of professional development to expand the staff's understanding of individualised teaching and learning strategies.

These participants' reflective comments indicated that they were disillusioned by the staff's practices with the clients, treating them inappropriately as a homogeneous, low-functioning group, rather than understanding their strengths as individuals. The staff's apparent lack of

any formal qualifications in the disability sector concerned the participants who had expected that employed staff would have demonstrated more expertise in carrying out their roles. Nevertheless, through critiquing specific incidents participants' increased their understandings of people with disabilities as unique individuals, expanding their awareness and desire to promote respectful and ethical practice.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS AT THE RECREATION PROGRAM

Four participating student teachers in the recreation program went on outings in community contexts which gave them opportunities to observe other people's reactions to school-aged children and adolescents with disabilities. Of the four, two reported on critical incidents. In looking at the data from critical incidents, a key theme emerged regarding general societal issues of non-acceptance of people with disabilities.

Two of the participants in the recreation program, Judith and Raymond, cited critical incidents which were meaningful for them. For example, Judith spoke about an incident that occurred when she accompanied staff at the recreation program taking the children for sport at the local park. During the outing, the staff member confided in Judith about a recent shopping experience which illustrated the general public's judgmental manner towards both the person with a disability and the staff member supervising her. Judith reflected on the boundaries surrounding people's intolerance and discriminatory attitude. She commented:

> *we went to the park and did sport with them which was good. Um ... just for*
> *a change and we thought hold on and just for a change like on Friday we*

did and ... this lady was telling me that sometimes she takes her down the street into society and they get looked down on like she feels she gets looked down on cause she believes in the same thing ... (Judith, Interview 2, 13/10/99).

Judith showed her empathy with the staff member and the person with a disability. She explained:

... You can't control it what they do ... you know. She's had to talk her way out of things you know, argue cause people won't let them get things for themselves ... Definitely interesting ... levels of tolerance and level of acceptance of difference. It's really defining boundaries (Judith, Interview 2, 13/10/99).

In retelling the event, she was upholding the person's right to participate in a public place and be accepted.

Participants reflected on social exchanges between themselves and the children and adolescents in their care. In his journal, Raymond reflected on negative social attitudes and biases, citing an incident at the recreation program, which he likened to his own school experiences:

I am not sure how other children or teenagers react to these children though, and I wonder how J and D, who seem to have minor problems, feel waiting for the recreation program bus out the front of their school. I would love to believe that there is no negative reaction by the other children, however, I know that similar situations occurred at my high school, and the disabled bus that used to pick children up had particular negative connotations associated with it (Raymond's Journal, 20/8/99).

Raymond was aware of subtle peer pressure to conform and suspected that amongst the teenagers there would be a dominant feeling that shunned diversity. In critiquing the incident from a perspective found in the literature, Raymond justified his view, advocating for broader acceptance of people with disabilities in the wider community:

Ashman & Elkins (1998 p 17) state that inclusion has "…brought about subtle, positive changes in the attitudes and behaviours of those with whom they interact at school." While this is certainly true, it is crucial to point out that it is not only school, but society in general that should feel these changes. Exercises such as taking the children down town, can help speed up these changes …(Raymond's Journal, 20/8/99).

Raymond wanted more people in the community to be exposed to children with disabilities as a way of hastening more widespread positive social attitudes towards them.

A more personal critical incident occurred for Raymond when as a result of having allowed himself to be open to daily interactions; he was struck by how a simple friendly farewell comment affected his rapport. He said:

Probably just at the end of the day where you can say 'Oh, see you later kid' or 'See you next week' or 'See you later kids. I had a good time'. They say 'Are you coming back tomorrow or coming back next week?' or whatever …(Raymond, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

Evidently, Raymond was enjoying his experience with the children and was touched by their encouragement for his ongoing involvement. His reflexive comment showed the impact of their friendliness on him personally:

… It seems selfish that I'm saying that but they really make you feel so warm and you just have to be friendly and I think me being able to let them do that to me is the biggest thing. Actually I didn't think I'd be able to get so close to them in such a short time and I feel so comfortable with them (Raymond, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

Raymond's reflexive comment revealed that he had new learning about himself and was surprised by his close emotional attachment and comfortable acceptance of the children.

In summary, the participants' reflective comments on the critical incidents which occurred during the recreation experience, depicted a concern with the wider community's intolerance

of people who behave differently from the majority of people. As a result of critiquing the incidents in the community, participants began to question the factors that led to children and adolescents with disabilities being segregated from mainstream practices.

Overall, there were three main themes which emerged from participants' critique of incidents in each of the community contexts. In the respite situation, the main theme related to developing an understanding of the child's unique behaviour within a holistic family-centred approach. The major theme at the independent living centre was a concern for fostering respectful age-appropriate interactions with adults with disabilities. At the recreation program, the critical incidents portrayed a key theme of overcoming segregated practices by promoting society's broader acceptance of people with disabilities; ultimately, valuing diversity in others.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Data on the student teachers' community experiences revealed how their situated learning had expanded their understandings about people with disabilities. The participants had enhanced their capacity to relate and interact with individuals in a more confident, relaxed manner. Primarily, the people with disabilities themselves influenced the student teachers' real understandings of an inclusive educator's role. In a less direct way, the participants learnt about their prospective roles through observing and interacting with the staff and the respite parents. Participants constructed their emerging understandings from both positive and negative role models which led them to question what they, as future inclusive educators,

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considered appropriate and inappropriate practices for interacting with people with disabilities. At times, the community experiences proved somewhat frustrating and hard for the participants. However, in general, participants' comments indicated that once they were able to form productive relationships with the individuals with disabilities, they overcame their initial nervousness and uncomfortable feelings.

Reflecting on practices helped the participants to consider more openly why the situation had occurred and what other alternative courses of actions or perspectives might be relevant. Interestingly, the critical incidents described by participants suggested that learning to deal with conflict gave them more confidence in their own ability to deal effectively with difficult situations in the future. The participants reported that the community experiences better prepared them for what to expect in their future role in catering for children's individual needs and different levels of functioning than the usual academic, non-participatory learning approaches.

Critiquing incidents alerted the participants to the various inappropriate practices of segregating children, adolescents and adults with disabilities. A common feature linking emerging themes across the community contexts, concerned participants' increased awareness for promoting wider acceptance of individuals with disabilities. In carrying out common daily activities with individuals, the participants were conscious of the extent to which people with disabilities were often inadvertently denied access to typical life experiences. The participants were therefore keen to ensure responsive community practices

towards individuals with disabilities, having witnessed these incidents of inappropriate interactions.

Evidently, the community experiences enriched the student teachers' authentic learning about the nature of people with disabilities. Each of the community contexts had provided unique opportunities for situated learning. The following chapter reports on significant issues which contributed to the participants' enhanced understandings of an inclusive educator's role.

CHAPTER 7: CONSTRUCTIVE PROCESSES SHAPING ENHANCED UNDERSTANDINGS

This chapter examines the constructive situated social learning processes (Ainscow et al., 2003; Putnam & Borko, 2000), which shaped the student teachers' enhanced understandings of an inclusive educator's role. Student teachers formed changed perspectives as a result of grappling with complex issues and through sustained reflective and reflexive processes. Section 1 presents examples of diverse issues arising from the participants' experiences, illustrating the impact of social phenomena across ecologies (Bronfenbrenner, 1997). Student teachers' ideal views and real-life considerations are examined in Section 2 giving specific examples of ecological influences and concerns with ethical practices. Section 3 depicts the participants' changed understandings of an inclusive educator's role. The chapter concludes with comments on the power of the situated experience in increasing learning beyond the usual textbook approaches.

1. ISSUES RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS' SITUATED LEARNING IN COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

A number of common issues (See Appendix 4 – Issues Raised by Participants) emerged as participants were drawn into reflecting on what their situated experiences had contributed to their understandings about people with disabilities and how best to cater for their individual needs within inclusive classrooms and community contexts. Salient among these reported accounts were concerns with barriers to inclusive practices (Odom et al., 2004) and the

personalised nature of interactions with individuals with disabilities. Less significant issues included the impact of an individual's disability on the family (Algozzine et al., 2001; O'Shea et al., 2001) and the critiquing of staff practices within a wider political context, especially the lack of staff training. The broader implications for the student teachers' future roles as inclusive educators are elucidated.

BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Primarily, participants reflected on their enhanced understandings in relation to issues affecting inclusive practices based on their past and current experiences in community contexts. They related their situated learning to previous experiences in schools and formed more critical perspectives about unchallenged inappropriate practices which they considered were barriers to full inclusion. For instance, although Kim agreed with the notion of inclusion, she considered current practices were inadequate, commenting:

> *Yeah. I agree with it [inclusion]. Like I think it's great and I think you could do it. It would be a lot of work but I don't believe it's happening in the schools... (Kim, Interview 2, 12/10/99).*

As an example, Kim described the physical and social barriers of segregation she had previously observed within a school environment which she opposed as hindering effective inclusion. She recalled:

> *... That school I was at ... it's like a little prison camp where they kept the people with disabilities. It was .. um .. it had a pool fence around it that you had to unlatch because they don't close down, so they incorporated it with the school. So they had a lot of people with disabilities up to the age of 20 and things like that and ... um... They were sort of locked in that section of the school (Kim, Interview 2, 12/10/99).*

Kim pointed out that the situation of grouping individuals with disabilities together in a padlocked area reminded her of the restraining barriers society imposed on prisoners. She was critical of the fact that individuals as old as 20 years were inappropriately kept at school, while deliberately marginalised them from the rest of the school's population.

Assessment practices of labelling and classifying children with disabilities mystified participants. The practice of assigning children to categories based on their differences in relation to their peers was perceived as a barrier to inclusion. Raymond was similarly concerned with the negative implications of setting children apart. He wrote:

> *No matter how many times I reminded myself that they were just normal kids, I couldn't seem to believe myself. I was aware of the labels that were placed on these children, and more than anything, I didn't want to unknowingly categorise the children. Ashman & Elkins (1998) state that labels show the ignorance of society. I didn't want my ignorance hurting these children (Raymond's Journal, 17/8/99).*

Clearly, he made a conscious effort to look beyond the labels placed on individuals. Raymond's comments indicated that he had formed personal beliefs that primarily respected children with disabilities as individuals. Raymond reflected on these children's educational rights to be included. He wrote:

> *Although I still have queries about teaching these children, I certainly have no reservations about their right to be accepted, whether it be in an inclusive setting within a school or in society in general ... (Raymond's Journal, 20/8/99).*

A key issue of promoting attitudes of acceptance within schools and across society appeared fundamental to Raymond and several other participants, including Anna, Chris, Judith, Kim,

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Narelle and Shelley. Furthermore, Raymond attested the personal value of the community

experience, claiming:

> *I feel privileged to have spent time with these great children, and on each occasion I have left there, feeling happy and content ... (Raymond's Journal, 20/8/99).*

Raymond then adopted a wider perspective, wanting to share with his fellow student teachers

the benefits he enjoyed in relating to children with disabilities. He wrote:

> *... I believe that every trainee teacher should have access and be encouraged to participate in such programs (Raymond's Journal, 20/8/99).*

He thought the community experience would be of merit for all student teachers.

As a result of his situated learning, Raymond questioned whether the involvement of

adolescents with disabilities in the recreation program might have impeded their inclusive

peer interactions, thus, indirectly causing others to devalue them. He commented:

> *I think what the program set out to do it's ... doing, encouraging these kids to live a normal life. Um ... but I'm just thinking that ... well I'm hoping that they're not being shut off from the rest of the world because they go to recreation program for a couple of hours a week and they meet all their friends and all their friends have got the same sort of problem or worse problems as them ... (Raymond, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Although Raymond was supportive of the specialised services, he was at the same time

worried about the possible harm of grouping similarly functioning adolescents together,

reducing their opportunities to be with a wider range of their peers. Raymond reflected

beyond the current context to question the hidden social cost associated with segregated

grouping practices. He speculated on other typical recreational scenarios, pondering:

> *... And I'm just wondering what they're like when they're not at recreation program, if they're down town or playing at the park or whatever. It's certainly a good idea that they've done something for these kids (Raymond, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Raymond had reservations about the type of recreation program offered, yet he summed up his genuine support for these children and their right to receive services.

Another participant, Rene was disturbed by entrenched normative social practices which failed to accommodate children's diverse needs and which segregated them unnecessarily. Related to this theme of segregation for Rene was also the negative impact of labelling. Thus, in considering other artificial barriers which restricted inclusive practices, Rene commented:

> *... like with some of the kids at recreation program I'm working with they don't have ... you know really big problems. Like there might be a few behaviour problems that could be worked out and they could still be in the mainstream classroom... (Rene, Interview 2, 13/10/99).*

She indicated her support for inclusive practices which in her opinion were achievable with some problem-solving and minor classroom adjustments. Rene feared the long-term consequences and detrimental effects of segregation on the individuals' lives when she commented:

> *... Like I think that they're missing out on everything else in life just because they've been labelled as having these problems (Rene, Interview 2, 13/10/99).*

Rene's reflections showed an understanding of the likely harm that socially-constructed labels placed on children with disabilities, especially the negative social implications of not having the same life experiences as the rest of their peers. In adopting a broader perspective, she thought beyond the nature and type of disability, to consider the educational implications. Rene's comments depicted her increased awareness of the children's individuality when she wrote:

> *The varying abilities between the children surprised me. S needed a lot of help whereas P didn't appear to me to have any problems at all. I'm not*

sure why I was surprised, I guess I never really had thought about what I expected ... (Rene's Journal, 16/8/99).

Thus, Rene reflected on how others might also make generalised assumptions about people with disabilities, commenting:

> *... I suppose I am like many other people who at first think that people who attend a Special Education school are disabled in the physical sense e.g. Down syndrome or in a wheelchair, but I had never really considered the wide variety ranging from behavioural problems to intellectual abilities ... (Rene's Journal, 16/8/99).*

These comments suggest that Rene had developed a wider understanding about the differences in people's disabilities. She then reflected on what the implications might be from a controversial societal perspective:

> *... I guess this is where the debate for inclusion comes in, what is considered a disability and what isn't (Rene's Journal, 16/8/99).*

Reflecting on the tensions in society towards the disability sector, Rene's comments indicated that she was mindful of the socially-constructed disability labels. She questioned the value of engaging in semantic language debates which sometimes clouded decisions, negatively influencing an individual's entitlement to appropriate support services.

From a macro ecological perspective, Rene was cognizant of the political mandates imposed on schools, including the legislation which makes discrimination of people with disabilities unlawful. Consequently, she advocated that regular class placements should be a viable option and was interested in finding out how decisions were made to segregate children into special schools and support units. She wrote:

> *... Some of the children seem to have very minor disabilities and yet are segregated for no reason that I can think of. I would have thought they would have learnt better under the inclusion Act, but I guess this is a matter of choice for the parents and the schools to decide where they think*

the child would learn best. It will be interesting to know just what sorts of assessment students go through to attend a special school, or any Special Education unit/school ... (Rene's Journal, 16/8/99).

Although Rene appreciated that placement decisions were the responsibilities of the parents and school executives, she was convinced that teachers in mainstream classrooms should be willing to make instructional modifications. Again she wrote:

... I feel that if students have the ability to learn, and are capable of fitting into a mainstream classroom with some adaptations that this should be seriously considered as an option for the students' education (Rene's Journal, 16/8/99).

From reflecting on her community experiences, Rene had formed her perspective of an inclusive educator's role as someone who could enrich children's learning.

Stepping back and reflecting again at the end of the experience on segregated services in the community, Rene embraced a fuller appreciation of the value of respite which these services provided for the individual's parents. She was, however, critical of how the current staff operated the recreation program, when she said:

... I don't agree with everything they do but I think, I think the whole thing's good like the parents have a break and stuff but I don't sort of agree with what they[the staff] do ... I think it's just a babysitting group like ... (Rene, Interview 2, 13/10/99).

Rene advocated for better staff training in order to provide more than just babysitting experiences. She was shocked that the staff were untrained and probably not given any induction in the area of disabilities. Understandably, she was disgruntled by the staff's inappropriate practices and said:

... the helpers aren't trained or anything. They just go along and supervise sort of ... I don't know if they're told anything about the disabilities or not. Um ... like the main people are trained... I just think they could do more with the kids... (Rene, Interview 2, 13/10/99).

Reflecting on her own childhood experiences, Rene had developed empathy with the children. She wanted their learning to be fun, while ideally not segregating them from others. She asserted:

> *Like, I mean I know it's you know, they've just had school and they're tired and I mean I remember when I was little we had a kids' club and it used to be heaps of fun... I think they could adapt it to something like that you know just a regular thing but get them out and not to be segregated again like ... (Rene, Interview 2, 13/10/99).*

From a personal perspective, Rene had become more committed to enriching the recreational learning experiences for children with disabilities. She argued her position on the grounds of equity, upholding these children's right to quality inclusive education. She pointed out that:

> *... I just think that we all have the right to the same education and that and it's not right if they're segregated (Rene, Interview 2, 13/10/99).*

Rene indicated her solid commitment to inclusive practices as distinct from segregated services.

Overall, participants were critical of unnecessary segregation and viewed practices such as labelling and singling out children with disabilities away from mainstream services, as inappropriate. They argued their position from both personal and professional perspectives using descriptive and dialogic reflection within a broader societal and political critically reflective context. No longer were the student teachers willing to accept existing inappropriate practices which they indicated in their reflections, disadvantaged the lives of people with disabilities, thereby hindering valuable inclusive opportunities for these individuals.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AS INDIVIDUALS

Participants identified the uniqueness of individuals and the personality traits of people with disabilities as another significant issue. Learning about individuals with disabilities, helped these student teachers to look more closely at their specific areas of functioning, leading to a more informed understanding of them, as individuals. Again, Rene raised the issue of diversity within the disability sector. She reflected on her increased awareness of individuals' varying abilities. Writing about her insights, she recounted:

> *It has really opened my eyes up, and I now realise how diverse disabilities can be and that they cannot all be categorised under the one group ... (Rene's Journal, 22/10/99).*

In terms of her own role, she admitted both her strengths and weaknesses, commenting:

> *... In the area of Special Education I have a long way to go in understanding the various issues. However I do feel that this experience has helped me understand the diversity of students and the many abilities they have (Rene's Journal, 22/10/99).*

Thus, Rene identified the issue of diversity embedded within the disability category. She had witnessed the differences in people's functioning in the community context and was able to distinguish and value the individuality of a person with a disability, instead of merely accepting unfounded generalisations of an impersonal, categorical nature.

Situated learning was apparent in Michael's reflection on how the recreation experience had changed his way of thinking about individuals along with the implications for an inclusive educator's role. Michael had developed stronger convictions about how he believed children with disabilities should be treated, while still acknowledging the child's disability. He said:

Well, I think you've got to ... um realise that a child ... you've got to recognise they do have a disability. However, do not treat them any different, if you know what I mean. So they don't feel that special treatment because I'm sure that impacts on them as well. If you sort of baby them and show them special treatment over the other children, they'll be tormented themselves ... (Michael, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

Michael was concerned that patronising children with disabilities by making unnecessary allowances for them would be perceived by their peers as unfair favouritism, creating a resentful climate among their peers.

Participants were surprised by the extent of enjoyment they experienced in their interactions with people with disabilities. Both Michael and Rene showed enhanced understandings of the need to consider peers' socialising influences in shared interactions. By the end of the experiences their reflections projected an increasing awareness of similarities, instead of differences, with able-bodied people's typical behaviour. Michael's comments depicted the positive contribution of peer role models when he marvelled:

... just seeing how happy the kids are when they're having fun. When you're playing games with them, the enjoyment they get out of it. Um ... the enjoyment of the interaction with each other, like some of the kids really enjoy being around each other...two children they take on leadership roles within the group and they, I think they love it too. They love it how the kids look up to them. Yeah, no it's a great program ... it's good. It's really good (Michael, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

Thus, Michael became aware that the positive group dynamics contributed to the children's increased self-esteem as a result of reflecting on how the children with disabilities enjoying the recreational activities. He reflected on how the community experience had clarified his views, stating:

... I had virtually no experience whatsoever beforehand. It definitely has and I think that I'm more ... um open-minded now and look ... I look at things totally different now as well (Michael, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

Michael's comments suggest he had developed a more receptive, accepting perspective, enabling him to relate effectively to individuals with disabilities. Thus, the participants constructed deeper understandings as they reflected on issues arising from their community experiences.

Another recurring issue concerned the complex nature of communicating with individuals with disabilities, evident when the participants reflected on their experiences with rapport building. For example, Ruby described her changed way of relating to a person with a disability as having a profound effect on her. She commented:

> *I guess how I've changed is that the mystery of communicating with a person with a disability has been lifted for me. Not only did I do respite care with a little girl but I also went and visited her at her school and experienced you know sitting and doing whatever with other children with disabilities ... (Ruby, Interview 3, 20/6/00).*

Ruby had enjoyed accompanying the child in different situational contexts. She commented on how the experience had impacted on her ability to break down the apparent barrier she perceived existed between people with and without disabilities. She reported that the experience made her feel comfortable around individuals with disabilities, stating:

> *... So, therefore, it's almost like a barrier and I guess in society there is ... there is a barrier between us and disabled people, you know and I mean that's quite well known. And even though I didn't ... I wasn't highly conscious of the barrier, I mean, I feel very comfortable now and it's not a problem... I feel as though a little veil has been lifted, let's say (Ruby, Interview 3, 20/6/00).*

In Ruby's case, the problem of relating to individuals with disabilities was solved when she discovered how to communicate with them. Reflecting on the experience, Ruby admitted that

she had become conscious of her own attitudes towards people with disabilities, only after

she had successfully established a personal relationship with an individual with a disability

and was able to communicate with them effectively.

Participants encountered diversity in communicative functioning in their interactions with

individuals who were nonverbal or had communication disorders. At the recreation program,

communication difficulties between the participants and the adolescents with disabilities

were also apparent. Raymond reflected on the experience of observing breakdown in social

interactions in relation to boys with communication disorders who were not encouraged to

join the group. He said:

> *I probably realise it's a lot more difficult than I thought it would be... a*
> *couple of boys out there that seem not to be included in anything. Um ...*
> *I'm not sure what their disabilities are but they're pretty severe. Um ...*
> *they find it very hard to communicate. They might be autistic but I'm not*
> *sure. But it seems that they get left out of a lot of things... (Raymond,*
> *Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Raymond recalled a specific routine to illustrate his point, when he said:

> *... while playing soccer or tips or whatever, they're always off doing their*
> *own thing. And I think that ... like I mentioned that they should be included*
> *... but I don't know how you'd go about it (Raymond, Interview 2,*
> *19/10/99).*

His reflection attested that although Raymond wanted to engage in interactions with all of the

individuals involved, he was unfortunately unable to communicate with some which meant

that they were left out of the peer experience.

