The Academic Identity of Students in Early Childhood
Field-Based Initial Teacher Education

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Abstract

Student academic identity is defined as the appropriation of academic values and practices within a sense of self, reflecting the willingness and commitment to the practices of the academic community (White & Lowenthal, 2011). As such academic identity is an important aspect of becoming academically literate. Within this research student academic identity is identified as consisting of five elements: self-theory, achievement indicators, agency-beliefs, motivation and dispositions. There is limited research presenting a holistic view of the phenomenon examining all of these five elements. Furthermore, my extensive search yielded no available literature on student academic identity pertaining to early childhood Field-Based Initial Teacher Education (FBITE) in Aotearoa New Zealand. With this in mind, the overall aim of this research was to critically examine the nature and significance of academic identity for students in early childhood FBITE in Aotearoa New Zealand. To achieve this aim, questions were posed which explored how students experienced academic identity; the multiple identities of students and their relationship to student academic identity; the multiple contexts of learning and their relationship to student academic identity; and finally the significance of student academic identity.

A structural-constructivist approach was used to investigate the significance of context on personal experiences of academic identity. The external contexts of significance included: programmes of study, the early childhood community and the wider socio-political context of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Within this theoretical framework an interpretive qualitative research design was used with participation from four tertiary providers of FBITE as well as from Associate Teachers from the early childhood community. Data were collected from students, Teacher Educators and Associate Teachers utilising open-ended questionnaires, group and individual interviews, in conjunction with documentary analysis.
The findings show that, for students in FBITE programmes, engagement in academic ways of being, knowing and doing is ultimately driven by a desire to achieve professional credentialing standards. As such student academic identity is intertwined with emerging professional identities, which hold precedence. It was identified that the development of a student academic identity is complex, influenced by learning contexts and the conflicting roles and commitments held in addition to being a student. The research findings have implications for curriculum design, programme development, student academic literacies and regulation of programmes of initial teacher education.
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Chapter One: Introduction

_Learning is not just acquiring skills and information; it is becoming a certain person—a knower in a context where what it means to know is negotiated with respect to the regime of competence of a community._

(Wenger, 2010, p. 2)

Setting the scene

The credentialing of teachers in the early childhood sector in Aotearoa New Zealand has faced a turbulent history, which remains unsettled even to this day. Despite claims that participation in quality early childhood education is critical to building firm foundations for children’s later learning and development (Ministry of Education, 2002), the credentialing of early childhood teachers as a contributing factor to quality provision remains open to the whim of Governmental preferences at any one time. The requirements to introduce professional registration and increase the numbers of qualified early childhood teachers, established within the strategic plan _Pathways to the Future_ (Ministry of Education, 2002), were a step towards establishing equality within the early childhood sector. Furthermore, to raise the profile of early childhood teachers, the move to attain pay parity with the compulsory sector early childhood teachers gained momentum. With a requirement that to meet the same credentials as teachers within the compulsory sector early childhood teachers would be required to attain qualifications at bachelor degree level, despite the two year diploma being the agreed minimum credential to meet registration requirements (Ministry of Education, 2002).

The introduction of the strategic plan for teacher registration and then measures to attain pay parity meant that many early childhood teachers sought to update or retrain to meet the required minimum standard of a NZQA (New Zealand Qualification Authority) Level 7 diploma.
or to upgrade their qualification to a bachelor degree to secure pay parity and to potentially remain in positions in which they had worked successfully for many years (Findsen, 2009). It was the academe that took on the role of providing authority and legitimacy to the credentialing process. Institutions replaced delivery of the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) with that of a Bachelor of Teaching (Early childhood education) (BTchgECE) once it was noted that, despite being of a similar NZQA level, those with a BTchgECE were paid considerably more than those with a Diploma of Teaching (Careersnz mana rapuara aotearoa, 2014). These changes in credentialing have been equated with an increase in the academic demands placed on students as institutional programme development was required to show the points of difference between the previously delivered diploma and the new BTchgECE.

As increased levels of qualification have been equated to higher academic levels of study, students entering the realm of early childhood teacher education are faced with challenges in terms of academic literacies. An aspect of academic literacies is that of academic identity (Lea & Street, 1998; Northedge, 2003), which is defined as the appropriation of academic values and practices within a sense of self, reflecting the willingness and commitment to the practices of the academic community (White & Lowenthal, 2011). Attention to the academic literacies of students in early childhood field-based initial teacher education (FBITE) is therefore warranted due to alignment with concerns regarding student academic literacies as evident within tertiary education strategies within Aotearoa New Zealand (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008b, 2012). Furthermore, academic literacies remain a key area of interest within wider higher educational circles, as demonstrated at the Te Tipurangi – Growing Capability, National Tertiary Learning and Teaching Conference 2015. The successful transition of students into academic study, and hence academic Discourse, is significant to academic success (Kift, 2015). As such, the academic identities of students in early childhood FBITE, in which changing academic demands and expectations are prevalent, warrant due attention and alignment with the overall aim of the study to critically examine the nature and significance of academic identity for students in early childhood Field-based Initial Teacher Education (FBITE) in Aotearoa New Zealand.
Research context

My interest in student academic identity came about through being responsible for the development of a new course within a programme of FBITE at an institute of technology in Aotearoa New Zealand. The course I developed focused on introducing students to academic literacies. This was identified, through the institutions quality assurance process, as being an area of particular difficulty for the students entering the field-based Bachelor of Teaching (early childhood education). The concerns identified by the institute’s external monitor were supported by data gathered from the pilot delivery of the new course highlighting that students’ desire to become early childhood teachers (their professional identity) was distinct from their wish to engage in academia (their academic identity): the professional calling being the reason for undertaking academic study. I will therefore be examining student academic identity from an academic literacies perspective.

My understanding of the complexities of the situation for students undertaking FBITE was reinforced whilst out assessing students on the practice-based components of the programme, for work-experience and practicum visits, whereby practice based mentors (Associate Teachers) were expressing concern that students were studying for a more academically demanding programme than they had undertaken themselves. There were some Associate Teachers (ATs) for whom this was a problem in relation to their own academic background and being able to interpret academic requirements and provide students with constructive feedback to complete academic tasks associated with practice elements of the programme. Other comments from some ATs implied that they were coming across students for whom the Bachelor of Teaching (early childhood education) was beyond the current level of student academic competence. This feedback was associated with a number of programmes delivered by a variety of institutions. As a teacher educator situated in the academy, I was therefore drawn to deepening my own understanding of the academic identity of students in FBITE within early childhood education.

Navigating academic study requires competency in academic literacies, seen as academic practices, which include the values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships, which connect
to and shape interactions with text and the academic world (Perry, 2012). A comprehensive
definition of academic literacies therefore acknowledges the academic context in which
specific literacies practices are situated. This understanding of literacies as socially situated
acknowledges the place of power, agency and identity as students learn to read the academic
word and the academic world (Street, 2003). Through this line of argument, developing an
academic identity within and towards academic practices is argued as a constituent part of
becoming academically literate (Lea, 2004; Northedge, 2003).

Early childhood initial teacher education within Aotearoa New Zealand has a strong
foundation within field-based programmes which draw on regular student experience
working, as volunteers or paid employees, within early childhood centres as part of their
teacher education. This field-based initial teacher education (FBITE) in the ECE sector is of
particular interest as students are on a regular basis moving between the practices of the
academy and the field of early childhood education. As such they are negotiating ways of
being, knowing and doing from one context to another, with acknowledgement that the draw
of such students into the academy in the first place was the gaining of a professional
credential for practice in the field, outside of the academe.