At the beginning, the participants found communicating with nonverbal individuals was hard.

For example, Chris' interaction with a male adult's nonverbal physical communication at the

independent living centre, made her feel threatened. Reflecting on her initial uncomfortable reaction to the incident, Chris described how in hindsight the new experience had better prepared her for managing any future outbursts. She said:

> *… he invaded my personal space to start with and then he was smelling me and I did have perfume on … um … and he was smell … and every time he's seen me after that he'd come up to me and I thought … afterwards I thought 'Well it was a new phase because he never like … not harassed … but he never was obtrusive to anybody else'. It was just me and I thought 'Well he's obviously spotted me as somebody different … um … and it's his way of saying hello'. That's what I put it down to … (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

On reflection, she found a likely reason for the individual's behaviour which helped her to understand the situation better. She commented on her adjustment:

> *Um …I'll have a really different perception now when I go in there. I think, I won't be … like I was a little bit frightened I suppose at first … um … because he's 6 foot 2. …So, I thought next time when I go I'll be prepared for that. I'll know that he's going to do that and I won't be wearing really smelly perfume you know (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Thus, Chris reasoned that her perfume had provoked the client's curiosity and inappropriate close contact with her. In her reflection for-action, she showed an increased awareness of planning a preventative strategy to avoid a repetition of the behaviour and build a more acceptable relationship with the individual.

Additionally, Chris was impressed by how much individuality the clients demonstrated, giving her new perceptions of people with disabilities. She discussed her new insights reflecting:

> *Um, probably the concept of individuality you know. That each one of them have their own personality and they're quite funny when they're together*

and have their little arguments and carry-ons but that's good (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

Evidently, she enjoyed each person's unique disposition and liked being in the company of people with disabilities.

Similarly, Judith also enjoyed the individuals' various personalities. She noted their sense of fun and was keen to interact socially with them. The depth of their personalities surprised Judith and according to her, would have probably amazed others. She reflected:

> *I think that anyone who has not had much to do with people, or a person, with a disability would be extremely shocked at how much personality a lot of these clients have, and how enjoyable they are to be around. Even the quieter ladies giggle and smile throughout the course of the morning, listening and reacting to the conversations that take place ... (Judith's Journal, 27/8/99).*

Because of the fun nature of the experience, Judith was readily involved. She wrote:

> *... I am really finding this volunteer work valuable and educational, and look forward to each session (Judith's Journal, 27/8/99).*

Judith's comments showed her enjoyment in getting to know the adults' different personalities, thereby reinforcing her awareness of the notion of individuality.

Dealing with unpredictable situations was unnerving for participants who felt confused by their misconceptions of people with disabilities. Incongruously, witnessing the unexpected capabilities of adults with intellectual disabilities shocked the participants at the independent living centre. For example, Kerry was surprised when she realised that these people with low intellectual functioning were competent in carrying out particular tasks as well as being able to think on abstract levels. She said:

> *... a realisation that these people are actually thinking. Like that girl I was talking to from Sydney. She was telling me like she misses her family and ...she was thinking like she was telling me about she's going back to Sydney. I think it was a long weekend or something and she was making cards for her family, you know, writing them a little letter and things (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99)*

Thus, Kerry indicated her surprise that an individual with a severe disability was able to engage in abstract thought processes.

In reflecting on her understandings Shelley captured the plight of people with disabilities and their learning needs from a humanistic perspective. She was critical of the staff's lack of responsiveness to the adults' severe disabilities. She commented:

> *Oh. I would ... I'd do something. They've got to. They laugh, and they cry and they have emotions as well. And just, just to sit there and not do anything all day, they must be so bored but they can't communicate that. You have to sort of realize, yeah (Shelley, Interview 2, 12/10/99).*

Shelley indicated that the staff needed to take more responsibility for engaging with the clients in more caring ways.

By the end of the community experiences the participants reported that they had relaxed into their roles and although critical of the services delivered, had developed effective relationships with the individuals, rather than being overwhelmed by misconceptions about people with disabilities in general.

THE IMPACT ON FAMILIES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Respite support for parents of individuals with disabilities was an issue identified across all community contexts. Participants became aware of subtle changes in the family dynamics as a consequence of catering for the dependency of an individual with a disability. They recognised the parents' need for respite time, away from caring for their children with disabilities. Tina reflected on the exacting demand of constantly caring for the young child with a disability during her respite experience. She commented:

> *I mean with the child that I was with, it took 24-hour care with him. Um, and I just thought they must be so strong and ...just so passionate about what they're doing. I mean ... it was ...they were actually foster parents. They weren't the actual parents ... (Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

While Tina was impressed with the foster parents' dedication, she also witnessed the emotional and physical strain that the child placed on them. Showing empathy in her reflections, she said:

> *Um ... so just the mental drain I think of having to watch someone 24 hours a day ... um ... they didn't have any time to themselves or ... um ... I, I ... it sounds awful but at times I even felt sorry for them, the fact that they didn't have that time together... (Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

She thought about the personal consequences for the foster parents in devoting so much time to caring for the child and the likely added pressure on their relationship. She considered both the negative and positive impact that might result, remarking:

> *Um ... just thinking about how their ...like their marriage... would I mean on one hand it might suffer or it might actually make them stronger and bring the family together. I'm not sure but they were just constantly tired and even their tone of voice at times seemed they were just so fed up. They just wanted him to do what he was told ... (Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00)*

Tina demonstrated a more emphatic understanding of the foster parents' frustration on account of her own experiences with the child.

Participants found that families looked to them for help as future professionals, for support, reassurance and advice on child development. Anna reported her conversation with a parent who expressed relief that her concerns about her child's delayed development were unfounded, commenting:

> *... she said she's got ... ' like maybe you could do some work with G' and I said 'Oh that's fine. You know, I don't mind, whatever you want, it doesn't bother me.' She obviously ... she said she sits with him some times and it just gets so frustrating, cause she gets so little for so long ... (Anna, Interview 2, 1/9/99).*

Anna knew that the child's slow progress was tedious. As a way of easing the mother's disappointment, Anna mentioned her classroom experiences with similar children. She reported:

> *And I said 'I've had kindergartens that can't even colour in the lines or' ... 'Oh really', she says, 'Oh really. And I said 'Yeah, like that's what kindergartens can't even colour inside shapes and'... 'Oh, Oh, OK.' I think that made her feel a bit better... Oh, he's not really that bad (Anna, Interview 2, 1/9/99).*

Anna was sensitive to the mother's anxieties. Her supportive comments may have encouraged the mother to feel more open in sharing her concerns in future interactions with other professionals. Anna described the continual demands the child placed on her, making the role hard:

> *There's a lot of hard work cause he's constant ... you're there constantly with him (Anna, Interview 2, 1/9/99).*

Thus, Anna appreciated the emotional intensity of being with an individual with high support needs. On a more positive note, Anna commented on the simple pleasure the respite parent found in being able to complete housework tasks before setting off for work, stating:

... Like she said it was really good, like she got the vacuuming done, washing done, the cooking done for that night cause she had to work and that was really good and I think she was happy that she had that done... (Anna, Interview 2, 1/9/99).

She described the situation further from the mother's perspective:

... You know, like I suppose it's a hard time because G's someone who needs you there sort of all the time sort of doing something with him ... (Anna, Interview 2, 1/9/99).

By constructively engaging the child in play activities, Anna was able to relieve the pressure on the parent at home.

Participants discovered that the issue of having a holiday is often difficult for families of children with disabilities. Anna's shared exchanges with the mother revealed the stressful impact on the family of preparing for and going on a holiday. She wrote:

... having a holiday, is something that most families take for granted, but when you have a child who has special needs, the holiday becomes more complicated. While I was doing my respite care, the family that I was with went on a holiday. The mother told me that it was something that she didn't like doing as it was a hassle, but for the sake of their other child, L, they went on the holiday anyway (Anna's Journal, 19/10/99).

Anna's comments portrayed sensitivity to the family's compromises, as a process of adjustment in accommodating a child with a disability. In having a holiday, the mother was both attentive to the extra needs of the child with the disability, while also being conscious of her other child's social needs.

The increased impact of caring for siblings in families of individuals with disabilities became apparent for participants in the respite situations. For example, Narelle wondered if she could cope in the parent's situation, with the physical demands of toilet training a child with a

disability while also caring for a baby. Narelle found herself over-stretched in the role, reporting:

> *Oh, I don't know how I'd go if I was a parent having to deal with toilet training one child, another child in nappies. Like M's in nappies and trying to teach her how to use the toilet as well. And it was just ... and then I just ... I said I need help and she came ... (Narelle, Interview 2, 20/10/99).*

She was grateful for the parent's help. At the same time she was critical of the mother's style of parenting which she thought gave the child with a disability too much attention, disadvantaging her brother. Narelle contrasted the father's firm disciplinary style with the two children, with the mother's indulgent approach. She recalled a specific incident as an example, commenting:

> *... I've seen like ... um ... N [the father] put J [the brother] and M on 2 different chairs and make them sit there. I've seen him do that in his lunch break. But D [the mother] doesn't ... like it, ... just seems like ... I feel that (sigh) I know this might be a bit harsh, but she seems to think it's her fault M's like this, so she has to like... she has to give her her full attention the whole time and J gets left out and ... you know M can do no wrong... (Narelle, Interview 2, 20/10/99).*

Her comments implied that the mother blamed herself for her child's disability and was overcompensating in a way which Narelle considered, disadvantaged the other sibling. Recalling how her own brother was spoilt because of his learning difficulty, Narelle was adamant that all children should be treated the same, commenting:

> *I don't think that children should be treated differently because they have a disability. Because then ...um ...they might ...I think it's only like it's only a slight disability they could play on it and I think ...cause I know from like my brother has learning disabilities. And I know from experience that he played on it because people treated him differently... (Narelle, Interview 3, 28/3/00).*

She became convinced that parents should treat their children equally, regardless of any differences.

In the respite with the same family as Narelle, Ruby found that the younger brother developed his own assertive survival strategies. She observed that:

> *M's little brother, J, who has learnt some of the most wonderful strategies*
> *in coping with a sister like M because M isn't gentle...Part of her syndrome*
> *... whatever her disability is ... (Ruby, Interview 2, 17/5/00).*

Ruby indicated that the younger brother had adjusted successfully to his sister's disability. However, like Narelle, Ruby also considered that the mother was not yet fully prepared to accept her daughter's disability. Ruby attributed the mother's reaction as caused by not having a firm medical diagnosis for explaining the child's condition. She said:

> *... nobody can give it a name and that in many ways is incredible*
> *frustration for the parent. Because it's good to have a label, a brand, we*
> *can put that on and say OK I can read about that and I can act*
> *accordingly... (Ruby, Interview 2, 17/5/00).*

Through reflective processes, Ruby came to view the lack of a disability label as adding to the mother's anxiety.

As mentioned in the previous section, open communication between the participants and others, was considered a fundamental aspect to establishing productive relationships. The complexity of understanding how disability was manifested in the person's social, emotional, physical and cognitive functioning proved particularly disconcerting for participants involved in interactions with individuals with high support needs. Although it is quite common for parents of young children involved in early intervention services to have no firm medical diagnosis for their child's disability, Narelle, as someone new to the early childhood intervention area, wanted relevant background information on the child. Hence, Narelle was

naturally distressed when the parent had not discussed the child's condition or suggested ways to manage the child's unique behaviour. She said:

> *She was very, very difficult. Um ... the first ... three visits I really felt like chucking it in. Because ... um ... the parents didn't give me any background. Just nothing about what she does, her behaviours or anything... (Narelle, Interview 2, 20/10/99).*

Narelle was not informed about her role and intuitively wanted to stop her involvement. The situation was made worse because there was no communication with the parents. As she stated, she found this very difficult:

> *... Left me alone with her every week for at least an hour. After the first, first visit I just thought No I can't do this. And ... um kicked in the head and ... um ... child chucking tantrums like throwing herself like violently against the door. I had no idea what it was about or anything ... (Narelle, Interview 2, 20/10/99).*

For Narelle, the lack of openness meant that she was unprepared for the child's aggressive outbursts. Understandably, she was uncomfortable in dealing with such atypical behaviour without support. She was concerned that the parent's expectations of her were too high. Through reflecting on a motive for the child's behaviour Narelle discovered the reason herself, commenting:

> *And ... um ... so I ... she didn't tell me why but I figured it out. It's all for attention. Whenever adults are talking or she hasn't got the full attention of the person that's in the room with her, she'll go into the other room and start banging herself against the door... I was getting quite upset about it cause I was getting sick of being left alone with her because that wasn't what was supposed to happen and ... um ... just not telling me anything ... not communicating with me at all about anything ... about her or you know it was really ... which shocked me (Narelle, Interview 2, 20/10/99).*

Thus, Narelle felt resentful towards the parent for not confiding in her.

Typically, in early intervention programs, in which a number of health, education and community professionals are involved, there is a strong need for open communication and collaborative approaches. Yet all four participants were faced with communication breakdowns which contributed to the stress on families. For example, Ruby commented on the unnecessary upset the respite family faced when they sought their entitlement for financial support. She described the emotional impact on the mother in dealing with unhelpful administrators, writing:

> *D [the mother] spoke very angrily about Federal and State Legislation, saying that it takes huge strength and endurance to simply acquire the information needed for a disability allowance. D was refused an allowance because the attending official did not know what 'developmentally delayed' meant. She showed him by taking M to his office where M promptly destroyed his environment and D was awarded her allowance quickly ... (Ruby's Journal, 4/4/00).*

Ruby indicated that while the mother had learnt to stand up to bureaucratic officials, the intensity of the experience drained the parent emotionally. Additionally, Ruby commented on how the mother had become accustomed to facing negative societal attitudes. She explained:

> *... No longer do the sideways glances and the quick judgements of people in the streets upset her when her daughter is giving a public tantrum. D claims that it has taken her a long time to toughen her resolve, but she now accepts that people are too critical and judgemental ... (Ruby's Journal, 4/4/00).*

As a result of her awareness of ongoing discriminatory societal pressures, Ruby became more understanding of the mother's stressful adjustment to her parenting role.

On a more personal level, another communication breakdown occurred when Ruby accompanied the parent and child on a medical appointment, which resulted in her critical comment of the medical professional. She reported:

The reason why she went to the paediatrician ... was because she was having more frequent petit mal and then, of course, all he could do was say 'Okay, well off you go to the hospital and have ... um ... a CAT scan done.' (Ruby, Interview 2, 17/5/00).

Ruby was shocked at what she thought was a dismissive attitude and an imposition on the family, in asking for major disruptions to their regular routines. She described her reaction:

And, of course, that's a huge amount ... N has to take time off work. You've got to keep her awake for ... you know, the paediatrician said the night before, keep her up till midnight and wake her up early the next morning. Um ... I have to really control myself sometimes. I felt like saying 'Do you think that the mother and the father may not want to stay up till midnight. They might all be in the habit of going to bed at 8.30. I mean what you're asking is huge (Ruby, Interview 2, 17/5/00).

Ruby was horrified at the professional's expectations of the family and his insensitivity to their personal circumstances.

Participants also brought their personal experiences to their interpretations about influences affecting their relationships with parents. Ruby demonstrated an awareness of the chronic sorrow, hardships and intense joy that many families of children with disabilities experience throughout their lives. Ruby reflected from first hand experience on the parents' sadness when she said:

... as part of my ... um ... reflections I could really understand N and D's sadness because she ... M can't respond lovingly really. She does ... she has little attempts at it but she might ... she gets that little look on her face and she might put her head towards you or hold your hand but there's not the deep response of a child who isn't disabled (Ruby, Interview 2, 17/5/00).

On an emotional level, Ruby accepted the parents had experienced a sense of heartache in their relationship with their daughter.

Participants demonstrated their awareness of the impact of burnout on parents and consequently believed that building positive supportive relationships with families was invaluable. In her dialogic reflection, Ruby questioned her respite family's coping strategy for living with the child's disability. She found the answer lay in the family turning to support services to ease the burden on them. She said:

> *How do two people, the parents, cope with a disabled child who is very demanding and the answer ... and I've answered it and I've said 'Well they look for everything in society or the community that can help them, can assist them'... (Ruby, Interview 2, 17/5/00).*

Although Ruby viewed the family's functioning as requiring support from professionals and the wider community, she believed that the bond between the mother's and the child's needs was inseparable. Thus, she argued for a family-centred approach:

> *But no, I don't believe you can separate a child and its mother. Like I don't believe you can separate D and M (Ruby, Interview 2, 17/5/00).*

Ruby's personal situation of being a single parent gave her empathy with the mother and enlightened her deeper understanding about family sensitive practice.

Additionally, Ruby wanted to expand her newly acquired communication strategies with the child in her home to further understanding of the child's educational functioning in a special school context. By observing the child's interactions with her peers, Ruby gained a richer appreciation of the child's relationships with others and had a better sense of her general behaviour. She was able to link the ecologies together, commenting:

> *... by having an insight into the family and how they desperately need schools and centres and how it can be an extension of the family or the home life in a sense and then the school can be incorporated back into the family. You know, it can be a two-way street. Um ... it's been a great experience ... (Ruby, Interview 2, 17/5/00).*

Thus, Ruby gained a richer understanding of reinforcing the child's learning through collaborative approaches between families and service providers.

Participants' reflections showed a more caring response to parents' emotional reactions increasing their sensitivity to family functioning in different contexts. At the independent living centre, Shelley reflected on the importance of community options for older individuals with disabilities and their families. She commented on the issue of respite for seniors and the essential life skills that people with disabilities need, claiming:

> *... I think [respite] is really important because people who are in their 50s and 60s need somewhere to go as well to be ... to get away from their parents and to give their parents that break and they need their... they need their like basic living skills. They need to know how to feel safe. They need to know how to wash up and cook and clean and things like that and they don't seem to do that much... just even getting them involved in community life (Shelley, Interview 2, 12/10/99).*

She was critical that the staff had narrow focus on their caring role without giving priority to promoting life skills. She argued for developing greater independent functioning that would make a difference in the quality of the person's community involvement.

The stress and pressure evident in carrying out the daily routine in families of individuals with disabilities were areas that participants had previously not encountered. Participants experienced the tension within families and in parent-professional relationships. They experienced breakdowns in communication which led to misunderstandings and conflicts. Nevertheless, as a result of their experiences, the participants appreciated the benefits of collaborative community support services for both the individuals and their parents, across their lifespan.

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STAFF PRACTICES WITHIN A WIDER POLITICAL CONTEXT

Student teachers reflected on staff practices within a wider political context as a way of articulating their ideals. Prior to the community experiences the participants had not thought deeply about political issues surrounding services for people with disabilities. As outcomes of the experience, they became interested in wider political issues affecting staff practices, such as examining working conditions, securing funding, rationalising of services, reviewing role expectations and providing specialised training.

Participants developed a realistic appreciation of the need to foster effective relationships as a basis for promoting conducive working conditions which avoided placing additional stress on staff, individuals and their families. Kim thought the answer lay in having universal codes of behaviour, advocating:

> *The staff in these situations and all working environments must have good relationships between other staff and clients. Without this partnership the situations may develop into serious problems and the staff may become stressed. These relationships are based on the fact that everyone has the right to feel safe, secure and to be themselves. This was brought about by the staff and management setting the boundaries for appropriate behaviour. These rules (although not written on paper) are acknowledged universally (Kim's Journal, 3/9/99).*

Thus, based on her community experiences, Kim was adamant that the basic rights of staff working in difficult situations involving people with disabilities should be respected.

Similarly, Judith's reflective learning at the recreation program acknowledged the constant demands on staff, causing stressful working conditions. She was convinced that the problem of retaining staff in these situations was due to insufficient funding and inadequate support. She likened the situation at the recreational program to the childcare industry, blaming the government for under-resourcing the sector. She depicted the strain on the staff member, commenting:

> *She wants to ... she can't cope with it cause it's too stressful. There's not enough support staff and not enough funding and it seems to be in all these different areas ... yeah, in child care where that it's the same old thing that there's not enough funding, not enough support and staff leaving all the time and ... um ... I was feeling that I think the government in that area need to get their act together (Judith, Interview 2, 13/10/99).*

This macro critical perspective indicated Judith's awareness of systemic problems caused by the government's neglect to act. Their failure she believed increased the workload pressures and resulted in staff shortages, generating more stress from stretched resources.

Another participant, Shelley, shared Judith's perspective that the government needed to support the disability field with more funding. She commented:

> *These people need to be cared for. As far as I know, the independent living centre is mostly self-funded. I believe that is about time the governments realise that these people are a part of the community and that facilities such as these should receive funding. The governments fund the elderly, schools and day care facilities so they should also fund these facilities... Surely the government could put money aside to help these places (Shelley's Journal, 26/10/99).*

Shelley was concerned that insecure funding signified the government's attitude of devaluing the disability sector in comparison with other community services.

In terms of accountability, Kerry went further with her criticism of a political system which might allocate additional funding for staff, yet do so without carefully investigating the quality of the service provided. She considered that the independent living service needed a comprehensive review, commenting:

> *...The only thing that the staff could tell me was when they had their morning tea break and when they knocked off. So, it seems to be ... Oh and then I asked them about ... how did they get their money? How did they get their budget? And they have to apparently they have to lobby the government every year to get more funding for the following year... (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Kerry indicated that the staff tended to shy away from in-depth understanding of the political agendas, concentrating instead on their own working conditions and entitlements. She claimed they automatically associated additional funding with increased staffing, reporting:

> *... But the big mistake that's going on there is, the more money they get they put more staff on, right. So they're totally overstaffed as it is (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

She was incensed that the service could claim to need increased staffing without some form of staff appraisal.

The participants considered the issue of evaluating practices as an essential aspect of the staff's roles. Judith thought that it was important to collaborate with colleagues to justify what you were doing. She encouraged political debates, arguing:

> *I think that rubs off on you though, doesn't it. If you've got your peers that you can go and talk to about it and ... I've got a couple of friends and we all really get into the political issues I think it's good ... you know what we think we should do as teachers and what we wouldn't do and it's really good. Instead of just going Oh, do this... and forget about it (Judith, Interview 1, 18/8/99).*

She was clearly unimpressed with a service delivery approach which lacked accountability and any peer performance review.