**Research focus**

The overall focus of this research is the academic identity of students in early childhood FBITE.
Student academic identity is identified as an intra and inter-personal construct that cannot
be examined away from the individual or the social groups and structures in which identity is
constructed and reconstructed. The dynamic nature of identity aligns with structural-
constructivist approaches, which attend to identity at the subjective level of the experience
of social agents whilst also situating identity within the wider system of complex social
structures in which social agents are located. Different social groups and structures have their
own distinctive ‘Discourse (with a big D)’, which according to Gee (1996, p. 131) refers to:

> A socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic
expressions, and artifacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that
can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or
As such the use of a big D in Discourse denotes recognition of the array of social practices, of which language is just one, associated with a given social group. Within the context of academic literacies, Gee’s conceptualisation of Discourse opens up understandings of literacies so that rather than being seen as solely language and text bound, academic literacies include consideration of matters of social participation, social agency and identity.

A programme of FBITE consists of study sites other than the main training institution’s campus (Kane, 2005). For students these study sites consist of the academic classroom, the work-experience early childhood centre for regular weekly teaching practice experience, and additional early childhood centres forming the practicum elements of the programme. This crude outline however misses the significance of the roles that students take on within these various sites of learning. For instance during classroom and the practicum based learning students may clearly hold the label of ‘student’. In their work experience centres they may actually be regarded as students, or as volunteers, as relief workers or even as teachers in a paid or unpaid capacity. Participation in these multiple sites of learning draws on a degree of adaptability on the part of the student so that they can adequately function in these multiple roles, across multiple contexts, and within multiple and possibly contested Discourses (Lea, 1998; Mezirow, 2000). Understanding how student academic identity fits within the overall experience of FBITE is deemed to be important to the wider issues of student engagement, retention, and success.

**Research aims, objectives and questions**

This study is significant in that student academic identity is explored in relation to field-based programmes of study, in which attention is given to the contexts in which identity is formed. This attention to the contexts in which student academic identity develops acknowledges the social relatedness of learning and is supported by Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 195), who state: “Identity remains unintelligible unless it is located in a world. Any theorising about identity ... must therefore occur within the framework of the theoretical interpretations within which it and they are located”.
Research aim

The overarching aim of this research is to critically examine the nature of academic identity and its significance for students in early childhood FBITE in Aotearoa New Zealand. Whilst there is growing literature on aspects of student academic identity there is none that specifically relates to the context of students in FBITE and furthermore none associating this aspect of student academic identity to the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Given that academic identity is identified as being one of many identities, a further aim of this research is to critically investigate the significance of academic identity for students in FBITE, given the multiple roles, contexts and Discourses in which they are negotiating multiple identities as social agents. To study student academic identity in isolation from these multiple sites of learning would restrict understandings of the significance of the construct for students in field-based academic study.

With the multiple sites of learning within FBITE a further aim of the research is to critically examine the tension and challenges these multiple learning contexts place on the development of student academic identity. Such possible tensions and challenges being associated with the various stakeholders associated with FBITE, namely early childhood education providers, institutions providing teacher education programmes, and the wider socio-political community in which early childhood education, initial teacher education and tertiary institutions are situated.

With these points in mind the overarching aim of this research is to critically examine the nature and significance of academic identity for students in FBITE in Aotearoa New Zealand. The sub-aims of the research being:

1. To critically examine the nature of academic identity as it relates to students in FBITE
2. To critically examine the significance of academic identity within the multiple experiences of identity as students in FBITE
3. To critically examine the tensions and challenges to the development of academic identity for students in FBITE and their associated impacts.
**Research objectives**

Within this research there are five objectives. The first objective of this study is to investigate the nature of student academic identity as a lived experience for students in FBITE in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is through the direct investigation of student experiences of academic identity that the nature of the phenomenon can be understood. As identity is not an observable phenomenon this investigation would need to draw on students’ abilities to reflect on experiences of academic identity, with experiences being given meaning through the act of reflection (Schutz, 1967). It is argued that it is easier to read identity at those moments of transition into new Discourses as identity emerges which enable clearer investigation of its nature and significance (LeCourt, 2004). A claim supported by Hall (1996) who talks about by reading identity “against the grain” (Hall, 1996, p. 18), which calls for engagement with the narratives of those going through the process of transitioning into new structures of meaning and positions of being.

However, it is likely that the student in FBITE will participate in a range of social groups at any one time, and that these groups will have their own distinctive Discourses (Gee, 2000). Participating across a range of social groups has been likened to existing in a “landscape of practices” (Wenger, 2010, p. 5), which can consist of being inside and outside any number of social groups at any one time. Whilst participation in every social group may not be desired or sought, the ease by which the expected ways of doing and being from one social grouping to another act as points of significance. The negotiation of boundaries between Discourses becomes part of a negotiated process of identity construction and existence (Wenger, 1998). As discussed, FBITE takes place across a range of contexts, and as such student academic identity is just one of many possible identities in existence at any one time. The second objective is to critically examine the coexisting multiple identities of student in FBITE, and the third objective, the investigation of the relationship between academic identity and other multiple identities of students in FBITE, provides opportunities for student academic identity to be examined as a relational concept alongside multiple experiences of identity.
In addition, it is possible that the concept of student academic identity is understood and experienced differently by those within these different contexts, which relates to objective four: to critically examine the multiple contexts of learning for students in FBITE and the understanding of student academic identity within these. Furthermore, if multiple understandings and perspectives of student academic identity are identified it is possible that the development of student academic identity is placed under tension and challenged. Once any tensions and challenges facing the development of student academic identity have been identified there will be the opportunity to examine their impact, which relates to objective five: to investigate the significance of academic identity for students in FBITE.

**Research questions**

The specific research questions emerging from the research objectives are:

1. How do students in early childhood field-based initial teacher education experience academic identity?
2. What are the multiple identities of students in early childhood field-based initial teacher education and how does academic identity relate to these?
3. What are the multiple contexts of learning for students in early childhood field-based initial teacher education and how does academic identity relate to these?
4. How is the development of academic identity significant to the student experience of early childhood field-based initial teacher education?

**Summary and outline of chapters**

Chapter Two reviews literature in relation to the concept of student academic identity in relation to becoming academically literate. Within this chapter the concept of academic literacies is broken down and examined as a socially informed process. Through the process of defining academic literacies the place of identity and a sense of being is acknowledged and expanded on through discussion of identity as a lived experience. Chapter Two also reviews issues associated with understanding the academic identity for students in Field-Based Initial Teacher Education (FBITE) due to the complexity of participating in the Discourse of the academe and that of the professional sites of learning as a student teacher.
Building on from this review of literature Chapter Three presents the conceptual framework, in which the macro and micro features of the research are visualised. The core understanding within the conceptual framework being that identity is experienced as a subjective internal state emerging out of relational activities within a social world. Therefore identity is understood as an intra- and inter-personal experience. Through the conceptual framework the underlying view of identity is as a lived experience that is best studied through the accounts of those to whom it holds significance.

Chapter Four outlines the methodological approach informing the subsequent research design. The chapter begins with a statement about the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research, which leads into discussion of the choice of an interpretive qualitative methodology. Subsequent sections detail participant samples, alongside the selection of data collection tools in keeping with the interpretive qualitative methodology. Detail relating to the preparation undertaken for fieldwork is followed by specific data analysis process. Finally this chapter closes with consideration of how issues of quality are met within the research.

Chapter Five and Six cover the findings on student academic identity as a subjective lived experience. Chapter Five presents the findings on student experiences of academic identity, whilst Chapter Six presents findings relating to the contexts informing such lived experience. In this way Chapters Five and Six align within the theoretical approach of structural-conductivism, which underpins this research. The findings emerge from thematic analysis using the principles of grounded theory.