The situated experiences stimulated participants to analyse strengths and weaknesses in existing services and to explore other possibilities for improving staff practices. Participants showed evidence of applying their own academic learning to propose strategies for enhancing services. Their suggestions for strengthening services highlighted their growing knowledge of specialised programming approaches designed to increase staff's expertise and make better use of available resources. By the end of the experience, the participants involved in the independent living centre and recreation programs, were more critical of the staff's roles. For example, Michael indicated that an element of complacency was evident at the recreation program, commenting:

> *…these 2 ladies are lovely and I think they may be do their best at times but sometimes they're a bit complacent but I really feel that you should be qualified to take children ... cause it's a big responsibility and I think that just something that's taken a bit too lightly (Michael, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

As a strategy for overcoming the complacency, Michael suggested that the staff needed professional development:

> *Perhaps she could use some self-managing skills, like monitoring, recording and reinforcing performance... Another model that Ashman & Elkins (1998) point out is the Process-Based Instruction (PBI) model. Here teachers and students use a plan to develop metacognitive skills. It contains four steps: cuing, acting, monitoring and verifying. Monitoring being the most important part in the process. Perhaps one of the most simple self-management plan is the Stop-Think-Do, which she could use easily (Michael's Journal, 13/10/99).*

He was keen to apply some of the specialised teaching strategies which he thought would improve the staff's interactions with the children.

In reflecting on service improvement issues, Raymond was annoyed that the staff at the recreation program did not give corrective feedback to individuals in situations in which their behaviour was clearly unacceptable. He considered possible motives for one child's inappropriate behaviour:

> *... sometimes he gets a bit aggravated and things like that and starts swearing a lot and ... the people there don't pull him up on it. Maybe they think if they let it go it might cure itself and not make a big deal of it. Whether they think they want the recreation program to be a fun place for him to go where he can go and relax and be with other people um ... be with the friends and it's a close family. Maybe they let it go for that reason. But I would have thought that if that was his major problem and I'd be trying to work on it a bit (Raymond, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Clearly, Raymond was aware of the disadvantages of not addressing the inappropriate behaviour.

In a similar way, Kim was concerned that inappropriate language at the independent living centre went unchecked and was excused because the person had a disability. She reported

> *Playing Basketball with a boy R was a new experience for me as he suffered from Tourette's syndrome. This had a big effect on the game as every time I'd yell out 'pass the ball to me' he'd reply with 'f-k you' or 'p-ss off'. Every time he said these types of remarks my natural reaction was to be horrified and offended. I found this experience to be distressing, as I felt very uncomfortable about being spoken to in this manner... (Kim's Journal, 10/9/99).*

The incident stimulated Kim to think about the consequences in a school context where swearing would usually not be tolerated:

> *... If a teacher interacts with the child differently than they would to other class members this could leave the child open to discrimination, prejudice, inequity, injustice, segregation and bias from others in the class on the grounds that they are treated differently (Kim's Journal, 10/9/99).*

Thus, Kim considered the nature of the child's condition influenced the staff's misguided tolerance of inappropriate behaviour. She reflected more broadly on the need for teachers to ensure consistency in their interactions with children rather than be perceived as showing discrimination.

Participants were critical that individuals with disabilities were not reaching their full potential. They attributed the problem to unclear role perceptions and the staff's inadequate training. Participants believed that the staff working in community programs had narrowly adopted non-educative, caring roles, instead of directing their efforts in developing the person's independent functioning and social relationships. In collaborating with her peer, Kerry reported that a similar staff management situation existed at both the independent living centre and the recreation program which raised the important issue of ensuring effective systematic processes for service monitoring and accountability. According to Kerry, the management problem reflected more broadly on widespread communication breakdowns. She illustrated this as:

> *They seem to have too many chiefs up there. Like all with their own opinion what should be happening and eventually nothing happens because they're all arguing. I just think ... but then I was talking to ... um ... this other woman I know. She works for the other one, not I.L.C., and I was just mentioning to her like the shambles that's happening out there and she said it's same at the recreation program ... (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Her solution was to conduct a thorough review of staff practices. As an outcome, Kerry envisaged building in greater accountability, claiming:

> *... So I think the whole thing needs a big ... that the whole industry needs a big shake up and I think there needs to be more accountability and I think there should be staff training and just ... I can't see the clients are having*

any benefit from going there. Because they're meant to be there to learn
skills, aren't they? (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).

Her view was that the clients' real needs were not addressed because the staff held

conflicting ideas with no agreed main purpose. Reflecting critically on how to overcome the

continuing cycle of non-productive environment for clients led Kerry to realise that the

problem was entrenched, with no checks at a systems level.

Participants' critically reflective comments indicated that the existing staff practices were

less than ideal. Their views illustrated that the political climate was not openly supportive of

the disability sector. The participants also reported that the staff's motivation was low and

there was very little real work commitment because of ineffective management, lack of staff

training and inadequate accountability. The next section reports on the participants' ideal

and real-life perspectives of their role as inclusive educators, depicted in their reflections on

their situated learning.

2. IDEAL VIEWS AND REAL-LIFE CONSIDERATIONS

As a consequence of the community experiences, participants increased their awareness of

controversial practices affecting people with disabilities. They became passionate in their

convictions about advancing ethical practices and setting higher standards of social

behaviour in relation to people with disabilities. Participants' views spread across systemic

levels of human interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1997). At a microsystem level, their values

related to viewing individuals with disabilities as people first, within a close family unit.

Next, at a mesosystems level, they advocated for more respectful parent and professional relationships. Then, moving outwards to exosystems, their desires for age-appropriate quality services expanded to include greater tolerance from social groups and community organisations. Finally, at a wider macrosystems level, participants promoted wider societal attitudes of acceptance of individuals with disabilities, genuine understanding of diversity and increased equity in political sectors.

As already indicated, participants raised ethical issues which questioned the practice of assigning socially-constructed disability labels. The processes of categorising individuals were viewed as harmful in perpetuating the myths about the character traits of people with disabilities. Participants were critical of society's ignorance in allowing individuals with disabilities to be to marginalised. They were especially critical of a system which devalued the need for staff to have formal training in catering for people with disabilities, placing them in services akin to child minding.

Participants wanted more staff accountability and processes to ensure continual service improvement. Michael became convinced that all staff needed to treat individuals respectfully. He was critical of their inappropriate gossip and having fun at the individual's expense:

> *just say something happens with a child... and the child does something wrong. Um ... they might just laugh it off behind their back or you know say ... Oh, you know, whatever. You know just have sort of a little sort of gossip behind their backs and I totally, totally disagree with this... (Michael, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Thus, Michael was upholding the individual's right to not be ridiculed by others. Rene made the further point that she believed it was especially unethical for adults to mistreat young children:

> *But saying directly to somebody you know that you're never going to be any good. I mean you hear people talking about it behind their backs... but to say it to little kids (Rene, Interview 2, 13/10/99).*

She was conscious of the imbalance of power between an adult and a child. She believed that adults should present as positive role models for children.

Participants were unwilling to accept the inappropriate actions of others and their outraged comments showed their reflective responses in relation to cases of observed unethical practices. Shelley discussed current practices at the independent living centre as ethically wrong. Her comments included:

> *I wonder about the ethical issues that surround this place. Is it right what they are doing to these clients? My answer to that is 'no'. These people are not getting quality of life. They are not allowed to make choices and they receive no educational stimulus. It is just a day care centre (Shelly's Journal, 26/10/99)*

She upheld the basic rights of the adults with disabilities to have choices in their lives.

On analysis of their learning, participants reflected about promoting tolerance and the rights of people with disabilities to be included in their communities. Shelley indicated that the current situation of low quality programs at the independent living centre was appalling and that such inappropriate practices should be exposed. She advocated for more humane understanding of people with disabilities and increased tolerance from society. She wrote:

Society needs to be aware that these people do have a personality and feelings. If society were made aware that these people are usually just stuck in a body that does not work as well as ours, we would live in a more tolerant society. Tolerance is one thing that needs to be learnt. There are not a lot of tolerant people in today's society and because of these people, people with disabilities are ostracised in our society ... (Shelley's Journal, 23/8/99).

Shelley wanted people with disabilities included within society. She despaired that there were few alternatives available for them once their compulsory schooling finished. She questioned their future beyond school, commenting:

... I am beginning to wonder if this is all that there is for people like this when they leave school. What other options are there for them? ...They do not really learn any independent living tasks. They do nothing! (Shelley's Journal, 23/8/99).

Based on her experiences at the independent living centre, Shelley was critical that on leaving the education system, the service had failed to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. She had found that the current situation did not provide functional life skills for adults with disabilities. She commented from a personal perspective:

... If one of my children were born with an intellectual disability, I would not want them sent there. I would want my child to have a stimulating and enriched life. These people get nothing like that at all from what I have seen. It is also up to society to realise this. These people are members of our society and to have them treated this way is appalling. These people need to have a rich and diverse life, just as everyone else in the community. If society were made aware of this, then these people would be so much better off than they are right now (Shelley's Journal, 23/8/99).

Thus, she held the ideal that people with disabilities deserve to enjoy a rich and diverse life. In the short period of the situated community experience, Shelley, like many of her peers, had transformed her thinking from not knowing about what services were provided for people with disabilities in the community, to placing herself in a prominent role as an advocate for their human rights.

Participants were actively constructing their personal professional perspectives about changing people's negative perceptions of people with disabilities. Kerry located the disability sector in the broader political context. She realised that lobbying for people with disabilities would be unpopular with the media and politicians, when she said:

> *... that little sector of society that doesn't really win votes for politicians. So, the media doesn't care ... Like the politicians don't ring the media and say get on to this you know as they do with Aids research or whatever ... because that's votes for them (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Kerry turned her attention to what she herself could achieve to change people's perceptions, commenting:

> *... I probably do things with my class like... Try and get some recognition that these people can achieve (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

She indicated that in her role as an inclusive educator, she would be influential in creating wider awareness of individuals with disabilities and their capabilities.

Reflecting on their community experiences, the participants constructed enhanced understandings about the reality of an inclusive educator's role. The community experiences influenced student teachers' prior beliefs and prompted them to raise complex concerns associated with the nature of their interactions with a person with a disability. As an outcome of their situated learning, participants were able to clarify their perspectives and personal values. Additionally, they were mindful of broader influences impacting on people with disabilities outside of their immediate community contexts. As an outcome of interacting and communicating with individuals with disabilities, participants became more sensitive in their use of language and raised their expectations of people's potential. Significantly, as the

student teachers came to know people with disabilities on an individual basis, their commitment to their role increased. They showed more in-depth understanding of the types of learning experiences which would facilitate the independent functioning of individuals with disabilities, enhancing their quality of life. Importantly, participants, while engaging in reflective and reflexive processes, constructed their own personal, professional perspectives about critical aspects of their future roles as inclusive educators.

Data provided evidence that participants enriched their personal and professional understandings as an outcome of their learning. Their views were based on ethical considerations affecting individuals with disabilities, their families and friends. They constructed understandings promoting, ideal parent-professional relationships; a commitment to ensuring service quality; and more responsive systems that supported individuals with disabilities across their lifespan. In the process of constructing their perspectives, participants transformed their understandings about themselves and their future roles as inclusive educators.

3. CHANGED UNDERSTANDINGS OF AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATOR'S ROLE

Biographical changes underpinned participants' deeper understandings of people with disabilities and an inclusive educator's role. They cited personal and professional changes as an outcome of situated learning in the community contexts. In particular, they reflected on the need for appropriate teaching and learning strategies to accommodate children with

disabilities in inclusive classrooms. For example, Judith discovered that the experience

provided implications about the knowledge she required in becoming an effective primary

teacher. Judith reflected on how the experience stimulated her desire to learn more about the

different kinds of disabilities and how to include people with disabilities within an inclusive

classroom setting, when she wrote:

> *Today has been a very big learning experience for me, in many ways.*
> *Firstly, I have come to the realisation that if I am to become a primary*
> *school teacher, I want to find out as much as possible about the different*
> *types of disabilities that exist today, and the best ways to care for people*
> *who have a disability or disabilities. As a result, I hope to become a*
> *confident and effective primary school teacher, who is capable of teaching*
> *and caring for any child...(Judith's Journal, 20/8/99).*

Judith indicated that she considered increasing her knowledge about people with disabilities

would enrich her as a teacher. In addition, she found that the community experience

confirmed her future inclusive teaching career choice, reflecting:

> *... Secondly, I have always enjoyed working with people and caring for*
> *people, and have been thinking for a while that this is what I want to do as*
> *a career, but being involved in this volunteer work, has confirmed in my*
> *mind, that I do, and will, work in this field. Consequently, I see primary*
> *school teaching as the best of both worlds, you get to care for, associate*
> *with, and teach a diverse range of children (Judith's Journal, 20/8/99).*

Thus, Judith appreciated the diversity her inclusive career choice offered.

In contrast to Judith, Kim continued to question her suitability to become an inclusive

educator. She reflected on her previous practicum experiences in schools and adopted a

realistic perspective in recalling discussions with teaching colleagues, claiming:

> *... 'Is inclusion for everyone'? I believe it is but can only be done if the*
> *child is not judged on what they cannot do but rather on what they can do.*
> *But 'can this be accomplished in every school?' I suppose if attitudes,*
> *values and beliefs change then this is possible, but realistically I cannot see*

every teacher in every school welcoming these ideas. This became apparent on prac as some teachers informed me that these types of demands placed on them to openly embrace and accept all students into their classrooms were unrealistic and impossible ... (Kim's Journal, 10/9/99).

Kim had reservations about teaching professionals' willingness to adopt inclusive practices. She acknowledged that her own personal attributes were not appropriate in the context of working with a person with high support needs. She reflected:

... This week we worked with the same ladies finishing the same activity. I believe D may have picked up on my aggravation and frustration of not being able to complete a simple task quickly as she seemed distant and not her usual happy self. I felt disappointed in myself as I had not been successful in covering up my feelings ... (Kim's Journal, 22/10/99).

Clearly, Kim found it difficult to relate to the adults with disabilities and anticipated that she would have a similar problem with children. She discovered that:

...Working in this environment has made me question my suitability to work with children with disabilities. I've discovered that I unconsciously have opinions on certain disabilities. I'm not impressed with the way in which I socialised with the clients. I believe they should never have become aware of my feelings towards them or their abilities (Kim's Journal, 22/10/99).

Kim was self-critical of her behaviour towards the person with a disability. She was disappointed in what she learnt about herself and her unconscious biases towards certain types of disabilities. Although Kim's comments implied that she initially felt uncomfortable in her role during the community experience, she found that the practical context increased her learning. She reflected:

I believe my university course helped to make me aware of different types of disabilities and their implications, but I believe I learnt more from actually becoming involved in a Special Education setting ... (Kim's Journal, 22/10/99).

In the end, she was circumspect about her own shortcomings and wrote:

... I cannot say how effective I will be as an inclusive educator as I will not know how I will react to each individual and their needs until faced with

each situation. Hopefully I will be able to include every child in my classroom to the best of my abilities ... (Kim's Journal, 22/10/99).

Although Kim was willing to accept inclusion, she considered the process would vary from child to child.

As Kim had foreshadowed, Rene found as a result of her practical experiences that not all teachers accepted inclusive practices. Rene discovered that being exposed to bad practice made her realise that she would prefer to leave the teaching profession rather than become negative in her interactions with children. She reflected on a specific incident, stating:

I was talking to him today and he's going 'Yeah, my teacher tells me I'm dumb, I'm never gonna get anywhere. I'm never gonna be able to do this.' And like I was talking to her and she said 'he's got the little man syndrome or something' and I think she must be trying to bring him down but she's doing it totally wrongly. Like ... ah ... the boy has no confidence whatsoever... (Rene, Interview 2, 13/10/99).

Understandably, Rene was convinced that the approach the teacher was using was unprofessional and damaged the child's self-concept. She considered the child's vulnerable age when commenting:

... But saying directly to somebody you know that you're never going to be any good. I mean you hear people talking about it behind they backs or something, but to say it to little kids ... (Rene, Interview 2, 13/10/99).

Such damaging comments shocked Rene who considered the staff member's behaviour was most inappropriate. In contrast, she set very different expectations for herself, reaffirming her professionalism as she said:

I hope that I'm not going to be like that. Like to say to a kid ... I just think, I mean if I'm at ... if I get to the stage where I'm saying things like that to a kid, I'll just leave (Rene, Interview 2, 13/10/99).

Instead Rene suggested that the teacher should leave the profession rather than continue to affect children's lives in negative ways.

As a result of dealing with acting-out and non-compliant behaviour in the home respite, Anna expressed the view that inclusion would be difficult in situations where children had serious behaviour problems. Based on her community experience, she considered that peers were less likely to be accepting of these children, claiming:

> *... like he's really disruptive and got behavioural problems and she wants him to go to a normal school and I'm thinking ... the kids are not going to accept him if he's a lot different like that and has got behavioural problems. They're going to steer clear of him especially if they're bad behavioural problems ...(Anna, Interview 2, 1/9/99).*

Her views were formed in consultation with the respite parent as she recalled an incident when the child was rejected, reporting:

> *... like she said they had a neighbour that moved in next door... a new neighbour, and their child plays with her elder son who's six and they play games but they don't like G playing with them because he's sort of different, and he doesn't like the different ...(Anna, Interview 2, 1/9/99).*

Accepting differences in people was a long-term process which Anna thought did not happen spontaneously. To illustrate her point, she compared the child's established relationships with known people, who readily accepted him, commenting:

> *... but the neighbours on the other side have known G all his life and they just know that's G, and they just play with him just like a normal other child. But it's just different for someone who hasn't grown up with him, how they react...(Anna, Interview 2, 1/9/99).*

Thus, Anna indicated that knowing how to relate to a person with a disability required spending time with the individual.

Raymond felt that the situated experience had answered his questions about children with disabilities, however he acknowledged that he still had further learning to accomplish, commenting:

> *I may disagree with or might take a different approach to... Having said that, it has made me much more at ease with being around handicapped children and has totally changed my view, thoughts and actions regarding the way I deal with these kids. The last four weekly visits have answered so many of my questions however what I consider important is that it has raised so many more ... (Raymond's Journal, 20/8/99).*

These comments indicate that Raymond was open to ongoing learning. At the same time, his perspectives suggested he had formed strong views that children with disabilities should be accepted by society. He reflected:

> *... Although I still have queries about teaching these children, I certainly have no reservations about their right to be accepted, whether it be in an inclusive setting within a school or in society in general. I feel privileged to have spent time with these great children, and on each occasion I have left there feeling happy and content. I believe that every trainee teacher should have access and be encouraged to participate in such programs (Raymond's Journal, 20/8/99).*

Despite his uncertainty about his inclusive teaching capabilities, Raymond was impressed with his learning and sought to expand the experience to all student teachers.

Reflecting on her community experiences, Narelle also reported that the community experience had increased her professional understanding. She suggested that she was better prepared for what to expect in different teaching roles, commenting:

> *I think it's made me grow ... I know I'm not a professional but towards being a professional. Like it's, you know I've had this experience now so I'm more prepared if I'm put into a special ed setting with what I could come across what I could expect so ... you know everything helps. I mean it makes you grow ... even if you know I wasn't going into Special Education (Narelle, Interview 2, 20/10/99).*

In gaining a wider perspective, Narelle indicated that the experience had added to her ongoing professionalism as a teacher. Similarly, Tina found the experience rewarding both professionally and personally. She said:

> *Um ... and I guess that was ultimately my goal was to really get the experience and I have gained... gained that. Just to work with children with disabilities on a hand-on on a kind of one-to-one basis. Um ... I've learnt a lot about myself, about patience and tolerance and ... um ... just generally ... (Tina, Interview 2, 7/9/99).*

Tina's comments indicated that she had discovered personal qualities that she admired in herself.

As a result of reflecting on their situated learning experiences, participants had gained more understandings about hidden aspects of themselves. For example, Ruby commented on how her own emotional struggles had given her more sensitivity. She said:

> *I'm talking about learning a sensitivity to life, to learning different lifestyles to what I knew... I think that maybe I can relate to D quite well on that level because she is very tired and she does have pain ...maybe she'll ... people walk around in diffused ... in a state of diffused nervous exhaustion ...But struggling out of something like that is possibly what a disabled person may face every day for all I know too (Ruby, Interview 1, 28/4/00).*

As a mature-aged student, Ruby had dealt with personal conflict which enhanced her empathy for the struggles faced by families of people with disabilities.

In a different way to the other participants, Michael commented that he felt his thinking and ability to problem solve had developed through writing about his experiences in his reflective journal. He reported:

> *Because it does give you a chance to pool all your thoughts and get them down and think of ways ... like I've explain... ways I can fix that, I'd fix them or how I'd handle the situation differently. Because otherwise if I didn't have the reflective journal, I wouldn't be thinking along that line, I'm sure (Michael, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

Thus, Michael benefited from reflecting on alternate ways to handle situations through an integrated process.

As a result of her less than ideal experiences at the independent living centre, Kerry questioned her insights. In her opinion, she gained a deeper appreciation of the benefit of setting high expectations because of what she had observed. She was convinced that a planning strategy offered genuine encouragement for an individual to reach his or her potential. In relation to this she said:

> *What have I learnt? Um ... Just that you should set high standards for clients, children or anything. If the staff down here, the co-ordinator had high standards of what these people are going to learn, I'm sure maybe they'd come up. Maybe not meet them but they would improve, attain something. I just don't think ... just say well there's no hope for them (Kerry, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

As an outcome of her learning, Kerry was convinced that she would not give up on an individual's potential to improve.

Learning outcomes highlighted the importance of inclusive teaching strategies including asking questions, developing basic living skills, collaborating with others and creating a conducive learning environment. Shelley stressed the need to take each person's situation as an individual case, giving priority for developing social skills. She wrote:

> *I believe that the inclusive educator needs to be able to cater for each person's individual needs. These people are not catered for correctly at this*

setting. These people may not be able to be totally included in society but they can do a lot more than they currently are... (Shelley's Journal, 26/10/99).