In Chapter Seven the findings are discussed in relation to the overall research aim and the subsequent research questions pertaining to the nature and significance of academic identity for students in FBITE. Key themes from the findings presented in Chapters Five and Six form the basis of this discussion. The layout of this chapter follows the sequential format of the four research questions.
Finally, Chapter Eight provides a summary of how the findings have addressed the research aim and questions. A model of student academic identity is proposed to clearly encapsulate the knowledge gained from the research. The chapter concludes with implications for knowledge in the area of student academic identity in relation to FBITE and associated possibilities for future research.

**Closing statement**

In this chapter I have outlined the issue under investigation and the associated research aim and questions. In setting the scene I have identified how the issue of student academic identity holds relevance for early childhood field-based initial teacher education. The following chapter details the review of literature pertinent to meeting the research aim.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

*Learning is a smudge between a self that knows to a self that knows more.*

Ellsworth (2005, p. 18)

Chapter overview

The aim of this chapter is to provide an outline of the current thinking in relation to the concept of academic identity as a student focused entity (Rodriguez, 2009; Was, Al-Harthy, Stack-Oden, & Isaacson, 2009). In doing so, attention is given to the context in which student academic identity emerges as part of the process of becoming academically literate. By following this process the concept of academic literacies is broken down and examined as a socially informed process of both epistemological and subjective significance. Furthermore, in defining academic literacies the place of identity and a sense of being is acknowledged and expanded on through discussion of identity as a lived experience. The place of identity within academic literacies, like the smudge referred to by Ellsworth (2005), being acknowledged as inseparable from the context in which it emerges. The chapter ends with a review of issues associated with understanding the experience of academic identity for students in Field-Based Initial Teacher Education (FBITE); significant due to the specific research context and also the complexity of participating in the Discourse of the academe and that of the professional sites of learning as a student teacher.

Defining literacies

To understand academic literacies it is important to define what is being referred to within the concept of literacies. On the one hand literacy can be regarded as the acquisition of a series of universal skills related to the process of becoming literate, with associated measures of competency. Within this approach there is a tendency to reduce literacy to discrete teachable and testable units (Schultz, 1997). The learner is, as part of this process, relegated to a distanced position. Others act as experts on what the learner needs to acquire in order
to perform or function effectively and the level of competency at which this is to be achieved or demonstrated (Schultz, 1997). An alternative approach is proposed by Gee (2001), in which literacy is always regarded as plural, as literacies, and refers to the mastery of secondary Discourse learned through social institutions which enable the acquisition of social goods and social status. According to Gee identity is always multiple and refers to performances in society rather than internal states (Gee, 2000). In this way literacies are regarded as social practices, which are influenced by the social, cultural, historical and political frames of reference whence they emerge. Like Schultz (1997), Gee acknowledges inherent power relations as social agents hold different social positions within the Discourse.

Literacies is a term which has emerged from contention associated with preference given to text based practices of reading and writing as supported by the cognitive and psycholinguistic traditions. The move to a literacies approach is strongly associated with the “New Literacy Studies” (Perry, 2012; Street, 2003). The conceptualisation of literacies as multiple emerged from work within the field of adult education, from which socio-cultural theories have emphasised the social nature of literacy, being embedded within contextually bound social systems, as illustrated in this quote: “literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge ... rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being” (Street, 2003, p. 77).

The concept of multiplicity within the term literacies recognizes that literacy practices are more than what people do with texts such as reading and writing. Rather, literacy practices also include features such as attitudes, values, feelings and social relations (Perry, 2012). Acknowledgment of these features draws attention to literacies as including the inherent influences of social positions, power relations and identity (Perry, 2012). Literacies therefore becomes a relational activity between the individual and groups or communities, rather than as located within individuals (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). The relational aspect of academic literacies being identified as difficult due to student perceptions of the academic community as, “alien, rigid and imposing” (Oliva-Girbau, 2011, p. 38). Furthermore the conceptualisation
of literacies as multiple, multi-literate, also covers multimodality and the multiple channels
of communication and variety in media for communication, as well as cultural and linguistic
diversity (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Multi-literacies are also associated with new literacies and
digital technologies (Ng, 2015), adding to the dimension of literacies as dynamic and evolving
within the social and cultural world (Sandretto & Tilson, 2014).

**Critical literacy**

Building on the perspectives of literacies as social practices, critical approaches in particular,
emphasise the place of power, empowerment, agency and identity within literacies.

Literacies, from a critical perspective, are a relational endeavour, associated with the
potential for self-transformation and the ability to have an impact and influence on the social
world, that is: “Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words, or syllables
– lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe – but rather an attitude of creation
and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one’s context”
(Freire, 2000, p. 86). According to transformation theory (Freire & Macedo, 1987), literacies
are about making connections between self and the world in order to change ones social
social position through acts of literacy-in-action is mediated by sponsors, who both facilitate
access to literacy but at the same time benefit from it. In this way literacies take on the guise
of a commodity, which involves the exchange of loyalties, commitment or rewards. For
instance it is argued:

> People throughout history have acquired literacy as a reward for lending their
loyalties or labor to the sponsor or have rendered up the use of their literate
skills in exchange for other rewards or have taken on literacy as part of their
commitment to or conscription into a larger cause. (Brandt & Clinton, 2002,
pp. 349–350)

Bourdieu conveys similar notions of the mediation of social positions when, within his analysis
of the Kabylia (Algeria) community, he talks about the way in which:
Agents lastingly “bind” each other … only through the dispositions which the
group inculcates in them and continuously reinforces, and which render
*unthinkable* practices which would appear as legitimate and even be taken for
granted in the disenchanted economy of “naked self-interest”. (Bourdieu,
2007, p. 196)

Through the binding process the positions of authority and power of select societal members
over others is maintained and the social order upheld. Through these relational positions at
some level there is awareness that one is the subjugated and one is the subjugator.

The academe is an example of one such sponsor; both mediating and benefiting from
controlling access to the literacies associated with academic Discourse. Through their
mediating role the academe acts as gatekeeper, controlling the movement of actors between
social positions through the acquisition of qualifications or credentials. Academically awarded
credentials and qualifications thereby become forms of capital facilitating movement
between social positions, argued by Bourdieu (2007, p. 187) who said that: “Academic
qualifications are to cultural capital what money is to economic capital”. At the same time
with the commodification of higher education the academe as sponsor also benefits from the
supply of knowledge as commodity for sale, as possession rather than a state of being
(Fromm, 1978). Jarvis (2003, p. 54) reinforces Fromm’s claims arguing that:

PUBLIC CERTIFICATION IS A GUARANTEE OF SOMETHING EVEN IF IT IS ONLY THAT THE LEARNERS ATTENDED A REPUTABLE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION, OR THAT THEY ONCE POSSESSED THE KNOWLEDGE OR THE SKILLS OR THAT THEY WERE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN THEM BY TAKING SPECIFIC COURSES.

According to Jarvis, education can be viewed as a commodity, which is sold in the market
place ready for the learner to acquire as a possession. Knowledge, and therefore learning, is
broken down for easy consumption which also meets the fast changing pace of the
postmodern society (Schultz, 1997). With knowledge holding a significant place within market
economies it is argued that certification, as a by-product of education, not only inflates the
learning that is valued by society but it also negates non-credit bearing learning particularly in relation to career enhancement (Findsen, 2009).

Within this credit-bearing world, critical literacy focuses attention on the interplay of power, empowerment, agency, and identity. Within a critical theory approach to literacies, attention is given to the positions of social actors as it is social position which directs ones gaze on the world, ones participation within it, and therefore ones sense of reality. Position, according to Bourdieu, affects how the world is viewed as he clarified that: “failing to construct the space of positions leaves you no chance of seeing the point from which you see what you see” (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 19). Literacies, from the critical theory of Bourdieu, would equate to a set of social practices, which vary according to social position reflecting the many, rather than a single unified, perception of social reality. The plurality of reality being associated with the different social positions held by actors at any one time: “since points of view depend on the point from which they are taken, since, the vision that event agent has of the pace depends on his or her position in that space” (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 18).