Thus, Shelley saw the need to encourage individuals to reach their full potential. She targeted the importance of providing individualised programs. Additionally, she questioned the low expectations held by the staff, commenting:

... I really worry about what happens to people after they leave school. What options are out there for them? These people are capable of a lot more than the staff here realise, I believe. Post School Options should be much broader and keep educating these people... (Shelley's Journal, 26/10/99).

Overall, she was convinced of the need to maintain education across the life span for individuals with disabilities. However she placed boundaries around the type of inclusion she considered was achievable, writing:

... I now feel that not all people can be fully integrated. I believe that each person is an individual and therefore each case is unique. Each case needs to be assessed to find the limit that these people can be included. I totally believe in part inclusion, especially to develop social skills. Social skills is what these people need most of all so they can fit into society further (Shelley's Journal, 26/10/99).

Additionally, Shelley was convinced that social skills were essential for people with disabilities if they were to be accepted into society.

Chris felt her experience was introductory to the whole field of Special Education. Commenting on learning about both the highs and lows prepared her for the challenges she might face, she said:

I realise the enormity of Special Ed now ... um ... I'm glad I've chosen it. Um ... I don't know how I would go working in a setting ... I could imagine that you would have ...really great highs, but I would imagine that you could have some good lows as well ... um ... I think sometimes you know ... would you stop and think What am I doing. Am I beating my head against

> *the wall? Um ... I think that the challenge ... the challenge would be great (Chris, Interview 2, 19/10/99).*

The challenge of thinking and problem solving captivated Chris.

Like Chris, Kim also showed a willingness to accept the unknown that she might face in the inclusive educator's role. She wrote:

> *I believe my university course helped to make me aware of different types of disabilities and their implications, but I believe I learnt more from actually becoming involved in a Special Education setting...These subjects have provided me with new insights into the diversity of the human race. I cannot say how effective I will be as an inclusive educator as I will not know how I will react to each individual and their needs until faced with each situation. Hopefully I will be able to include every child in my classroom to the best of my abilities (Kim's Journal, 22/10/99).*

From these comments, it is evident that Kim was keen to make a positive difference in children's lives.

Overall, participants felt that the community experiences had empowered them for their future role as inclusive educators, giving them a greater sense of self-efficacy. Their university theoretical learning had become more meaningful when combined with the practical situations in the community contexts. Participants felt they had gained an appreciation of the complexity of issues affecting people with disabilities. Their changed understandings generated principles for exemplary inclusive practices which are discussed in the final chapter. Thus, the student teachers' deeper understandings about their role as inclusive educators have strong implications for teacher educators concerned with socio-cultural practices.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the situated community experiences had prompted participants to engage in examining issues and clarifying their beliefs. In general, reflecting on the many individual, societal and political issues broadened participants' perspectives and led to their enhanced understandings about people with disabilities. Issues covered contextual aspects depicting concrete and artificial barriers which participants claimed prevented access by individuals with disabilities to life experiences and stimulating environments enjoyed by the rest of society. The traditionally accepted practices of segregating individuals with disabilities in separate accommodation, transport and services, were questioned. Participants worried that when individuals were homogeneously grouped around notions of disability, there was a loss of their peers' socialising influences. Other considerations dealt with the impact of disability on the individual's family and the family's dependency on available respite and appropriate community support. Staff practices were entrenched in segregated modes and lacked coordinated emphasis on developing the individual's potential. At a macro level, the student teachers considered that the wider socio-cultural political system was inadequate in delivering equitable services to individuals with disabilities.

Data illustrate the ecological influences which shaped participants' enhanced understanding of their future role as inclusive educators. Their reflections covered political, ethical and societal attitudes. By the end of the community experiences, the student teachers were convinced of the need for those delivering services to individuals with disabilities, to be more collaborative in their shared efforts with families, professional staff, people in the community

and society at large. Participants' reflections and individual perspectives suggested they believed they had benefitted from the community experiences, deepening their understandings of ideal versus real-life considerations and changing their orientations towards people with disabilities and thereby, increasing their preparedness to be inclusive educators. The following chapter examines the wider social context of inclusive education by presenting additional data gathered from Interview 3 with Group 2 participants.

CHAPTER 8: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-IDENTITY AS AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATOR

This chapter focuses on further development of self-identity as an inclusive educator. The six student teachers in Group 2 who had elected to study a Special Education Major, participated in a third interview in the university semester following the situated community experiences. At the time of the interview, these participants were in their final fourth year of the course, completing a Major in teaching children with disabilities and studying a Special Education Programming subject. Data gathered from these participants during this follow-up interview depicted their further understandings of their future roles in relation to people with disabilities. Section 1 presents the participants' perceptions of aspects of specialised teaching and learning which the student teachers considered were fundamental to effective inclusive practices. The participants also identified the assumptions they held prior to the community experiences. Section 2 reports on the student teachers' revised expectations of an inclusive educator's role as a result of subsequent reflection interacting with the influence of other experiences beyond the community experiences. Conclusions are advanced in Section 3 which have direct implications for inclusive education practices.

1. SPECIALISED TEACHING AND LEARNING ASPECTS OF AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATOR'S ROLE

The participating student teachers in the final fourth year of the teacher education course, identified three main aspects that contributed to their deeper understanding of appropriate teaching and learning strategies for children with disabilities. First, as with all students they

suggested that having good background information about the person with a disability as well as getting to know the individual as a unique person, was necessary to be able to plan and program effectively for his or her specific needs, interests and behaviours across a range of contexts. Second, participants showed their readiness to design individualised educational programs, based on comprehensive assessment of the person's current level of functioning across areas of cognitive, social-emotional, physical and independent living skills as well as other relevant curricular domains. Third, the participants located an inclusive educator's role within a collaborative team environment involving families and professionals from other disciplines readily sharing knowledge and taking part in ongoing communication to support individuals with disabilities. Each of these aspects is examined in more detail below.

GAINING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE ON INDIVIDUALS

Participants' comments indicated that they felt the best way to deal with difficult confronting situations involving unfamiliar persons, was to gain detailed background information on individuals and learn ways to deal with their behaviours. In particular, Anna and Tina, found having comprehensive background knowledge about the overall functioning of the person with a disability was helpful. They regarded such information as valuable in preparing them for knowing how to interact with the individual in a range of contexts, both within and outside of classroom settings. For example, learning to confront and manage an individual's inappropriate behaviours.

Reflecting on the familiarisation process, Anna and Tina explained how they gained specific background knowledge on the individual's needs. In recalling her respite situation, Anna

described how initially she was unsure of why the child flitted from one activity to another without any sustained attention. An example of Anna's dialogic reflection provided insights into the way she grappled with understanding the child's immature behaviour and his short attention span. She questioned her observations, commenting:

> *Oh, why is he … why is … used to sort of think why is he jumping all the time? Why can't he stay focused? And I didn't understand in a sense why he would do that. Like I was a bit confused at the start as to why he had to play with toys with blocks and whatever and just couldn't stay with…(Anna, Interview 3, 7/3/00).*

Anna explained that initially dealing with the child's impulsive behaviour was challenging. However, she took charge of the situation and by the end of the experience Anna indicated that she was confident in setting priorities. Thus she said:

> *… you're not just going to sit down and let him just bang his head against the table. I mean you just have to take the initiative and think it's dangerous and what's best for him type of thing…(Anna, Interview 3, 7/3/00).*

Anna had increased her ability to deal with unfamiliar situations. She tackled the problem by focussing on the child's safety needs as a way of establishing teaching priorities.

As a starting point, Anna discovered that careful observation was an effective strategy for gathering background information. She then reflected on how teachers engaged in analysing children's skills using observation during unstructured play. She recalled a recent practicum experience as an example of the observational process in which staff identified the children's functioning. Anna reported:

> *But a lot of times too in the special setting they [children] do get a lot of time to play and they [staff] sort of just observe to see what … how they play, what they're doing with blocks and sort of thing and if they're really interacting with things. I know it's all mainly observation I think, a lot of it.*

And you're analysing the stuff yourself cause a lot of the time the children can't even draw … can just pick up things maybe…(Anna, Interview 3, 7/3/00).

Anna was mindful that effective teachers observed the children's interactions and interests to determine their current level of skills and as a basis for program development.

In hindsight, Anna reflected on teachers who had made an impact on her when she was a pupil, indicating that she considered it essential for teachers to give meaningful, clear explanations. She thought that being able to explain information was a critical teaching skill for fostering a learner's genuine understanding. She reported:

… I sort of look at teachers that have influenced me the most and stuff and explained things the way I understand it which I think is most important in Special Ed because you need to explain things so they understand…(Anna, Interview 3, 7/3/00).

Anna appreciated the need to pitch explanations to the level of the child's cognitive understanding.

In light of her own schooling experiences, Anna commented that in addition to giving clear explanations, she was convinced it was even more important to build an effective relationship with the person. She described her concept of teaching as a *personal* endeavour and implied that it was ultimately up to each teacher to find the best way to communicate with the individual learner. Anna elaborated:

…I've had teachers that haven't explained things to me as well as others and it's not necessarily the way you're explaining it but it's the way you relate to someone else. Like someone else might be a very good teacher and some of the children might succeed and some won't. It's … I think it's a personal thing and I don't know if you're … I don't know you just sort of

have to try different methods I guess to reach all the children... (Anna, Interview 3, 7/3/00).

Anna's comments suggested that flexibility compelled her to try different approaches to connect with all children. She then reflected on her future career, specifically choosing to teach children with disabilities. Despite knowing that her career choice was difficult, Anna said:

But I would like to honestly just teach in a special school with those children. Like I don't know ... it's harder, I think like a lot of people say I admire you for doing that. And I don't see it as being that hard. I find it very enjoyable... (Anna, Interview 3, 7/3/00).

Thus, Anna was eager to teach children with disabilities. She described it as requiring detailed planning. Anna anticipated adopting a mastery learning approach, which would involve the children in taking small steps in a carefully paced learning process when she said:

...I know ... it takes a lot of planning because you've got to plan ... to plan one thing at time. It's very slow but if you can sort of achieve one step at a time... (Anna, Interview 3, 7/3/00).

Anna appeared confident that she had the necessary skills to take on the programming aspects of the educator's role.

Similarly, Tina found the community respite experience helped her to identify the child's educational needs. Thus, Tina transferred what she learnt about the child in the home context to the school setting. She considered the child's individual needs:

... having had that experience with him at home has been ... made it easier for me to work with him in the classroom knowing what his specific needs are...(Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

Like Anna, Tina also looked closely at the child's individual's functioning in behavioural areas. Tina then used this background as a way of pinpointing the child's developmental level. She reflected:

I didn't focus on the whole situation I just tried to think about what … what caused him to snap and just things around it um … sort of pick his behaviour more closely…(Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

Tina was keen to understand the social and personal ecology of the child's behaviour. She concentrated on what had prompted the child's response as a way of preventing a recurrence. She went on to elaborate how relating successfully to one child had influenced her more positive attitude towards children with disabilities in general. Tina reported that she had changed her outlook through personal interactions, claiming:

… I've even gained a greater respect for the children with special needs just to get to know them more as an individual not as a whole class …(Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

As an outcome of her past experiences, Tina valued knowing the person as an individual.

Thus, the reflective comments suggest that learning about individuals' appropriate and inappropriate responses assisted these two participants in managing their own reactions and increased their awareness of the need for individualised programs. Other participating student teachers contributed their perspectives on aspects of teaching and learning by elaborating on the processes they employed for designing individualised programs for children with disabilities.

DESIGNING INDIVIDUALISED PROGRAMS

Participants' reflective comments on designing individualised programs draw on their course and practicum experiences subsequent to the situated community experiences. As reported, both Anna and Tina purposely gathered background information using observational

strategies to assist them in making programming decisions. Thus, Tina further explained the process of individualising children's learning by making distinctions between a regular preschool classroom and a Special Education classroom context. In considering the teaching adaptations required for children with disabilities, she argued:

> *Cause I notice … even though you do focus on individual planning and things in general preschool, it's just … it is just so more specific and individual for the children in the Special Ed classrooms. Cause you're focusing more on their actual needs …(Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Tina advocated an individualised programming approach. She then clarified her perspective by providing an example of the more detailed level of programming required for a child with a disability. She explained:

> *Um … what's an example I can use? Say if you're looking at fine motor in a preschool you'd probably look at everyone on a general fine motor level. Whereas with the students at a special school, they might have one particular area of fine motor you need to work on...(Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Tina's reflective comment demonstrated her awareness of reducing and narrowing the curriculum content for a child with low functioning skills. She suggested that by targetting one main area of a curriculum domain, she was better able to decide on which specific skills to teach.

Three other participants, namely, Chris, Kerry and Narelle, were all keen to improve the teaching and learning opportunities for children with disabilities. From the outset, Chris, like Anna and Tina, reflected on relating effectively to the children, as a basis for setting individualised teaching objectives. She portrayed her ideal situation as an inclusive educator, as:

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...when I get my own class that I'd love to be able to spend the first 2 or 3 weeks getting to know all the kids and writing just a comment down and being able to at a parent/teacher interview and say 'Okay here's where your child is today. By the end of ... half of the year, this is where I want them' and not pit them so much against the basic skills but against what they can do...(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

Chris' scenario showed that she was primarily concerned with monitoring each child's individual progress rather than setting broad curricular goals. Hence, Chris reflected on her changed awareness of individualised programs, mentioning:

I'm a lot more aware of the individual differences you know like ... um ... I've always known ... well for want of better words, that there's ... the, the normal run of people and then there's the special ed ... um ...guys and I've never thought that I've ever been swayed to one or the other. In fact, I probably sway more to people ... um ... with the diverse need ... um...(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

Similarly to Anna and Tina, Chris expressed her preference for working with individuals with disabilities. At the same time, even within that distinct section of the population, Chris recognised that diversity was a major issue. Reflecting on her learning, she said:

... but what I learnt is that they're all so individual and just the importance of individual education programs ...(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

In designing programs, Chris emphasised an individualised educational approach. As well, she discussed how being in the actual setting stimulated her learning, claiming:

There's, there's a practical side of things being out there ... being in ... um ... in the settings, being involved in the settings ... like doing the IEPs (Individual Educational Plans), ...actually being in the field and going round seeing these kids and having access to ... um ... like having access to information. Like, it makes it very hard when you do it out of the textbook, I find...(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

Chris indicated that she learnt more when applying theory in a real context, thus making sense of theory through practice. At the same time, she appreciated the need for formal knowledge and said:

... I think you need the theory as your base and it makes a lot of sense but ... um ... once you get out there on the practical side that just seems to fall into place. That amazes me. I've never known how that happens...(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

Understandably, Chris also discovered that theoretical information became more meaningful once she used her new knowledge in interactions with others. She reflected:

...You just read all these theories and think I don't understand this. And once you start actually putting pen to paper it all just falls in there. And you go 'Oh, so that's what it's supposed to do.'...(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

Thus, her learning was further reinforced when designing actual individualised programs.

As a key aspect of the whole class approach, Kerry reflected on the necessity of having raised expectations for individual children's progress. She indicated that without such an approach, unfortunately apathy tended to exist in classrooms, claiming:

...probably because what's the point of setting an IEP for a child if you can't have any strong sense of expectation ... like mid-way or at the end of that program. Well then, why bother having one. It's just a token thing otherwise ... (Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

Thus, Kerry questioned the justification of merely accepting a defeatist attitude. She used the example of a child she was currently working with on an individual program to illustrate her point, commenting:

... like there's a young boy in Year 4 and ... he still doesn't know his sounds of the alphabet. He can't recognise that because he doesn't know the names of the alphabet in Year 4. Um ... I've spoken to the teachers and the principal and everyone else and their justification is well he only rated an IQ of 75 on the scale but (I think) he's (the child's) capable ... (Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

In contrast to her professional colleagues' outlook, Kerry genuinely wanted to make a difference in the child's learning and was not influenced by his low IQ score. Hence, she highlighted the child's capabilities when she worked with him individually, explaining:

> *… if I sit and read a maths question to him or explain what he has to do on the worksheet, then he's capable of doing it so really there's no excuse why he's not up to that level … (Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Kerry was convinced that the child could do more if he received additional instruction from the teacher. In her comments, she stressed the importance of designing individual programs and working towards set goals. Kerry attributed the child's reading failure to the lack of a structured program, reasoning:

> *And without having ... like he's never had any program written for him and I think unless teachers are committed … like they've got little things floating around in the classroom but because they're not actually committed to that child this is what's happened. So that's why I'm trying to bring him back to having a program that ... unless you set yourself goals to meet within the program well this is what will happen … (Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

She cautioned that without carefully structured programs, teachers tended to drift aimlessly in their responsibility for teaching children with learning difficulties.

Reflecting on her broader understanding, Kerry claimed that she considered it was the regular class teacher's responsibility to cater for all children's different levels of learning. In the past, Kerry had expected those children requiring help to be placed in remedial settings. Interestingly, Kerry commented on how she had changed her perspective to one which meant that she was now prepared to take responsibility for all children's learning. Recalling this change, she commented:

> *…when I first started I thought the curriculum was there and you just went through the motions of the teaching and then the kids that didn't keep up they just sort of automatically went out to remedial and that was their problem after that … (Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Rather than blame children for failing to learn, Kerry now accepted that it was the teacher's role to make the necessary instructional modifications to promote their learning. Thus, she considered that all children were capable of learning, admittedly at their own pace. She said:

> *…Whereas, now I look at it, it is my problem and … when I go into a class I want all the children to come up … obviously it'll be at different levels … (Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

She commented on how she would monitor each child's progress to ensure that all children demonstrated their competence before moving on to a new task. She considered an individualised educational plan as vital in structuring a child's ongoing learning. Although Kerry recognised that the rate of learning would vary for individuals, her aim was to ensure that all children keep improving. She stated:

> *…But I do want to see improvement every term in each child whether it be small or in leaps and bounds but I expect … but for me to justify my role there to have all children come up to a certain level and then moving on, setting more goals and coming up to that… (Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Kerry viewed her teaching role as dynamic, evolving in a continual cycle of problem-solving and goal-setting strategies.

As well, Kerry realised the value of setting goals which included a suitable timeframe. As a way of reviewing learning, Kerry allocated a period of one month as the time by which she expected to see some change in the child's achievement. She commented on how she would ensure an individualised perspective across all children in the class, remarking:

> *For each child … I think there has to be a holistic approach. Um … I'd set goals for them depending on their needs … this is any child from … like bottom of the rung to the top. And have a goal set for every single child and they have to come up … there has to be an improvement somewhere … like at short intervals, say a monthly scale. There has to be some sort of*

measurement where the child has achieved some sort of goal and then build
on those goals…(Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).

Convincingly, Kerry described a structured, monitoring approach which involved a final

stage of resetting goals which built upon goals already achieved.

Reflecting on the curricular implications for teacher educators, Kerry emphasised the need

for general training to concentrate on assessment processes, together with individualised

educational planning (IEP) approaches. In order to prepare all student teachers to teach

effectively across the Key Learning Areas (KLAs), Kerry advocated that assessment

practices were the key to individualised planning. She said:

> *… there should be more training in assessment and more focus in teacher*
> *training on the IEP so they … can look at individual needs for students.*
> *That's actually across the board for teaching any student … um … to*
> *incorporate their interests um … needs, look at the weaknesses, learn how*
> *to adapt curriculum um … any KLA specifically for a child… (Kerry,*
> *Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Kerry strongly advocated maintaining a positive teaching approach. She thought that

focussing on children's interests was a worthwhile strategy for motivating their learning.

Disturbingly, Kerry was concerned that her university peers who were not studying in a

Special Education major, were not adequately prepared to program effectively for children's

different abilities. She claimed:

> *And we just had a tute (tutorial) earlier this morning … um … and the*
> *students there, the mainstream students, were talking about they… they still*
> *don't know how to program properly and they don't feel confident that if*
> *they've got a group of children they'll be able to cater for their needs and*
> *what do they do with the weak ones. What do they do with the top end …*
> *(Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

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Kerry implied that the regular student teachers were confident only in teaching to the typical middle-functioning group of children in a class. In contrast, Kerry acknowledged that her teacher education had given her the necessary skills to know how to construct individual programs for atypical kinds of children. She said:

> *…Whereas with Special Ed we can sort of think … like because we've had the training in IEP writing and actually sat down and done one. Like last time I did a severe child this time it was more literacy. And with those skills, bring those to the classroom, I think we're more well rounded … (Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Kerry was confident that she would cope in meeting a wide range of children's educational needs.

Finally, Kerry, along with other participants, expected that establishing the inclusive educator's role would be difficult. She admitted that extra work was involved in adequately catering for individual differences. She described the programming process as:

> *… a lot of work to set up. But I think once it's set up and in place, it's just monitoring and … it'd be hard work…(Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Clearly, Kerry accepted the need for extra planning as a basis for monitoring the learning processes of individual students.

The emphasis on having knowledge and skills in assessment practices as critical aspects of designing individualised programs was shared by Narelle. She described assessing children's current levels of functioning, as a crucial first step in planning. She suggested:

> *… just one of the main challenges I think was when you start out with your class ... start you know, appointed into a class, is actually finding a starting point. And, ... um … you know building on that and building your IEPs and*

> *and … um … building a program for the children so that you know they can reach their full potential …(Narelle, Interview 3, 28/3/00).*

Narelle wanted to promote a successful learning-to-learn approach and to extend all children's development in inclusive classrooms. Interestingly, she accepted the inevitable challenges and viewed the inclusive educator's role positively. Narelle said:

> *I think that ...um ...if we don't have challenges then we're not really ... we're kidding ourselves really. I mean challenges motivate us to do more and ... um ... all I think, if you're faced with say, you know, any sort of challenge if you're concerned about the children then you should be able to overcome it. Everything's can be overcome...(Narelle, Interview 3, 28/3/00).*

Thus, Narelle, like Kerry and Chris, implied her desire to meet challenges by working closely with others, adopting a constructive team approach.

In summary, participants recognised that designing programs for children with disabilities meant addressing their diverse educational needs. Reflective insights conveyed that the student teachers were aware that there were real challenges in planning, implementing and monitoring individualised programs, yet they were unshaken in their determination to take on the difficulties of the role. Ideally, they planned to work collaboratively with others in supporting individuals with disabilities as the next section demonstrates.

COLLABORATING WITH OTHERS

Collegial support was a collaborative strategy that participants advocated as desirable in difficult situations. Participants described their inclusive educator's role as enhanced by collaborative processes with parents, other professionals and even their own family members.

For example, Narelle, Ruby and Tina recalled their respite situations, promoting collaborative communication processes among all stakeholders. Specifically, Narelle illustrated how collaboration meant that each member of the parent-professional team jointly contributed to the child's individual program. She explained the shared consequences of unforseen events for team members, commenting:

> *The situation with M getting sick would have an effect on all the people that have contact with her. At the special school, they would have to restructure her program to accommodate these set backs, the Speech therapist would have to start all over on M's progress, and at home D would have to begin all over encouraging M to use signs when she wanted something …(Narelle, Interview 3, 28/3/00).*

Narelle's comments showed that she understood the pressing need for coordinated communication channels to marshal both professional and parent efforts.

Reflecting back on the respite experience, Narelle was disappointed that working on her own without supportive communication with others, made the difficult situation even more intense. However, on a positive note, the experience gave her a deeper appreciation of the carer's role. She reported:

> *… but after having M for 16 hours, I realised there was a lot to it. Like, there's … it's really, really in-depth and like you know we're only just skimming the surface here. And, I mean, I learnt a lot. It would have been better if I, say had been in a setting where I had somebody to give me feedback when things actually happened so I knew what I was doing. Like I'd learn from it…(Narelle, Interview 3, 28/3/00).*

Understandably, Narelle admitted that she liked to receive feedback to improve her skills, indicating that the lack of feedback in the community experiences was a limitation. She suggested that collaboration was a method she would employ to seek others' advice, particularly when she had exhausted her own repertoire of strategies.

Although Narelle reported that she mainly learnt by experiencing practical situations, she expected there would be times when her lack of experience would require input from others. She reflected:

> *Just being exposed, I think, is a major thing. Cause it's one thing to read about a situation in a text book and it's another thing to experience it and the more experience you get, the better off you're going to be. And if you're confronted with ... you're exposed to you know an experience you don't know what to and you've tried everything, then you know you consult other people ...(Narelle, Interview 3, 28/3/00).*

Narelle's comments suggested that she valued her support network for professional development.

Additionally, Narelle turned to the literature for suggestions on suitable teaching strategies. Her following reflections depicted her resourcefulness in seeking relevant information when she said:

> *... And if they don't know, you go elsewhere and then if you're still stuck you go to the literature and see what they say and try their strategies and you know, you're better off using ... well, I think, you're better off using strategies that have worked ...(Narelle, Interview 3, 28/3/00).*

As depicted, Narelle primarily learnt from her own and others' previous experiences. Hence, as a result of her learning, she recommended adopting teaching strategies which others had found successful. Consequently, Narelle's resourcefulness meant that she was willing to explore multiple perspectives as a way of discovering what worked best for the individual children concerned. She explained:

> *Like you know from personal experience, from teachers, especially if they've had the children in the past they know they work and then you can try them and if your teaching style ... you know doesn't like those strategies*

or the children don't like the way you present them then you can try something else…(Narelle, Interview 3, 28/3/00).

Narelle's comments indicated that she was prepared to persist and be flexible in finding the most appropriate teaching strategy to enhance the children's learning.

Offering another perspective on professional mentoring, Ruby suggested a practical classroom approach as a collaborative learning strategy. She envisaged student teachers working with small groups of children while being supported by an experienced teacher. She thought the children's interaction with the student teachers would reduce the stress on the classroom teacher, commenting:

> *I think student teachers could be used on a one-to-one basis or with a small group of students and ... um ... the existing teacher has to be the mentor and the guide. But I think that can be ... that could relieve a lot of stress in a classroom or ... I mean some teachers don't like to work with anybody they just like to be themselves and sure they should have that choice to be completely independent…(Ruby, Interview 3, 20/6/00).*

Ruby thought that her peers would gain from the expertise of an associate teacher to guide them within a real classroom context.

Similarly, Tina found having her mother's professional advice as a preschool teacher encouraged her to consider other alternative classroom approaches. She reflected on how her mother's way of handling a situation was useful as a comparison with her own, reporting:

> *Well my mum actually does work for the Department of Community Services. So if I have a problem with anything well I have a thought about something I can bring it to her and think say well this is my thought … um … how does it compare with yours kind of thing …(Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Tina increased her confidence by exploring alternatives. Ultimately, she accepted the decision was her own, commenting:

> *She… she doesn't influence me I wouldn't say in any way but she … she poses another … maybe another way of doing things. She might say well that's fine but I might do it this way. So then I have, like you said I have that network of different perspectives, yeah (Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Tina indicated that she was reassured by discussing her ideas with her mother. As a result of the respite situation, Tina had increased her preparedness to adopt a critical perspective. She commented on her expanded awareness of suitable teaching strategies when she said:

> *… a lot to do with behaviour management and things like that. Whereas I had no idea before … like I thought it was all what we were taught here which isn't really anything against the lectures and whatnot but it seems a lot of theory and then you get out into a setting and you realise that's the area where it might not work. Um … so I think through my own experiences I've just … in a sense developed my own strategies for dealing with things (Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Tina's comments, like Narelle's, showed that she had increased her confidence in dealing with non-compliant behaviour and had developed her own repertoire of teaching and classroom management strategies.

In summary, the three participants identified various collaborative aspects of specialised teaching and learning involved in an inclusive educator's role. Their comments suggested that they valued having a supportive professional network and had developed learning strategies to combine their individual efforts through teamwork and negotiation.

The specialised teaching and learning aspects of an inclusive educator's role the participants portrayed included acquiring comprehensive background information on the individual with

a disability and a knowledge of the person's current level of functioning. With such information, participants indicated that they were in a stronger position to design an effective individualised program for teaching in the specific areas of identified need, while building on the individual's interests. In carrying out the role, they were genuinely committed to working in collaboration with relevant others to expand their learning and expertise. The next section traces how important these areas are with references to the literature and discusses the expectations held by the student teachers in coming to terms with their prospective careers.

2. EXPECTATIONS OF AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATOR'S ROLE

At the follow-up third interview, participants reflected on their prior assumptions relating to an inclusive educator's role, as well as discussing their changed understandings and expectations of the role. As future inclusive educators, they envisaged adopting a more structured task-orientated approach. Generally, they anticipated teaching outside of traditional curricular domains in higher priority functional areas of basic living skills. Their concern was with increasing children's self-esteem and consolidating their strengths. They also recognised the personal and professional challenges they might face in successfully accomplishing such roles of an inclusive educator.

BROADENING THE CURRICULA

Two participants portrayed an expansive notion of curricula beyond the usual Key Learning Areas. For example, Anna discussed the issue of teaching children with disabilities non-traditional curricula such as independence in toileting, commenting that her university peers were probably unaware of such task analysis in teaching considerations. She said:

> *There just is a lot of steps. And they need to be aware I suppose too what's basic. As far as things like toilet training and things like that they need to be aware that that sort of happens in the classrooms and because a lot of people ... I don't really know if they really know that's what happens ...(Anna, Interview 3, 7/3/00).*

Anna indicated that she considered it relevant for all student teachers to increase their awareness of independent living skills. From a personal perspective, Anna showed her enthusiasm for her future teaching role when she recalled:

> *... I thought Oh well I'll go and see if I wanted to do that and I just absolutely love it more than teaching and I know a lot of people just can't wait to get out there and teach but I can't really wait to get out there just teach in a special ed setting... I don't know ... that's just what I'd prefer to do...(Anna, Interview 3, 7/3/00).*

Anna had made a distinct career choice and expected to enjoy teaching children with disabilities.

In a similar way to Anna, Ruby considered the broader role of holistic education as extending beyond the traditional curricular domains. She described inclusive teaching as embracing notions of caring. She reflected on her career choice, explaining:

> *but I need to be in a sort of caring role, a nurturing role, giving role and that's one of the reasons and I think that education is a lot more than just teaching our children, you know, reading and writing and arithmetic ...(Ruby, Interview 3, 20/6/00).*

Ruby had constructed her own sense of what her inclusive teaching role would involve and expected to make a long-term commitment to the profession, commenting:

> *… So I have that concept behind me and I will probably face 14 years in the teaching field which I will look forward to …(Ruby, Interview 3, 20/6/00).*

She looked forward to contributing to the learning of many children. Reflecting on the benefit of the community experience in relation to understanding the role better, Ruby said:

> *I mean that's a learning experience all the time and you can see with hindsight the errors you've made and the things you should do but we are only human and that's it and I mean you know we do … I think making mistakes is a very valuable part of life…(Ruby, Interview 3, 20/6/00).*

Ruby had constructed a realistic attitude to her own learning and was more sensitive to life experiences. Additionally, Ruby was mindful of the changing role of schools in providing education for children from disadvantaged sectors which she considered highlighted the role of inclusive educators. She upheld the value of the role arguing:

> *I think that is absolutely necessary in our schools because there is a need to be inclusive educators with children now because you're including a wide field of life. And, I mean, our children a lot of them are damaged… They come from appalling situations and I mean schools are often a haven for children…(Ruby, Interview 3, 20/6/00).*

Ruby appreciated the pluralistic nature of schools in teaching children from diverse backgrounds. Thus, participants like Ruby were increasing their awareness of the need for maintaining a positive approach in meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities.

BUILDING ON THE INDIVIDUAL'S STRENGTHS

Participants' comments indicated that in adopting an inclusive educator's role they planned to use a positive approach in building on an individual's strengths rather than focussing on

the person's deficits. On reflection, Chris described her personal impressions of the inclusive educator's role as contributing to children feeling valued. She hoped to develop children's self-esteem by praising their strengths. She said:

> *… if I can't offer the kids in my class a little bit of empowerment or a little bit of enrichment or a little bit of self-esteem building in the whole 12 months I have them, I don't want to teach any more…(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Chris wanted to make a difference to children's self-perceptions. She accepted that children would be aware of their weaknesses and purposely wanted to focus their attention on their strengths, commenting:

> *… I want, I want the kids at the end of year to go away and say … you know well … I mightn't be the best reader in the class but Mrs W said that I can draw really well and I think that that's what we need to concentrate on …(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

By giving constructive feedback, Chris wanted children to take pleasure in their achievements. She described the role as supporting an individual within a family context, commenting:

> *…If it's done by someone who's dedicated and has a passion about Special Ed and is prepared to work hard, I think that it's a very empowering role for both a professional and the student and their family. I think it just has this domino effect…(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Chris expanded on her views showing she truly understood the impact of education based on her own upbringing in which she felt she had lacked guidance. She reflected on the difference that receiving genuine support could offer, commenting:

> *I think with more support … you see I got no support with resources at home. With more support in the school I could have been … you know I wouldn't say one of the best but I just know that my ... um outlook on life would have been completely different. I've got to where I am basically through kicks in the teeth all the way along. You know like … I went out to work and thought 'Gee there must be something better than this.'…(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

In deciding on a teaching career, Chris turned her life around. She recalled how education

provided her with new opportunities. She advocated that:

> *So then I decided to strive for an education and ... now I realise how empowering being educated is, mainly for yourself and ... um ... and I just worry that there's a lot of kids in my boat who lack resources that other children have…(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Overall, Chris was eager to enrich children's lives. Summing up her perception of the

inclusive educator's role, Chris said:

> *… I think it's a very important role and I would imagine that it would take someone incredibly dedicated to fulfil … um … an enriching one for all students not just have somebody in your class because it's an inclusive school and that's what you have to do…(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Thus, Chris described the role as one that not every teacher would have the dedication to

undertake. She defined the role as requiring a passionate commitment, elucidating:

> *…I think it's a job that you should volunteer for. I don't think that you should be made do it and ... um … It requires I think it requires a passion…(Chris, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Importantly, Chris was convinced that only those who willingly chose to teach children with

disabilities should be expected to do so. Other participants reinforced this belief because of

the demands that being an inclusive educator presented.

MEETING PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES

The role of an inclusive educator was depicted as both personally and professionally

challenging for the participants. For instance, Kerry expected that the inclusive educator's

role would be confrontational and demanding. She held negative assumptions that she would

be faced with overcoming constraints and obstacles, such as the lack of resources. Hence,

Kerry anticipated the role extending beyond the classroom, suggesting:

*I think that as a Special Education teacher you'd be trying to set up
programs and buying resources and I think you'd constantly be fighting …
to be able to go to workshops or buy resources or implement things
throughout the school. I think it'd be just … difficult (Kerry, Interview 3,
22/3/00).*

She implied that she expected resistance towards her efforts from other staff members.

Although Kerry had reservations about the current approaches used by her colleagues, she

was still open to helping them in reaching their goals. She explained:

*I'm the sort of person that if people genuinely try, I'll do anything to help
them meet that goal. Um … I expect people to set a high standard for
themselves … um … and people should be rewarded for what they're doing
as long as they are genuinely working towards a goal. Um … I think that's
my philosophy … work hard (Kerry, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Kerry wanted to support individuals in striving for their goals.

Like Kerry, Narelle also thought that the inclusive educator's role would stretch her. She

expected that there would be physical and emotional tensions, having witnessed the pressure

on members of families of individuals with disabilities. Narelle showed empathy with the

parents, reflecting:

*… I knew it would be hard because … I've seen in my own family with
disabilities and … um … like I know how much of a strain it can be on
parents, but I didn't realise to what extent. Like I knew that … I didn't
realise … cause our family … um … my aunty had Down Syndrome and my
cousin has physical disabilities and I've seen that, but … autism and
whatever global … like she had global development delay…(Narelle,
Interview 3, 28/3/00).*

Narelle's family background had given her a degree of understanding of the impact of

disability. However, at the same time, Narelle said she was shocked by the stress involved in

dealing with someone with a severe disability. She exclaimed:

*…Unbelievable! Like it's just amazing how parents cope…(Narelle,
Interview 3, 28/3/00).*

She was amazed by the parents' resilience yet still questioned her own capabilities, pondering:

> *I don't know how I'd go having to deal with that you know all the time. Like 24 hours a day. I think they're doing a marvellous job but ... um ... I just, I got a shock basically ...(Narelle, Interview 3, 28/3/00).*

Reflecting on the community experience, Narelle had recognised the constant time-demanding intensity of the caring role. She marvelled at what she had witnessed. From a personal perspective, Narelle said:

> *... like I know myself that I have to do a lot more training to be able to ... effectively teach children like M. And like I want to do that but I also want the experience of mainstream teaching before I go into that so I've got that background ... and then I can ... you know break it down for children with special needs...(Narelle, Interview 3, 28/3/00).*

Narelle wanted to have a solid background in regular teaching before she embarked on her Special Education career.

Attention to combining personal and professional traits was apparent when Tina reflected on what to expect of the inclusive educator's role. Thus, having participated in the respite experience, she said:

> *I think you do ... you need the motivation and the energy levels as well. I know ... my first visit at the special school last week I was actually horrified when I came home and I was in tears after seeing ... just seeing the way the children ... not so much being treated but just ... I can't quite ... It wasn't so much the way they were being treated or ... it was just the way they were ...(Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Tina's reaction showed that the physical characteristics of children with severe disabilities still disturbed her. Like Narelle, Tina found the emotional aspect of the teaching role difficult to come to terms with in relation to children with high support needs. However, the insights

Tina gained from her community experience gave her a stronger disposition and heightened her awareness of her strengths. She explained her new outlook as:

> *…there's so many things I've learnt almost … in myself. Just the way I can see things and I really … you know I was acknowledging you know what I already had up here in a sense…(Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Tina was reassured that she had the appropriate coping qualities once she had the practical experience. She reflected:

> *It's very hard to … explain how I feel about it … um … I think because I went out and I did have, I did have the … um … qualities before that it was almost an acknowledgement that I did have those qualities and I could use those qualities. It certainly boosted my confidence and in a sense my capabilities…(Tina, Interview 3, 22/3/00).*

Tina's comments suggested that understanding notions of herself as a learner enhanced her confidence in becoming an inclusive educator.

All six participants indicated that they had a deeper appreciation of the role of an inclusive educator. Their unique family, social and educational backgrounds influenced the student teachers' personal and professional perspectives. Reflective comments indicated the influences of their teacher education course, practicum placements and especially the community experiences. In general, the participants considered the inclusive educator's role as involving expanded curricular domains, enriching children's self-esteem and from a reflexive perspective, learning more about themselves as learners.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In revealing their changed perceptions of the inclusive educator's role, the participants highlighted some important curricular implications for teacher educators. Looking back on their teacher preparation they indicated that there were aspects of the role which they considered current practices failed to address. In particular, the student teachers promoted more expansive curricula which recognised basic living skills as a priority. They identified many children's individual needs as complex and suggested that teacher education should move beyond traditional Key Learning Areas of curriculum to equip the full range of children. Appropriate assessment of children's levels of skills was considered critical to planning realistic teaching objectives. Importantly, participants recommended that it was expedient for all student teachers to learn how to design individual educational programs and to collaborate effectively with others in their combined endeavours.

Participants' expressed revised expectations of the inclusive educator's role indicated that they had changed their initial understandings particularly as an outcome of the community experiences, combined with their subsequent experiences in their teacher education course. They reflected on their deeper understandings of what schools offered in broader life issues affecting children from diverse backgrounds. In understanding aspects of the teaching and learning process, the participants reflected on the personal and professional qualities they considered were important in carrying out the inclusive educator's role.

Generally, the six participating student teachers held expectations that they would be successful in their future teaching roles as a result of having meaningful, practical interactions with individuals with disabilities. Unlike their university peers' Key Learning Areas driven teacher preparation, the participants appeared to appreciate the more individualised teaching and learning strategies they had gained in situated community contexts with individuals with disabilities. The implications for teacher educators are apparent in widening the curricula to address the individual needs of all student teachers preparing to teach children with diverse functioning, in inclusive classrooms. The next chapter discusses the findings of the current study and sets future directions in inclusive practices for teacher educators and researchers.

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION

This chapter critically discusses the most important findings arising from exploration of the emerging understandings of student teachers as they learnt about their future role as inclusive educators. An analysis of the participants' personal and professional learning indicated that the participants had experienced valuable insights as a result of the situated community experiences with people with disabilities. Furthermore, the discussion focuses on situated reflexive and reflective learning in socio-cultural environments as scaffolding processes for enhancing deeper understandings. Essentially, this chapter discusses the findings already presented in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, that shaped the student teachers' role understandings, as well as examining these findings with the literature reviewed earlier in Chapters 2 and 3. The results of the investigation are further considered for their value in connecting theoretical learning with situated real-life community experiences, in light of the current trends in inclusive practices (Ainscow et al., 2003; Jordan & Stanovich, 2003).

Research question one sought to identify the critical biographical influences that facilitated participants' learning. Two main considerations, namely, the external and internal ecological factors, were distinguished. Section 1 highlights the influences of these ecological factors illuminated by the participants' reflective and reflexive inquiry. The adoption of an ecological systems perspective as a means of interpreting results supported previous research approaches (Odom et al., 2004; Arthur et al., 2003; Bronfenbrenner, 1997). Thus, an analysis of the ecological systems of social relationships provides, in this change, a framework of the varying influences shaping the nature of the participants' understandings.

Section 2 goes beyond considering the socio-cultural ecological aspects to review the contextual influences arising from the community experiences. It specifically addresses research question two for the ways in which the three situated contexts contributed to the participants' new insights. The discussion focuses on the implications apparent from the ways that the different community settings promoted the participants' reflexive and reflective inquiry. Comparisons are made across the three settings, including the home-based early intervention respite service for young children and their families, the centre-based recreation program for school-aged children and adolescents, and the adult post-school options and independent living centre.

Section 3 discusses findings related to research question three by examining the nature of the participants' perspectives on their role understandings. It addresses the professional aspects of inclusive teaching, together with participants' personal understandings of desirable qualities in themselves as learners. Discussions draw on recent policy developments in inclusive practices (Atelier, 2004; Waterhouse, 2004; Anderson, Lennox, & Petersen, 2003). The relevant issues and implications for teacher educators are followed up in Chapter 10.

Finally, Section 4 examines the methodological framework used in the current study. It identifies some of the problems encountered in conducting the study as well as addressing the effectiveness and limitations of qualitative case study approaches (Freire & Cesar, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Stake, 2000; Bassey, 1999). Additionally, the model of

Biographical Reflective Pedagogy (Bentley-Williams, 2000) used for coding and analysing the data, is evaluated in terms of its strengths and weaknesses and its relationships to other selected models of reflective inquiry (Smith & Lovat, 2003; Brookfield, 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Tripp, 1993; Knowles, 1992).

Increasingly, there are systemic pressures on teacher educators and educational practitioners to improve the quality of inclusive practices. Moreover, it is argued that in a climate of ongoing socio-cultural change, understanding student teachers' unique biographies brings new opportunities for teacher educators to form valuable interdisciplinary community partnerships to work together in mutually supportive relationships. As a result of participating in the community experiences with individuals with disabilities, student teachers experienced unique opportunities to reflect on issues relevant at an individual, a classroom, a school, a community and a societal level.

Understanding the role of an inclusive educator was shaped by establishing effective social-professional relationships between student teachers, individuals with disabilities, their families, other service providers and people in the wider community. Findings from the current study concluded that a deeper awareness of the ecological and contextual influences impacting on the lives of individuals with disabilities provided prospective inclusive educators with a solid foundation for constructing deeper understandings of their role identities.

1. CONTRIBUTING ECOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

According to an ecological systems conceptual framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1997), systemic influences may include variables such as personal characteristics, staff practices, family perspectives, social policies, cultural systems and changes over time (Odom et al., 2004). These contributing ecological factors (Arthur et al., 2003) impacted on the nature of participants' individual and shared responses, influencing the effectiveness of their interactions with others and their social, emotional, cognitive and physical reactions (See Appendix 5 – Responses Affecting Biographical Change). The findings of the current study indicate that the participants' personal responses changed as a result of the community experiences, mainly in increasing their confidence and feelings of comfort in their roles with people with disabilities.

Commonalities in participants' responses were evident across situated contexts. Intersecting with these were the personal characteristics of the individuals, arising from the participant's varying motivations, background experiences and expectations, mixed with their emotions and feelings towards people with disabilities. These interactive ecological influences were manifested in the participants' responses prior to, during and after the situated community experiences. Throughout the investigation, strategies promoting reflexive and reflective inquiry provided effective tools for making explicit both the interaction of these ecological influences and the participants' professional and personal role understandings of people with disabilities.

KEY EXTERNAL ECOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

 Key external ecological influences which contributed to the participants' role understandings, included people, places and events. Each of these factors is discussed in more detail.

Interactions with people with disabilities

As might be expected, the single most significant influence on the participants' role understandings came from the community experiences with the people with disabilities (See Appendix 6 – People Who Influenced Participants' Reflective Inquiry). The student teachers reported that they learnt more from interacting with a person with a disability in a situated context than from any other source. A key finding from the data showed that the situated community experiences encouraged personal contact with an individual with a disability, ultimately leading to meaningful interactions which made significant impressions on each of the participants. At the same time, the staff in the community settings and the respite parents also influenced the participants. References to the external influences of family, relatives, friends, teachers and others on the participants were minimal when compared with the influences of dynamic human interactions with people with disabilities.

Such findings support attention to the ecological perspectives that recognise the influence of the setting on appropriate and inappropriate interactions between people thereby, according to the literature, promoting a *focus on the totality of their environment* (Arthur et al., 2003, p.5). Additionally, the findings also suggest there is a need to expand this focus to draw

attention to the underlying multi-faceted socio-cultural influences shaping relationships in interactions with people with disabilities within an ecological framework (Arthur et al., 2003; Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Christensen, 1992).

Places and times

Another related key finding of the ecological influences concerns the variations in each of the different contexts on the participants' reflective inquiry (See Appendix 7 - Types of Reflection). There was a need to provide opportunities for sustained reflexive and reflective processes (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Schön, 1987) in relation to the community experiences in order to strengthen the influences of participants' biographical experiences (Cole & Knowles, 2000; Collier, 1999). Gaining an inclusive perspective was an unfolding developmental process for each of the student teachers which encompassed continual connections with ongoing personal and professional experiences occurring over the individual's lifetime (Cole & Knowles, 2000).

Prior to the community experiences the participants engaged in mainly descriptive reflection readily recalling their experiences with family members and friends with disabilities. Less impact was made on participants from their other reported encounters with individuals with disabilities during their own schooling and more recent practicum experiences. At this early stage of the investigation, the participants showed a general unquestioning acceptance of people with disabilities yet demonstrated little, if any in-depth understanding of their own educational needs or the role of an inclusive educator. As well, each of the three community

contexts facilitated the participants' inquiry relating to their on-action and for-action reflective processes in conjunction with their learning from their academic Special Education studies. A comparison of data collected at different points, that is, prior, during and post stages of the community experiences indicated the influence of timing in promoting the participants' reflective-inquiry processes (See Appendix 8 – Nature and Types of Temporal Aspects of Reflective Inquiry). Critical incidents in these situated experiences were particularly important in this process towards deeper learning.

Events and critical incidents

Data on participants' learning from critical incidents (See Appendix 9 - Critical Incidents), suggest that these real-life practical experiences with individuals with disabilities contributed significantly to the personal insights of the participants, making many aspects of an inclusive educator's role more salient. Findings from the data demonstrate that the purposeful targeting of participants' attention to incidents which they found disturbing or significant (McKenna, 1999; Tripp, 1999), served to sharpen their reflective processes (See Appendix 10 – Nature and Type of Reflective Inquiry Influenced by Critical Incidents). Through processes of reflecting and interpreting their experiences, participants increased their awareness of inclusive role-related issues such as the need for a continuum of life-long services, linking early childhood, school and adult learning contexts for people with disabilities (See Appendix 11 – Reflective Inquiry About Issues).

Of the three community contexts, experiences by student teachers working in the independent living centre prompted the highest number of reported critical incidents clearly presenting the participants (Chris, Kerry, Kim and Shelly) with the most challenging interactions. Critical incidents located the dilemmas faced by these participants as they grappled with teaching basic living skills to adults with high support needs. For two other participants (Tina and Narelle) the critical incidents they reported during their home-based experiences showed a growing awareness of the crucial role of respite services in families' lives. They became convinced of the genuine need to relieve the stress and frustration frequently faced by parents in dealing with the extraordinary demands of their young children with disabilities.

Although the student teachers learnt from the positive role models provided by the respite parents and community support staff, there was also benefit for them in evaluating instances of inappropriate role models. The findings suggest that exposing participants to a range of positive and negative role models in situated contexts was a relevant strategy in helping them to clarify their beliefs about an ideal role identity (Knowles et al., 1994; Knowles, 1992). This was illustrated when the participants reported inappropriate staff practices at both the recreation program (Raymond, Michael, Rene and Judith) and at the independent living centre (Kerry, Chris, Kim and Shelly). Disturbing negative staff practices such as denying individuals with disabilities opportunities to make choices in what they ate (Kerry), leaving individuals with communication disorders out of games (Raymond), or labelling individuals with behaviour problems (Rene), stimulated the student teachers to reflect on how they might adopt different approaches to those used by these staff members. These findings are

consistent with earlier research conducted in classrooms purporting that identity is conceptualised from an analysis of both real and ideal role models (Knowles, 1992) and strengthened by professional reflection.

Thus, several key external ecological influences contributed to participants' constructive role understandings arising from their personal contact with an individual with a disability, combined with multiple opportunities to reflect on that contact while particularly focusing on real-life critical incidents and interactions. Further ecological influences stemmed from the internal characteristics of the participants.

KEY INTERNAL ECOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

Several internal influences were interactive with the external ecological influences. These included participants' motivations, attitudes, prior assumptions, feelings and emotional reactions to their experiences with people with disabilities in the community settings.

Underlying motivations

At the commencement of the investigation, participants indicated that they were keen to increase their understanding of people with disabilities (Judith, Michael, Narelle, Ruby, Shelley and Tina), improve their self-confidence (Chris, Narelle, Raymond, Shelley), engage in practical experiences (Chris, Kerry, Kim, Michael, Rene, Shelley, Anna and Tina) and interact effectively with people with disabilities as a basis for deciding if they wanted to

become inclusive educators (Anna, Kerry, Kim, Narelle, Rene, Ruby and Tina). The results confirm that all of the participants projected an openness to change when they expressed their genuine desire to understand and relate to people with disabilities successfully. Their underlying motivations in volunteering for the community experiences depicted the student teachers' receptiveness to fresh ideas, highlighting an implication for teacher education. Thus, being amenable to new approaches was a desirable pre-requisite characteristic for motivating participants' learning which appeared in keeping with previous findings concerned with student teachers on teachers' personal qualities (Hickson & Smith, 1996) and advocated in promoting open-mindedness, responsiveness and wholeheartedness (Dewey, 1938).

Initially the student teachers were mainly concerned with understanding the different types of disabilities. In actually carrying out their voluntary community experiences, however, the participants shifted their motivation away from a focus on the type of disability to building new understandings (See Appendix 12 – Reflective Inquiry About Humanistic Aspects of an Inclusive Educator's Role), showing they were concerned with a more educational, humanistic perspective (Richardson, 1997). As the participants formed effective relationships with the individuals with disabilities, they not only recognised, but also accepted, the notion of diversity in individuals (Ashman & Elkins, 2002). Thus, through processes of reflective inquiry and situated learning, all of the participants became more career-directed, displaying stronger commitment to teach a diverse range of children to function effectively in inclusive social and learning environments.

The participants' responsiveness to the community experiences had generated their increased awareness of teaching as a moral endeavour (Elbaz, 1992) in which caring inclusive educators strive to understand the needs, goals and interests of individuals (Sands et al., 2000; Villa & Thousand, 2000). Preparing student teachers for the demands of a diverse society was recognised in the literature as a major challenge facing many teacher educators (Waterhouse, 2004; Voltz et al., 1999). Thus, the community experiences provided a forum for the student teachers to experience directly the real-life moral dilemmas and ethical considerations affecting inclusive practices. As a result of exploring the participants' underlying motivations it was then possible to examine the various socio-cultural influences affecting their attitudes and beliefs.

Changing attitudes and prior assumptions

Findings from the data collected at the commencement of the voluntary community experiences showed that in the main the participants held prior assumptions about people with disabilities which were somewhat superficial (Kim, Raymond, Michael,) unconsciously stereotypical (Anna, Judith, Chris, Shelley, Rene) and untested (Ruby, Tina, Kerry, Narelle). During the investigation, the reflective data on participants' philosophies (See Appendix 13 – Reflective Inquiry About Philosophies), showed that they became more conscious of the complexity of their future role by considering wider socio-cultural issues and questioning existing restrictive practices. Participants were able to identify obstacles and barriers during their reflective processes which were previously unfamiliar to them. Their concerns addressed access to typical community experiences (Anna, Narelle and Judith) segregation

practices (Kerry, Raymond, Shelley and Rene) and inappropriate language (Chris, Michael, Ruby, Narelle and Tina).

Participants were especially critical of staff practices which they perceived as devaluing people with disabilities. This was evident in the participants' concern with the fundamental issue of treating people with disabilities with respect (Judith, Ruby, Shelley, Kerry, Kim, Michael, Narelle, Rene and Tina). Additionally, some participants (Kerry, Kim, Rene, Shelley, Tina and Raymond) were concerned with the negative social consequences of labelling people with disabilities, believing that labels adversely affect how others interacted with them. The participants' situated learning of role-related issues informed their personal, professional perspectives. Participants in each of the community contexts reported their increased awareness of the potential capabilities and rights of people with disabilities.

Understandably, all of the student teachers expressed their growing desire to remove unnecessary barriers and to overcome inequitable practices. At a macro systems level, some participants raised political issues relating to injustice which restricted opportunities for people with disabilities, such as inadequate funding, the lack of equity in services and insufficient resources (Judith, Chris, Kerry, Ruby and Shelley). Both Group 1 and Group 2 participants advocated passionately for improved inclusive practices. Participants' accounts revealed their varying attitudes and dispositions, providing multiple voices about disability agendas (Villa & Thousand, 2000) and their personal worldview (Canning, 1991). The participants' accounts suggested that they engaged in high levels of emotions and feelings as they struggled with fully understanding their prospective roles.

Feelings and emotional reactions

Data uncovered personal feelings and emotions experienced by participants, including a range of intense positive and negative emotional reactions (See Appendix 14 – Reflective Inquiry About Emotional Responses). On the one hand, in the early stages of the investigation participants were faced with the emotional lows of confusion, shock and discouragement. Then, as they settled into their roles with individuals with disabilities, the same participants usually encountered feelings of emotional highs as a result of their increased confidence, acceptance and enjoyment in their shared interactions. The emotional turmoil and exhaustion reported by several of the participants (Anna, Chris, Judith, Kim, Narelle and Tina) were also cited in the literature on disabilities in relation to those who work with serving people's needs (Dettmer et al., 1999).

While feelings of frustration featured in each of the contexts (See Appendix 15 – Participants' Emotional Responses), the participants in the respite experiences found their context particularly difficult in comparison with the reactions of participants in the other two settings. The implication of this finding suggests that teacher educators need to be aware that natural home environments can have a tendency to stimulate more intense personal emotional reactions in both student teachers and families than structured centre-based settings. One respite participant (Anna) reported that the parent was equally frustrated by the slow rate of the child's progress. The very basic tasks at the independent living centre frustrated other participants (Chris and Kim). Further frustrations came from the lack of time available during

routines to really understand and work out the best way of doing things (Judith) and the difficulty in gathering background information from the staff (Raymond).

Although the participants at the recreation program and the independent living centre expressed greater feelings of discomfort than the participants at the respite, only the respite participants (Ruby, Anna, Tina and Narelle) endured feelings of guilt. Again, the implication for teacher educators is that the home environment provided a powerful learning context for student teachers to experience the pressures on families. Their sense of guilt may have stemmed from feelings of perceived inadequacy in not being able to relieve the parents sufficiently from the constant demands and intensity of caring for a young dependent child with a disability. Of the three contexts, the recreation program helped the participants to feel the most relaxed while the respite context was the least effective in building participants' confidence and yet these participants reported their experiences as the most enjoyable.

The findings suggest particularly in the case of the respite participants, that by overcoming the unexpected obstacles and challenges arising during the community experiences, the participants adjusted their feelings and were able to deal more effectively with difficult situations (Knowles et al., 1994). Through these lived experiences, the participants discovered what it meant to relate personally to an individual with a disability. The results highlight the key finding that overcoming previously experienced difficulties with a person with a disability gave participants a heightened sense of achievement and convinced them that they had the necessary personal and professional qualities to become successful in the role of an inclusive educator, increasing their sense of self-efficacy.

The findings from the contributing biographical influences suggest that in the formative years of the teacher education course, the student teachers were open to questioning practices. In general, participants appeared circumspect about their interactions, reporting feelings and emotional responses which prior to the community experiences, had been given little acknowledgment in their teacher education course (Sumsion, 1997). The next section examines more closely the ways in which the three community contexts played a role in influencing the participants' situated learning.

2. CONTRIBUTING CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES

Contextual influences were apparent from the ways that the different community settings contributed to participants' reflective inquiry and insights affecting an inclusive educator's role (See Appendix 16 – Nature of Participants' Philosophies). Comparisons of understandings across contexts revealed that the most understanding about people with disabilities and their needs came from the participants' experiences involving adults with high support needs and confronting their quality of life issues at the independent living centre (See Appendix 17 – Understandings about People with Disabilities). These findings suggest that interactions with adults with disabilities along with the different types of activities at the independent living centre, gave participants a fuller appreciation of diverse issues across the person's lifespan. An implication for teacher educators is that in selecting suitable contexts for situated learning experiences, consideration should be given to the setting's potential to develop desirable outcomes in student teachers.

In contrast, the caring respite role with very young children generated the most influence on participants' self-learning (See Appendix 18 – Understandings Shaping Biographical Changes). It would appear that the home environment because of the less formal atmosphere, created the most conducive opportunities for the participants to be reflexive about their own attributes both as novice professionals and as learners. These contextual findings highlighted the important influences of making connections and relationships between personal and professional situated learning through reflective processes (Sumsion, 1997). Each of the community contexts is discussed in more detail for the ways in which they shaped participants' emerging role understandings.

COMPARISONS ACROSS SITUATED COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

Findings from the current study showed that the three community contexts impacted in different ways on the participants. Specifically these included in relation to the nature of their reflective inquiry, their responses and understandings.

The nature of reflective inquiry

The nature of reflective inquiry varied for the participants at the independent living centre, in the recreation program and in the respite program as they began to experience uncertainty, asking searching questions of themselves and others. Data indicated that the participants engaged mainly in dialogic reflection in each of the three contexts (See Appendix 19 – Nature of Reflective Inquiry in Contexts), confirming the value of open-ended learning

opportunities to extend student teacher's awareness of new possible alternatives to current practices (Ainscow et al., 2003; Smith, 1999). Dialogic reflection was particularly apparent during times of emotional upheaval for participants in each of the community contexts, such as when they felt frustrated, uncomfortable or found a situation difficult. Such findings are in accordance with the literature on the importance of emotional reactions as a focus for reflection (Smith & Lovat, 2003; Purdie & Smith, 1999; Smith, 1999). As expected, participants reflected more on emotional feelings as a result of incidents after they had occurred and to a lesser extent on possible future courses of action to overcome and prevent negative emotions.

Data showed that of the three community contexts, the recreation program stimulated the highest level of dialogic reflection. A likely explanation would be that the nature of activities offered at the recreation program, more closely resembled the typical activities found in schools. This finding indicates that for student teachers in their early years of a teacher education course the similarity with classroom experiences may be an important consideration for teacher educators concerned with creating meaningful contexts for students' formative learning (Knowles et al., 1994). At the same time, the data from the independent living centre and the respite contexts showed that the participants were more receptive to making real-life connections because the nature of the experiences went beyond classroom activities. Furthermore, in general the student teachers had little background knowledge to equip them with critical perspectives of the inclusive educational field.

Importantly, dialogic reflection steered the process for participants to come to terms with their role understandings. The nature of participants' dialogic reflection tended to centre on the specialised teaching strategies required to accommodate individuals with disabilities effectively (See Appendix 20 – Understandings Affecting Teaching and Learning Strategies). The teaching strategies which most concerned the participants, covered aspects of knowing how to react with younger children and adolescents, as well as teaching basic skills to adults. Other less crucial teaching strategies raised by participants included getting to know the person, knowing the environment, asking questions, collaborating and implementing a program. It would appear from the type of strategies depicted as a result of their community experiences, that participants had recognised the teamwork involved in coordinating individualised services for people with disabilities.

The findings suggest that engaging in real-life interactions in these situated contexts promoted open-ended dialogic reflective inquiry, contributing to the student teachers' higher order thinking and emerging understandings. At the same time, the limited critical reflection portrayed by the participants is similar to other research findings (Korthagen, 2004; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Smyth, 1989) and understandable for student teachers involved in a totally new experience (Renzaglia et al., 1997; Pultorak, 1993). Only one participant (Kerry) in Group 2 reflected critically on implementing a program. The main focus of critical reflection displayed by three Group 1 participants (Judith, Raymond, and Shelley), was outside of the usual classroom contexts and instead dwelt more broadly on the multiple stakeholder roles of government funding bodies, staff, carers and family members, portraying their awareness of the wider support needs of individuals with disabilities.

These findings encourage teacher educators to consider fresh opportunities for promoting critical constructivist perspectives (Christensen, 1992) in undergraduate student teachers rather than limiting professional experiences to only inclusive classrooms. Similarly, as the literature on the benefits of service learning showed, student teachers learn from experiences which promote mutual understanding whether or not there is an educational component to the community service (Schine, 1997). Additionally, teacher educators need to be mindful that developing and sustaining critical reflection is a long-term process (Smyth, 1989). While the ability to reflect critically was recognised as a valuable goal of the current research, it is usually more a long-term outcome of teacher education (Lowenbraun & Bobbitt, 1998). Another contextual influence concerned the impact on the participants' responses to situations and their constructive understandings about issues.

The nature of participants' responses and understandings

The community contexts had significant yet varying influences on the nature of participants' responses and understandings. Commonalities and differences in participants' responses were evident across situated community contexts, revealing that the nature of the actual setting influenced the participants' reactions and understandings. For example, communication dilemmas featured as a problem for participants' physical responses (See Appendix 21 – Participants' Responses) at both the independent living centre and the respite program, where they interacted extensively with individuals who were non-verbal and used sign language. This was evident when a worrying concern with making progress featured primarily in

respite experiences when children seemed to regress to lower levels of functioning on account of illnesses, disruption to usual routines or because of being in unfamiliar surroundings. In addition to communication difficulties, knowing how to manage an individual's inappropriate behaviour proved difficult for participants at each of the situated contexts and meant deciding on what was acceptable behaviour and setting boundaries. Participants found it particularly challenging to ensure that their behaviour strategy approach was consistent with the expectations of families, staff and others in managing across environments such as the home, school, centre and community contexts.

In other cases, the nature of participants' cognitive responses (See Appendix 22 - Intellectual Responses) related to more individualised role aspects and varied according to contexts. For example, the recreation program generated a number of cognitive responses which showed increased awareness and attention to inclusive issues as concerns. In contrast, the respite program provided limited opportunities for cognitive responses from participants with the main concern understandably relating to parents needing a break. As would be expected, the independent living centre prompted responses which focussed on the atmosphere, linked to the obvious need for raised professional awareness.

Overall, these actual situations involving direct personal contacts with individuals with disabilities and their carers prompted participants in becoming more conscious of their own physical, emotional and intellectual reactions. As a result of the diversity of biographical experiences in these situated contexts, the participants were well placed to identify role-

related issues affecting professionals working in the inclusive education field as well as better understanding themselves as learners.

Self-learning in each of the community contexts

Participants in reporting on their new understandings reflected on their own self-learning, indicating personal biographical changes as they made sense of their social learning processes (Ainscow et al., 2003). Of the three contexts, the respite program most influenced personal changes in learners suggesting that the intimate nature of situated experiences in a home environment were most conducive for reflexive self-learning. Interestingly, the independent living centre prompted deepest understandings about people with disabilities. Thus, these findings suggest that biographical changes varied according to the nature of the individuals with disabilities and the setting in which they were located. An implication for teacher educator is the power of respite contexts to facilitate close relationships with individuals with disabilities, thus promoting reflexive learning qualities in student teachers.

In summary, the unique features of each setting played a major role in highlighting specific aspects of the inclusive educator's role, influencing the participants' nature of reflection, responses and understandings of people with disabilities and perceptions of self as novice professional and learner. The next section discusses the participants' professional and personal understandings on an inclusive educator's role as an outcome of their situated learning.

3. DEEPER UNDERSTANDINGS OF AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATOR'S ROLE

The participants demonstrated that consolidating their theoretical knowledge with ongoing practical situated learning experiences enhanced their reflective and reflexive inquiry (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). The social construction of identity was played out by each of the participants as they attempted to make sense of their role perceptions, within the boundaries of the normal social world (Waterhouse, 2004). The nature of their professional and personal understandings was revealed as participants elaborated on their deeper understandings.

PROFESSIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS

Reflective inquiry increased participants' awareness of interdisciplinary, cross-agency pedagogical, ethical and socio-cultural issues relevant to education, health and community service providers and families of individuals with disabilities. Shared perspectives raised across the situated contexts included issues affecting the need for a continuum of services across the lifespan, reluctance for unnecessary segregation and the grappling with socio-cultural barriers (Ainscow et al., 2003; Ashman & Elkins, 2002) generated by inappropriate practices experienced in each of the contexts. Main areas of concern centred around pedagogical concerns and ethical issues, staff practices and family-sensitive issues.

Pedagogical concerns and ethical issues

Pedagogical concerns with teaching and learning practices (See Appendix 23 – Pedagogical Issues Raised by Participants) identified in each of the settings influencing how participants came to understand notions of difference, individuality and social justice. Additionally, sensitive ethical issues arose in each of the contexts as the student teachers considered alternative ways of engaging with people with disabilities, fostering respect and dignity (McKenna, 1999). The context of the independent living centre stimulated specific attention to pedagogical issues, suggesting that the experience of interacting in a non-learning environment had a disturbing effect on the participants, stimulating them to examine preferable alternatives. Participants at both the independent living centre and the recreation program, identified negative attitudes about inclusion and labelling practices, suggesting that these segregated services prompted the participants' awareness of less than ideal approaches. Thus, they recognised the need for appropriate accountability, curriculum, services and practices.

Staff interdisciplinary issues

Common across each of the community contexts was the concern with inappropriate and appropriate staff practices (See Appendix 24 – Issues Affecting Educators and Carers). A major concern was the constant stress on staff leading to burnout. Linked to the pressures of the work on staff (Dettmer et al., 2002; York, 1995), was a concern with having the

appropriate professional skills and qualifications needed in the role. In each of the community contexts, the participants who were exposed to interactions with untrained staff, realised the value of qualifications to ensure the delivery of quality services and practices, reaffirming their own professional careers.

Family-sensitive issues

A common issue of support for families was raised in each of the community contexts (See Appendix 25 – Issues Affecting Parents and Families). Unique to the respite program were the two issues of parent burnout and dealing with siblings (Odom et al., 2004; O'Shea et al., 2001). In contrast, the lack of attention to family issues (Bruder, 2000; Bailey & Wolery, 1992) at the recreational program and the independent living centre suggests that parental involvement was not so strongly evident at the centre-based services.

The nature of professional issues raised by participants covered multiple aspects on their role understandings in relation to pedagogy, ethics, staff, carers and families. The findings demonstrate the value of contextual influences in promoting situated learning, ultimately confronting and challenging participants' role understandings. Additionally, the findings portrayed the participants' personal understandings.

PERSONAL UNDERSTANDINGS

Unique contextual influences were ideal for promoting personal views of ideal inclusive practices. The participants' shared and individual pathways and perspectives became apparent as a result of their situated, reflexive learning.

Shared and individual pathways

The journey on which each of the twelve participants embarked in constructing understandings of an inclusive educator's role, took both shared and individual pathways. As discussed earlier in this chapter each of the participating student teachers had varying expectations and background experiences, yet all were faced with differing constraints and opportunities. Ecological and contextual factors interacted with the individual's reflexive and reflective processes. Common shared understandings reported by participants included their broader awareness of their future role outside of classrooms in relationships and collaborations with families and other professionals. In general, participants were conscious of the backgrounds of those working in the disability area in the community and government sectors.

The findings of the current study traced the stages of the participants' reflective learning processes before, during and after their community experiences. The four main areas of understandings related to their understandings of their roles as prospective inclusive classroom teachers, their perceptions of themselves as learners, people with disabilities and their personal changes (See Appendix 26 – Understandings by Stage). The current study revealed that most reported learning about people with disabilities occurred during the times

of ongoing direct contact with them in the community contexts. In contrast, the participants'

deeper understandings of self-identity as inclusive educators, themselves as learners and their

awareness of their biographical changes, happened during the later stages of the

investigation. Thus, multiple opportunities to recall and reflect on situated experiences

(Putnam & Borko, 2000) appeared important for promoting participants' progressively

deeper learning (Korthagen, 2004; Sumsion, 1997).

As a result of interacting with individuals with disabilities outside of classrooms, the

participants were more discerning about teaching skills for real-life learning. The critical role

of reflective inquiry for extending the participants' understandings is apparent in facilitating

their deeper professional knowledge and learning (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). They had

increased their knowledge of functional independent living skills as opposed to restricting the

learning of a person with a disability to the usual curricular areas, or even worse, simply

presenting individuals with low intellectual functioning with boring, aimless, repetitive

activities. Participants' accounts indicated that they had overcome many of their fears

concerning their own weaknesses and were confident in wanting to participate in the role of

shared decision-making. Further, common role understandings reported by participants

included their responsibilities for assessing and delivering programs to cater for the priority

learning needs of individuals with disabilities (Salend, 1998; Falvey, 1995). Participants

discovered that a critical aspect of successful interactions with others depended on enhancing

functional communication skills (Snell & Brown, 2000). Other identified aspects of their

prospective role included knowing how to manage an individual's inappropriate behaviour

and the importance of adopting positive approaches (Walker, 1999; Gordon, Arthur, & Butterfield, 1996).

The value of collaborative goal-setting (King-Sears & Cummings, 1996) and working cooperatively (Friend & Bursuck, 1999) became clearly evident for participants as an outcome of their community experiences. Such a finding is supported in the literature on inclusive practices in which the role of interdisciplinary professionals requires them to collaborate in teams involving expanded partnerships (Dettmer et al., 2002; Sands et al., 2000; Groundwater-Smith, Parker, & Arthur, 1994). In addition to appreciating the need for effective interpersonal and communication skills, the participants also had gained understandings about creating caring, collaborative cultures and fostering empathy (Villa & Thousand, 2000). Without exception, the participants had formed meaningful relationships with people with disabilities outside of the usual classroom environment and in doing so had constructed first-hand, powerful insights which led to their deeper appreciation of what an inclusive educator's role involved.

As would be expected, individual participants varied in the depth of their role understandings. Most participants who had already chosen a career as an inclusive educator became more passionately convinced of their motivation to teach children and adolescents with disabilities. In contrast, other participants, (Narelle, Raymond and Michael), were more reserved in their commitment, preferring to gain general teaching experiences before considering whether to take on a career in the inclusive and Special Education fields. Each participant reported his/her unique perspectives on the impact of their experiences on their

careers and life. The participants' views were based on their individualised interpretations arising from the challenges and highlights faced by them.

Hence, the findings show the importance of socio-cultural opportunities for prospective teachers to be able to make realistic professional and personal choices. In line with social constructivist theory which places emphasis on the role of social interaction and socio-cultural contexts (Hatton, 1994; Mallory & New, 1994), forming effective relationships with people with disabilities became a catalyst for the participants' learning about inclusive practices. The implication of employing reflective processes to evaluate their learning was that the student teachers were better prepared to take responsibility for their career choices with a greater sense of self-regulated control (Ertmer & Newby, 1996).

For these participants, the path towards role understanding was not straightforward. The diverse nature of the participants' backgrounds meant that each person formed individual understanding of an ideal role identity based on their socio-cultural views (Arthur et al., 2003; Bronfenbrenner, 1997). The voluntary community experiences had provided valuable testing grounds for the participants to try out their ideas, teaching and learning strategies without the usual formal pressures on their performance. In discussing their future careers, the participants looked ahead with enthusiasm and commitment despite the difficulties they had encountered in working alongside families, health and social care staff. Overall, the study of students' community-based learning approaches affirmed similar findings in medical education research in promoting an active, person-focused way of delivering care (Anderson et al., 2003). In addition to examining the biographical influences that shaped student

teachers' learning, there is also the need to consider inclusive developments affecting teacher educators. Inclusive reforms are currently giving greater emphasis to teaching and learning approaches which support local communities in becoming autonomous in identifying their particular strengths and service needs (Atelier, 2004).

Thus, in relation to research question four, the findings give new directions to teacher educators by encouraging them to incorporate a range of diverse community experiences into pre-service programs. Further research needs to focus on expanding the cognitive social learning processes of student teachers to advance positive outcomes for individuals with disabilities (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Llyod, 2002). The next section examines the methodology employed in the current study and discusses the process of capturing data which depicted changes in the participants' independent learning.

4. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This qualitative investigation provided rich sources of data for understanding the unfolding biographical learning of student teachers engaging in out-of-course community experiences. The nature of cases presented in the current study verified the influences of social and contextual variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The multi-site case study approach made it possible to examine the complexities of human interactions in the three community settings in an attempt to find transferable, deeper meaning to previously unexplored research questions (Freire & Cesar, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Stake, 2000; Bassey, 1999). The common concern of bounding cases (Yin, 1994) in case study method

was overcome as distinctions were drawn among participants, people, places, times and incidents.

Methods of gathering data from participants included reflective learning journals (Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993) and semi-structured interviews (Trumball & Slack, 1991) designed to encourage open reflexive and reflective practices. Participants used reflexive and reflective processes in various creative ways in order to question, debrief, clarify and propose alternatives, enhancing their constructive understandings (Dieker & Monda-Amaya, 1995). Open questioning during semi-structured interviews purposely sought to avoid inhibiting participants' responses and was supported by other selected models of reflective inquiry (Smith & Lovat, 2003; Brookfield, 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Tripp, 1993; Knowles, 1992). The model of Biographical Reflective Pedagogy (Bentley-Williams, 2000) used for gathering, coding and analysing the data provided a useful structure for identifying the individual learning pathways of the participants. It allowed for an analysis of the individuality of responses while also locating each participant within broader cohort and context groups. Thus, the model showed flexibility in depicting a framework of the participants' unique and shared motivations, the relevant contexts, the nature of the physical, emotional and intellectual responses, their reflective and reflexive processes and their emerging perspectives which led to outcomes of understandings. Reflective and reflexive processes were central to the model as tools for enhancing the participants' decision-making in interactions with others, informing their notions of inclusive teaching and self-analysis (Renzaglia et al., 1997) and guiding them in reaching self-understanding (Webb, 1999). In

hindsight, the participants were more discerning as they reflected on their future personal and professional goals, acknowledging the value of lifelong learning (Sileo et al., 1998).

In summary, the methodological framework allowed for the voices of the participating student teachers to be heard. The participants' situated perspectives were revealed through their shared and individual dialogues. Data presented the nature of the participants' uncertainties, emotions, values and insights. As a result of their experiences in the community, valuable insights occurred for each of the participants. Deeper role understandings emerged from the participants' consideration of their responses to critical incidents (Tripp, 1993). As the experiences and challenges unfolded, the participants increased their self-efficacy by learning to control and function within the many social and contextual variables. The research journey followed the participants as they constructed newly found expectations of the role of inclusive educators. At the end of the community experiences, the results of the study suggested that the participants had made progress in resolving their role uncertainty. Their new perspectives looked forward in providing more inclusive practices for individuals with disabilities with increased equitable, social and learning opportunities. Overall, the student teachers' learning paths guided deeper understanding about the roles of inclusive educators. The next point examines some of the limitations of the study.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were a number of limitations to the current study which may affect the generalisability of the findings to a full group of student teachers, including the volunteer status of the participants, the small number of participants, the shortage of high-quality inclusive community placements, the reliance on the researcher to promote the participants' reflective processes, along with the time demands involved in carrying out the practical experiences. Foremost, the small number of participants in the current study makes it unlikely to infer that the results would generalise to a large group of student teachers. A key factor in the success of the community experiences in contributing to the participants' constructive role understandings was their reported openness and willingness to undertake the challenges of interacting with people with disabilities, outside of the usual school experiences. Thus, despite their fears and reservations, all of the participants in the current study readily volunteered and appeared highly motivated to enhance their learning and understanding of people with disabilities.

Similar situated learning studies may find it difficult to replicate the participants' high level of motivation, especially if the community experiences were made compulsory. In the current study, there were subject-related incentives for student teachers to participate in the practical experiences. Instead of writing an assigned essay, the twelve participants in the current study along with other student teachers who also participated in the community experiences, completed the required number of hours and wrote a short two page overall analysis statement of their reflective learning journals for partial subject assessment by their lecturers.

It would be difficult to offer similar flexibility in subject assessment to include a practical component if there were insufficient suitable placements for student teachers to undertake relevant community experiences.

Admittedly, the current study was limited by the lack of sufficient high-quality, inclusive community places. Although there were three different types of community settings selected, covering home respite experiences, after school recreational experiences and adult independent living groups, in each of these settings there was a mix of high and low quality placements. For example, it was difficult to recruit sufficient families of young children with disabilities for the home respite experiences. Understandably, some parents of children with disabilities receiving early intervention services were hesitant in allowing unfamiliar student teachers to provide respite in their home. As a result of the shortages in placements some student teachers were placed with peer partners to extend the opportunity to as many volunteers as possible, however, this teaming arrangement was not always conducive to the family and sibling dynamics. Ideally, the availability of extra placements would allow for more inclusive options, better quality control and would mean that student teachers could participate in and make comparisons across more than one placement, consolidating their learning across contexts.

A further limitation of the current study was its reliance on the researcher to stimulate the participant's reflective and reflexive processes. The researcher supported the participants' reflective inquiry throughout the duration of the community experiences by meeting with each participant on an individual basis. During semi-structured interviews, the researcher

guided the participants to reflect on alternative approaches and consider what they might do to change the situation in future professional and personal contexts, particularly in situations in which the quality of the community settings was not high. The participants were guided in moving from descriptive reflection to question their reactions and examine alternative perspectives. Thus, the benefits to the student teachers of participating in the community experiences would be reduced if the researcher lacked skills in enhancing reflective and reflexive processes. Another limitation to the study concerned the additional time demands on the researcher and the participants.

The time involved in recruiting, organising and carrying out the community placements placed considerable demands on the researcher and the participants. Initially, the researcher contacted a number of community organisations and families in an attempt to secure suitable community placements. Following the agreement to participate in the study, the participants then made introductory visits to meet the individuals with disabilities, parents and other family members and relevant service providers and to negotiate their specific role. In many cases, the practical experiences increased the contact hours for the participants beyond the allocated time because of unexpected variations to routines in the homes and centres. The current study was also limited to individual self-reporting modes and peer interaction occurred on an informal basis among the participants.

In hindsight, it might be advisable for teacher educators and researchers considering extending the study to a large group, to plan and conduct the student teachers' community experiences with the administrative and professional support of practicum staff.

Alternatively, extending the practical component into other teacher education program areas may embed the community experiences with other curricular areas, creating more awareness of inclusive practices. Following on from this discussion, the final chapter draws some overall conclusions and provides a number of suggestions for future research. It also sets out some underlying principles for teacher educators as a basis for further developing student teachers' deeper inclusive educator role understandings.

CHAPTER 10: IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

The conclusions and implications arising from this study have relevance for teacher educators, researchers, policy makers and inclusive educator practitioners concerned with improving understandings and services for people with disabilities, and in particular, their individual social and learning needs. Foremost the findings of this study led to the conclusions drawn in Section 1 that situated learning does offer a viable way to address the complex processes involved in constructing understanding of the multi-faceted role undertaken by inclusive educators. Whereas previous inclusive research studies have focussed on preparing student teachers within classroom areas of assessment, teaching and learning strategies, this current study took a wider contextual approach in order to give student teachers more in-depth, community-based perspectives. Thus, through involving student teachers in out-of-course community experiences with people with disabilities, the current study afforded an innovative approach to examine situated contexts as unique learning environments for constructing role understandings in preparation for becoming inclusive educators. Then in Section 2 there are seven underlying principles arising from the current study which are designed to enhance both teacher educators' and student teachers' deeper understanding of the role of inclusive educators. Finally, the implications of the current study for teacher educators are presented in Section 3.

1. CONCLUSIONS

The present study found that participating in community-based situated experiences successfully enhanced the student teachers' independent learning while at the same time, increased their awareness of the diverse learning needs of individuals with disabilities (Lim & Quah, 2004; Freire & Cesar, 2003). Understandings presented in the data about inclusive teaching produced dynamic ideas about the role of inclusive educators. The participants' reflective data showed a stronger commitment to restructuring classrooms to accommodate all children as the pivotal role for inclusive educators. Additionally, the participants reported that they wanted to change, modify and refine existing community practices for people with disabilities in accordance with their newly formed belief systems (York, 1995). Thus, they envisaged working in advocacy roles beyond the classroom to develop more inclusive practices. Such findings about role understandings were in line with previous research in teacher education, which viewed curriculum as a life journey (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and a moral undertaking (Elbaz, 1992).

In conjunction with theoretical aspects of the teacher education course, situated learning opportunities increased the participants' knowledge of suitable strategies for teaching individuals with disabilities (Groundwater-Smith & Hayes, 2001; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). Despite the immediate setbacks experienced by the participants in each of the three community contexts, dialogic reflection facilitated them in exploring alternative approaches and new perspectives.

Contrary to what the student teachers had witnessed in some negative community situations, the participants reported that they were still eager to pursue individualised teaching approaches in inclusive learning environments. Hence, the participants identified a range of alternative strategies as outcomes of their real-life experiences. For example, the participants' reflective comments at the independent living centre highlighted the importance of basic living and social skills in fostering the independence of an individual with a disability. In contrast, the recreation and respite programs encouraged participants to reflect on communication strategies to promote responsiveness and collaboration so that services would be more coordinated in their efforts to meet an individual's changing needs.

Clearly, situated learning was a powerful tool for enhancing participants' constructive perspectives of ideal inclusive practices (Waterhouse, 2004; Meltzer & Reid, 1994). Dialogic reflection was instrumental in raising the participants' expectations of what ideal practices needed to offer. Together, reflexive and reflective processes, led to the participants' situated learning. The community experiences facilitated the participants' wider consideration of socio-cultural notions, such as the rights and respect of people with disabilities. In unique ways, each of the community contexts heightened the participants' expectations about what ideally should be offered by inclusive educators (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Importantly, reflective and reflexive inquiry integrated the participants' cognitive social learning processes (Llyod, 2002), guiding them in constructing deeper professional and personal understandings of inclusive practices.

Contextual influences steered the situated learning of the participants and allowed them to gain a comprehensive understanding of at least some central aspects of their prospective roles as inclusive educators. Having formulated ideal approaches to inclusive practices, the participants turned their attention to the relevant teaching and learning strategies, necessary for carrying out the role of an inclusive educator in meeting the needs of a more diverse student population (Kame'enui et al., 2002). Thus, by the end of the current study, the findings portrayed that these participants had become more focussed on applying their learning from the community experiences to enhancing successful inclusive teaching practices.

Continual quality improvement processes depend on equipping professional staff with formal qualifications, expertise and ongoing professional learning. The findings of this study showed that engaging in out-of-course community experiences gave the student teachers a deeper appreciation of relating to people with disabilities as individuals with additional special needs. The student teachers reported their stronger motivations towards becoming an inclusive educator having reflected on their real-life community experiences. As a result of their understandings from community experiences, the student teachers embraced establishing productive personal and professional relationships both with individuals with disabilities and the other people engaged with them.

The current study portrayed the enhanced meaning that comes from reflecting on personal and professional experiences. The individuality of the student teachers' responses to their out-of-course situated community experiences reflected the diverse nature of the participants'

understandings of their prospective roles as inclusive educators. The underlying principles presented in this chapter raise many of these role related understandings. As a result of the community experiences, the student teachers reported deeper knowledge and understandings about people with disabilities and the influences of social, cultural and political issues affecting them in functioning across various socio-cultural systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The main research question sought to examine the variables that shape the nature of the student teacher's understanding of the role of an inclusive educator. The findings suggest that active participation in community experiences with individuals with disabilities and their carers was a powerful influence on all of the student teachers. The quality of these shared interactions with individuals with disabilities was the primary variable which contributed to clarifying role understandings. The participants constructed understandings about successful life-long goals, assessing individual needs, structuring the learning environment, building on the initiative and interests of the individual, thereby providing individuals with disabilities with meaningful opportunities for learning, socialising, communicating and achieving their potential.

The student teachers' situated perspectives focussed their role understandings on the quality of interactions, the quality of tasks and activities, the quality of teaching and learning approaches relevant to the nature of the individual's cognitive, social, emotional and communicative development. They envisaged their role as providing individualised support using naturalistic approaches with adapted curricula and modified recreational, leisure and daily routines. In short, an inclusive educator's role was described as ensuring higher levels

of engagement for individuals with disabilities through promoting high quality student to student relationships; productive teamwork involving teacher, student, parent and carer relationships; negotiation of teacher, student and community worker partnerships; ultimately, strengthening complex social processes to build responsive inclusive communities.

The current study provides insights into the nature of how the student teachers constructed their role understandings by engaging in *communities of practice* (Ainscow et al., 2003, p.231). Reflexive and reflective learning strategies played a significant role in guiding student teachers to overcome their initial reservations, negative assumptions and perceived barriers to understanding the needs of individuals with disabilities. By the end of the study, the results demonstrated that each of the participant's inclusive educator's role understandings had changed considerably as a result of the community experiences. The findings of this current study gave rise to the formulation of a number of underlying principles to underpin practice in teacher education in promoting inclusive role understandings.

2. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

The following underlying principles offer guidelines to enhance the education of inclusive educators by depicting the essential values and standards which underpin quality inclusive practices. Adherence to these principles challenges teacher educators and practitioners to embark on a more holistic systemic approach to improve inclusive educational policies and practices. The underlying principles cover critical aspects of an inclusive educator's role

including socio-cultural issues such as diversity, equity and ethics. The principles also address the need for fostering positive attitudes, collaboration and teamwork, while maintaining a critical focus on pedagogy, proactive early intervention, accountability and reflexive learning processes. They provide teacher educators with a guiding framework for ensuring quality inclusive practices to connect situated learning environments across expanded community contexts. Ideally, the underlying principles are designed to enhance deeper understanding of the complexities and uncertainties involved in the role of an inclusive educator.

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES FOR BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATOR

These seven underlying principles address the multi-faceted role of inclusive educators in meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities in community contexts. They include:

Principle 1: *Promote inclusive policies and practices which encourage a positive attitude towards individuals with disabilities and a genuine commitment to making a real difference to improve their lives and educational outcomes.*

Notions of ethics and good teaching underpin the role of an inclusive educator (Korthagen, 2004). Inclusive educators' beliefs and attitudes about their roles and responsibilities influence the culture of schools and community contexts, contributing to the ways that they

support students with disabilities (Carrington & Elkins, 2002). Understandably, committed inclusive educators strive to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities and raise their valued status in the wider community. Effort is required to prepare other children, teachers and the wider community to accept individuals with disabilities and to improve inclusive education (Thomas, 2001). Being a part of the lives of people with disabilities typically enriches a constructive understanding of them as individuals. Additionally, connecting these individuals with those who play a significant role in their lives generally brings a richer understanding of their everyday needs and the impact of varying socio-cultural influences (Voltz et al., 1999; Sileo et al., 1998).

The participants in the current study discovered that there was an apparent need to promote more positive attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, improve the quality of their daily lives and advocate wider acceptance of their participation in the general community. Initially, the participants' accounts revealed that they were keen to increase their understandings, knowledge and skills in relation to their prospective inclusive classroom roles. The research findings suggest, however, that active participation in social interactions with people with disabilities, their families and carers, in the main, encouraged the participants to adopt wider community perspectives than were previously held by them at the commencement of the study.

The participants reported that they had changed their role understandings as a result of interacting with previously unknown individuals with disabilities and through subsequent reflective processes of questioning whether existing practices were appropriate. The

voluntary community experiences provided a range of valuable opportunities for the participants to interact with individuals with disabilities in ways that facilitated their commitment to improving inclusive practices within a more pluralistic society while enhancing their deeper personal and professional learning.

Principle 2: *Adopt a 'whole family unit' philosophy which recognises the diverse socio-cultural influences and personal relationships shaping the lives of individuals with disabilities.*

Inclusive educators need to demonstrate their awareness that the nature of relationships plays an important role in catering for the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities and their families. Family members often have unique understandings about the individual's specific needs. Over the last decade, there is a trend towards increasing support for both the individual and his/her family (Bailey & Wolery, 1992). This partnership approach with families is based on enhancing the quality of life of family members by empowering the family's functioning using strength-based approaches (Powell, Batsche, Ferro, & Dunlap, 1997). In recent years, service providers in the field of early childhood intervention have adapted developmentally appropriate curricula (Cook, Tessier, & Klien, 2000) and adopted individualised family service plans, detailing their strong commitment to family-centred practices (Dunst et al., 1994). Such family-sensitive practices value and recognise the importance of the family members' care-giving role in supporting individuals with disabilities (Bruder, 2000). While valuing the input from family members as key decision-

makers, previous research has also shown that addressing the concerns of families requires systematic planning and regular communication in order for individuals with disabilities to make smooth transitions across a range of settings (Bentley-Williams & Butterfield, 1996).

The current research builds on these previous findings by linking personal and professional ecologies of student teachers across contexts to offer situated learning opportunities affecting individuals with disabilities and their families. The findings revealed that adequate support for individuals with disabilities and their families requires ongoing coordination of life-long goals and the sharing of expertise and resources among the various service providers. Thus, the effective preparation of interdisciplinary professionals for their prospective roles is enhanced by promoting family-centred practices together with positive attitudes which acknowledge and respect the dynamic and diverse nature of families within broader socio-cultural systems operating within local communities and societal frameworks.

Principle 3: *Embrace proactive preventative approaches which encourage timely early intervention and transition planning to maximise an individual's participation in inclusive services.*

Ideally, proactive approaches need to start early on in the lives of individuals with disabilities to identify, plan and provide timely support which will improve the social and learning outcomes for both the individual and his/her family (Dunst, 1999). Where possible, proactive and preventative monitoring of individuals with disabilities and their families generates a

more systematic, sustained and effective marshalling of support across available services (Odom et al., 2004). Thus, building support for individuals with disabilities and their families in the critical early years and thereafter, at transition points throughout the individual's life, enhances the person's and his/her family's potential to function independently. Inclusive educators need to be equipped with strategies that will assist with a less stressful transition process for all those involved (Carruthers, 2001).

Participants in the current study reported that the nature of caring and supporting individuals with disabilities often placed extra time, energy, social, emotional, intellectual, physical and financial demands on individuals with disabilities, their families and team members. In particular, the participants' comments highlighted the benefits of receiving early respite support for individuals and their families, thereby preventing and reducing the stress, anxiety and exhaustion likely to result from the individual's ongoing dependency on others. Participants, however, in contrast claimed that poor management practices often caused unnecessary tensions and negativity as a result of staff and family members feeling unsupported. As well, participants held concerns that unplanned and ad hoc practices culminated in the inefficient use of scarce resources, reducing the choices and inclusive options for individuals with disabilities.

Principle 4: *Provide opportunities for participating in collaborative approaches with generic and specialised service providers to enhance access and equity for individuals with disabilities.*

Social justice and equity for individuals with disabilities are fundamental issues relating to human rights (Llyod, 2002). Recently, social capital theorists have contributed to inclusive practice by arguing for new paradigms to build the capacity of people with disabilities and their families to participate in community life (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2004). The long-term goal of inclusive practices is to achieve coordinated universal services with access, support and equity for all individuals with disabilities. Achieving access and equity for individuals with disabilities to participate in inclusive services requires generic and specialised service providers working together to offer all individuals equitable social and learning opportunities.

Effective collaboration across several disciplines including education, health and community support enhances the quality of inclusive practices for individuals with disabilities and their families/carers (Dettmer et al., 2002). Professionals and those committed to improving existing practices for people with disabilities need to work cooperatively to capitalise on the strengths of the individual and the family members (Powell et al., 1997). Collaborative approaches should encourage responsiveness to the circumstances and aspirations of the individuals with disabilities and their families, building structures that support ongoing changes (Kugelmass, 2001). It is argued in the literature that collaborative efforts ought to interrupt current ways of thinking to create space for examining new possibilities in moving inclusive practice forward (Ainscow et al., 2003), while providing all students with differentiated and appropriate education (Flem et al., 2004).

In recognising the value of parent and professional teamwork, the participants in the current study identified more conducive ways to address the social and learning needs of individuals with disabilities, supported by their families and community networks. Mutual collaboration between all stakeholders was considered to be essential to relieve some of the added resource strain of caring for and delivering services to an individual with a disability. Thus, collaborative approaches may draw on mutual support from formal and informal partnerships to assist generic and specialised service providers working effectively side by side to sustain and improve inclusive practices.

Principle 5: *Ensure ethical practices which afford individuals with disabilities their moral entitlements for privacy, respect and dignity.*

Ensuring ethical practices raises concerns about the quality of life of individuals with disabilities (Hilliard, 1992) and challenges service providers to examine better ways in which to provide appropriate support. Issues of labelling individuals with disabilities as the basis for allocating resources have impacted negatively on how others perceive them (Howe & Miramontes, 1991). Ethical deliberation needs to consider the extent of support and resources that the person with a disability requires to achieve equity with others and to reach their full potential (Ashman & Elkins, 2002; Howe & Miramontes, 1991). Preparing inclusive educators for their role in protecting the welfare of individuals with disabilities involves developing an awareness of the conditions and problems they might encounter in practice (Ainscow et al., 2003).

As a result of the community experiences, the participants raised sensitive moral and ethical issues affecting their daily interactions with individuals with disabilities. Their suggestions for improving the individual's quality of life included promoting inclusive policies and practices throughout the wider community which recognised the person's right to ethical and moral practices. The participating student teachers voiced their concerns with preventing and overcoming situations in which individuals with disabilities were marginalised by society. Participants reported their fears about individuals with disabilities being mistreated and teased by others. The findings showed that having direct contact with a person with a severe disability, served as a powerful catalyst in increasing the participants' broader understanding of the impact of the disability, while also highlighting the necessary resource implications, including the importance of social networks for people with disabilities. For example, in situations in which the person's high dependency on others for his or her personal care was apparent, the participants became acutely aware of the person's right for privacy, respect and dignity. Additionally, age appropriate considerations were particularly relevant in carrying out personal-social interactions with individuals with disabilities who had low-functioning levels of communication, cognitive, physical and social-emotional skills.

Principle 6: *Focus on pedagogy to promote transparent outcome-based learning measures and evidence-based decisions which facilitate increased professional accountability.*

Inclusive practice requires increasing awareness of appropriate goals, assessment tools, active learning support and resources for individuals with disabilities (Pleasants et al., 1998; Renzaglia et al., 1997). It provides an approach that strengthens general pedagogy (Flem et al., 2004) and benefits both general and Special Education (Fisher et al., 2002), while requiring a whole school effort to be successful (Mamlin, 1999). Holistic pedagogical approaches engage inclusive educators in planning, coordinating, delivering, monitoring and evaluating generic and specialised service provisions across the individual's lifespan. Effective instructional strategies involve modifying teaching and the curriculum to cater for individual differences (Carrington & Elkins, 2002). Individuals with disabilities are more likely to generalise mastered skills when learning opportunities are structured across a range of persons, places and activities (Snell & Brown, 2000).

Outcome-based learning measures (Kame'enui et al., 2002) can demonstrate an individual's progress in all relevant areas of functioning, including cognitive, communication, domestic, social, physical, mobility, recreational/leisure and vocational needs. Evidence from assessment, goal setting, teaching and learning strategies, individual outcomes and progress records need to inform accountability and decisions affecting service provisions (Algozzine, Ysseldyke, & Elliott, 1997). In delivering appropriate educational programs, inclusive educators are faced with the challenge of tailoring the teaching and learning activities to meet the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities. Individualised educational programs therefore need to cover all areas of functioning affecting the person's daily life. Inclusive teaching and learning activities need to build on the personal strengths and interests of

individuals with disabilities and their peers in stimulating, culturally responsive environments (Sands et al., 2000; Voltz et al., 1999).

In the current study, the participants expressed inclusive values in believing that all individuals have the right to an appropriate education in their local school and community. Unfortunately, the participants also reported breakdown in systems and organisations caused by a lack of accountability, along with negative staff members' and prejudiced community attitudes. In contrast, participants placed emphasis on their ability to relate effectively to individuals with disabilities as a pre-requisite for understanding and meeting their specific needs. They identified multiple opportunities for ongoing life-long learning across home, school, vocational and community contexts, encouraging reciprocal social and learning interactions between individuals with disabilities, their family members, peers and service providers.

Principle 7: *Engage in reflexive and reflective inquiry which interconnects knowledge, skills and situated learning experiences, leading to deeper role understandings in meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities.*

Reflexive and reflective inquiry provide opportunities for professionals to consider changes and improvements to current practices by examining alternative approaches from multiple viewpoints (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Previous research with student teachers in practice-based professional development programs has demonstrated the benefit of reflective

processes as tools for developing and changing perspectives of Special Education needs (Llyod, 2002). Identifying the social, physical, political, geographic and educational barriers to inclusive practices increases awareness of the variables that shape the nature of the setting (Arthur et al., 2003).

The findings in the current study revealed that engaging in socio-cultural reflective strategies alerted the participants to consider the criteria for ensuring the quality of inclusive practices. Not only did engaging in reflective processes increase the participants' awareness of issues, it also promoted their more informed acceptance of the rights of people with disabilities to inclusive services and the need for greater staff accountability. Reflecting on the barriers to ideal inclusive practices raised the participants' awareness of critical aspects for educational service improvement. As a result of their community experiences the student teachers identified the barriers and tensions impeding inclusive practices, highlighting pre-service areas for teacher education development. Situated experiences had guided the participants' understandings of the social and learning needs of individuals with disabilities and according to the participants' reports, made them feel more confident of being able to undertake their future roles as inclusive educators successfully. Each of the student teachers' situations had meaningfully engaged them in powerful social interactions and learning opportunities with people with disabilities.

The underlying principles presented encompass an analysis of the student teachers' shared role understandings while also providing teacher educators with new directions for widening the scope of inclusive pre-service professional experiences to include situated learning

opportunities within broader community contexts. Future research will need to question and examine the contribution of reflexive and reflective situated learning across these expanded contexts as a way of understanding changing roles and adapting to individuals' needs in local communities, schools and centres. By replicating the constructive and analytical processes used in this current study, it may be possible to deepen understandings of self as learner, the nature of individuals with disabilities, specialised teaching and learning strategies and inclusive practices.

Future directions

The results of the current investigation suggest that it is timely for all student teachers to have a greater presence in their wider community contexts. Just as recent reforms by educational policy leaders and practitioners have created more opportunities for community and family involvement in schools and centres, so too there is a need for university researchers and practitioners to embrace community linkages (Atelier, 2004; Odom et al., 2004). Thus, induction into the teaching profession needs to be responsive and proactive in encouraging more diverse community-based opportunities for student teachers. New collaborative partnerships may shed light on social learning processes for connecting student teachers' biographical experiences with their situated learning in wider socio-cultural contexts. Further research needs to examine the influences of these diverse community contexts for effective ways to enhance student teachers' reflexive and reflective processes, while instilling ideal personal and professional qualities.

Further research is needed to expand biographical reflexive and reflective orientated-inquiry into new and broader areas of situated teaching and learning contexts. The model of Biographical Reflective Pedagogy (Bentley-Williams, 2000) served as a conceptual framework for organising data and findings from the current research. Additional research is needed to examine the variables and their impact on situated learning in different community contexts. Future research would benefit from examining the perspectives of the student teachers in light of the views of community service providers and parents. The challenge for teacher educators is to go beyond the traditional classroom experiences currently presented to undergraduate student teachers. These current practices tend to rely on somewhat narrow, conservative apprenticeship types of approaches to learning, reducing the likelihood that student teachers will be confronted with the real-life socio-cultural and ethical issues currently facing all educators. The final section concludes with the implications of the study for teacher educators.

3. RELEVANT ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

The findings in the current study revealed that the participants' orientations towards individuals with disabilities changed in ways that made the social learning process transformative within *communities of practice* (Ainscow et al., 2003, p.231). Participants' reflexive accounts suggested that they constructed an emerging personalised philosophy and belief system which supported creating inclusive classroom communities to sustain learner-centred programs (Kugelmass, 2001). Throughout the volunteer community experiences, the

reported data demonstrated that the student teachers became increasingly aware of real tensions in working in the disability field.

The results of the current investigation showed that the participants struggled in dealing with the contradictions between inclusive versus segregated practices. Principles of equity underpinned the participants' expectations that people with disabilities should have greater access, presence and participation in inclusive services. Consequently, the key socio-cultural issues of diversity and equity have relevance for teacher educators' pedagogy in changing negative attitudes about inclusive practices (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Llyod, 2002). The current study's findings illustrate the complexities and difficulties of adequately preparing student teachers for their future role in inclusive environments. As an implication of these findings, teacher educators need greater awareness of their student teachers' unique biographies in order to build on their capacity to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities and be able to engage them productively into community life.

The merger of general and Special Education into a combined notion of inclusive education has changed educational trends in schools and centres (Odom et al., 2004; McRae, 1996). Understandably, the transition to inclusive practices requires collaborative working arrangements to overcome existing barriers and to look for new ways to make better use of available resources (Atelier, 2004). The current study's findings showed that socio-cultural influences affecting the nature of student teachers' interactions in the community contexts, challenged the participants to scrutinise their assumptions about people with disabilities. The issue of diversity emerged as the participants grappled with understanding diverse apparent

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and hidden differences in the needs and levels of functioning of individuals with disabilities. These shared experiences with individuals presenting with different physical, communication, cognitive and social-emotional needs, influenced the participants' perceptions of what they considered their teacher education course should offer. Their participation in the community experiences generated an enthusiasm for fostering individualised programming approaches in the preparation of all student teachers to become inclusive educators. Thus, the findings of the current study highlight the need for teacher educators to include knowledge, skills and experiences in individualised programming approaches which facilitate all student teachers' deeper understandings of inclusive teaching and learning practices, increasing their self-efficacy in programming for diverse learners.

The findings in the current study demonstrated that identifying the factors that influence an individual's learning is complex and multifaceted. Establishing links with the community helped the student teachers to understand their future role as involving more than classroom practices. The participants gained practical experiences which assisted them to make sense of the inequity of situations, previously unfamiliar to them. The integration of reflexive and reflective practices into wider socio-cultural contexts facilitated the student teachers' understandings of the social networks of individuals with disabilities. As well, the findings revealed more collaborative ways of promoting the student teachers' independent professional and personal learning (Ainscow et al., 2003).

According to the research on reflection in teacher education, reflective thinking connects ideas with underlying beliefs, allowing for uncertainty and doubts, while capturing a more

holistic approach guides learners in becoming a good teacher (Korthagen, 2004; Smith & Lovat, 2003; Brookfield, 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995). In the current study, reflective and reflexive processes attempted to engage the student teachers in higher-order thinking and to consider possible alternative strategies to improve learning outcomes. More importantly, reflexive and reflective practice were intended to guide the participants in identifying abuses of power in systems and services, as well as alerting them to social justice issues, such as the privileges operating in the community for able-bodied people (McKenna, 1999).

As a result of experiencing inappropriate levels of inclusive practices in their community experiences, the participants struggled with their idealised notions of identity (Knowles, 1992). Although some participants engaged in reflexive inquiry which situated the context of their personal learning with their future careers (Cole & Knowles, 2000; Cole, Elijah, & Knowles, 1998; Knowles et al., 1994; Knowles, 1992) not all participants were able to adopt a critically reflexive perspective. For these participants, a more reflective approach was achieved. Clearly, there remains an unmet challenge for teacher educators to find better ways to promote critically reflective processes as a basis for all student teachers to reach deeper understandings of individuals with disabilities.

Thus, an analysis of the findings of this current study indicated that prospective inclusive educator's role understandings were constructed through the integration of four main situated learning processes. First, situated community experiences fostered the participants' positive attitudes and encouraged them to adopt more open-minded ways of relating to individuals with disabilities. Second, engaging in these everyday interactions with people with

disabilities allayed the participants' initial fears and uncertainties, replacing their insecure feelings with an increased sense of accomplishment and improved self-confidence. In several cases, critical incidents which occurred during the community experiences, challenged the student teachers' previously unfounded negative assumptions about people, who appeared or behaved somewhat differently to the norms established in society.

Throughout the community experiences, ongoing reflective processes steered the participants' learning, increasing their broader awareness of micro and macro systemic, socio-cultural and political issues. Consequently, a third situated learning process revealed that the participants became more discerning in identifying the gaps and inappropriate practices evident in current service provisions. Additionally, reflecting on the community experiences prompted the participants to raise their awareness of controversial issues as they scrutinised more closely the alternatives to the less than ideal, negative and inappropriate staff practices. Through the processes of identifying and dealing with the shortcomings in existing services, the participants focussed their attention on the need for better service coordination and collaboration across community contexts. As an outcome of their community experiences, the participants' reflections divulged their main concern with the importance of long-term planning and ongoing life-long support for a person with a disability. They recognised the need for collaboration across environments as being crucial in sustaining the individual's continual learning, development and independent functioning.

A final constructive process involved situated reflexive learning as the participants individually came to understand their own future role within a wider systems framework. The

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results of the respite and community experiences indicated that having real-life exposure to individuals with disabilities in community contexts successfully enhanced the student teachers' personal and professional knowledge. In terms of their own learning, the results showed that engaging in situated meaningful experiences undeniably contributed to the participants' perceptions of their increased self-efficacy. The findings brought to light the benefit of reflexive situated learning as a constructive process which facilitated the student teachers' deeper role understandings while enhancing their stronger commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities.

In summary, the student teachers' situated reflexive and reflective learning processes strengthened their abilities to make connections across contexts. They became mindful of socio-cultural issues which adversely affected the quality of lives of individuals with disabilities. These insights subsequently provided the basis for the formulation of underlying principles for promoting role understandings as a guide for constructive developments in the inclusive teacher education field. The emphasis is on how student teachers can successfully meet the needs of individuals with disabilities within a broader community context.

Finally, an analysis of the findings showed that the situated experiences significantly contributed to the student teachers' understandings of their pivotal educational role in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Moreover, by situating the participants' experiences in families' homes and community settings it was possible to extend the student teachers' role perceptions into everyday life experiences affecting individuals with disabilities across their lifespan. The implications of the current study therefore have relevance beyond the teacher

educator field to professionals from other disciplines, similarly committed to improving services and the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. It is envisaged that in addition to finding answers to best practices in teacher education, further research into community-based situated learning would strengthen inclusive policies, practices and curricula. In light of the findings of the current study, the journey towards becoming an inclusive educator is both personally and professionally challenging.

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NODE LISTING

1	**(1) /Agents**
2	(1 4) /Agents/Participant
3	(1 5) /Agents/People with Disability
4	(1 6) /Agents/Uni Peers
5	(1 7) /Agents/Friend with Disability
6	(1 8) /Agents/Family Nuclear
7	(1 9) /Agents/Family Extended
8	(1 10) /Agents/Staff-Carers
9	(1 11) /Agents/Teachers
10	(1 12) /Agents/Teacher's Aide
11	(1 13) /Agents/Respite Parents
12	(1 14) /Agents/Society
13	(1 15) /Agents/Government
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15	(2 1) /Context/Schooling
16	(2 2) /Context/Community
17	(2 2 1) /Context/Community/Special School
18	(2 2 2) /Context/Community/Work Placement
19	(2 2 3) /Context/Community/Special Unit
20	(2 2 5) /Context/Community/Public Schools
21	(2 3) /Context/Uni
22	(2 3 1) /Context/Uni/Special Ed Course
23	(2 3 2) /Context/Uni/General Course
24	(2 3 3) /Context/Uni/Prac
25	(2 3 4) /Context/Uni/Socialising
26	(2 4) /Context/Agencies
27	(2 4 1) /Context/Agencies/Recreation Program
28	(2 4 2) /Context/Agencies/Indep't Living
29	(2 4 3) /Context/Agencies/Respite
30	(2 6) /Context/Participant's Home
31	**(3) /Stage**
32	(3 1) /Stage/Prior
33	(3 2) /Stage/Current
34	(3 3) /Stage/Post
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36	(4 1) /Response/Action

37	(4 1 2) /Response/Action/Defending
38	(4 1 4) /Response/Action/Comparing Notes
39	(4 1 12) /Response/Action/Communication Dilemmas
40	(4 1 15) /Response/Action/Setting Boundaries
41	(4 1 18) /Response/Action/Making Progress
42	(4 2) /Response/Emotion
43	(4 2 1) /Response/Emotion/Enjoyment
44	(4 2 2) /Response/Emotion/Confidence building
45	(4 2 3) /Response/Emotion/Comfortable
46	(4 2 4) /Response/Emotion/Relaxed
47	(4 2 5) /Response/Emotion/Frustration
48	(4 2 18) /Response/Emotion/It's Hard
49	(4 2 19) /Response/Emotion/Uncomfortable
50	(4 2 21) /Response/Emotion/Guilty
51	(4 3) /Response/Intellectual
52	(4 3 4) /Response/Intellectual/Atmosphere
53	(4 3 5) /Response/Intellectual/Resources
54	(4 3 9) /Response/Intellectual/Acceptance
55	(4 3 11) /Response/Intellectual/Awareness
56	(4 3 15) /Response/Intellectual/Inclusion
57	(4 3 17) /Response/Intellectual/Parent Break
58	(4 3 24) /Response/Intellectual/Not Learning Anything

59	**(5) /Reflection**
60	(5 1) /Reflection/Process
61	(5 1 1) /Reflection/Process/On Action
62	(5 1 2) /Reflection/Process/For Action
63	(5 1 3) /Reflection/Process/On~For Action
64	(5 1 4) /Reflection/Process/In Action
65	(5 2) /Reflection/Critical
66	(5 3) /Reflection/Dialogic
67	(5 4) /Reflection/Descriptive

68	**(6) /Philosophy**
69	(6 1) /Philosophy/Beliefs
70	(6 1 3) /Philosophy/Beliefs/Funding
71	(6 1 5) /Philosophy/Beliefs/Inclusion
72	(6 1 6) /Philosophy/Beliefs/Rights
73	(6 1 7) /Philosophy/Beliefs/Labelling
74	(6 1 9) /Philosophy/Beliefs/Respect
75	(6 1 11) /Philosophy/Beliefs/Special Ed Teaching
76	(6 3) /Philosophy/Attitudes
77	(6 3 1) /Philosophy/Attitudes/Acceptance
78	(6 3 2) /Philosophy/Attitudes/Open minded