Within critical literacy approaches the knowledge associated with any particular credential is commensurate with the amount of status or prestige they are likely to have in society from that learning encounter. By implication students studying for a qualification at degree level acquire more knowledge that those who are training at a diploma or certificate level. As asserted by Fromm (1978, p. 41): “The minimum they receive is the amount they will need in order to function properly in their work”. Furthermore accessibility to higher education to undergo credentialing has contributed to social positions, with the scarcity of candidates with higher-level qualifications being equated with a higher market value than those without (Moodie, 2008).

The current situation of mass education (Delanty, 2001), whilst facilitating wider social citizenship through academic qualification and occupational credentialing, may in turn act to devalue these same achievements through flooding of the market place. So whilst scarcity equalled value, the current situation serves to raise the base level of expectation and in turn
the exceptional becomes the expected (Symes & McIntyre, 2002). Furthermore the diversification of the student demographic, widely associated with this move to mass education, has resulted in raising the issue of student literacies related to participation in the academic Discourse (Lea & Street, 1998).

**Academic literacies**

By joining the academe students are agreeing to participate in the Discourse of the community, which is defined by a system of symbolic action outlined by the academic community and communicated through a distinct body of practices (White & Lowenthal, 2011). Academic literacies relate to becoming conversant in the Discursive practices of the academic community and as such are a necessary part of success in academic study (Lea & Street, 1998). Becoming academically literate means that students will need to learn the ways of being, doing, and knowing constituting the Discourse of the academic community. Academic Discourse in its simplest form revolves around the generation and dissemination of knowledge. Therefore academic literacies involve becoming conversant and engaging with academic Discourse at an epistemological level in terms of the origin of discipline knowledge, how the value and worth of information is decided and how information is conveyed, and at a subjective level, in terms of engaging in academic Discourse situated in relationships, dialogue with knowledge, people, place, and time (Dunham, 2012).

Within academic Discourse the generation of knowledge is primarily associated with methods of inquiry, critical thinking and the analysis and evaluation of information or data, and the sharing of findings within the relevant discipline community. There is a reliance on reading and writing within the academic community for the dissemination of knowledge. Academic Discourse consists of rules and expectations, the most widely promoted being that of ownership of knowledge and the detrimental act of plagiarism (Dell, Kaposi, du Sautoy, Burton, & Morgan, 2011). Becoming academically literate involves not only being aware of the rules and expectations of the academic community but also being able and willing to follow them (White & Lowenthal, 2011). It is well documented that many students, particularly at the beginning of higher education, find the rules of the academic community
daunting and challenging especially if they have had limited prior exposure to academic Discourse (Gourlay, 2009; Ivanič, Edwards, Satchwell, & Smith, 2007; Lea & Street, 1998).

Through the duration of their study students become more exposed to the social practices of the academic community, typically moving from using the prior generated knowledge of a discipline through to developing and generating new knowledge through their own research as students. This exposure also facilitates deeper involvement and participation within the academic community (Wenger, 1998), and becoming literate relates to these degrees of involvement and participation within a given community. Movement from the periphery of the community of practice is facilitated through the enhancement of competency in the required Discourse (Gee, 2001; Smith, 2009). Through being exposed to and participating in the community Discourse the student as social actor is opened up to constructing new meaning, adopting new ways of mediating the world, and as such new ways of locating self within the academic community (Stets & Burke, 2005).

It is acknowledged that social actors may be negotiating ways of being within a number of communities at any one time and through entry to a new community social actors learn that Discourses vary between contexts and communities (Reveles & Brown, 2008). For the student this means that they are not only learning to navigate the Discourse of the academic community but they are also participants in other communities such as work sites, social communities, and the community of family. Also known as communities of practice, such social groupings are defined as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, n.d, para. 2). Membership of multiple communities of practice is referred as a nexus of interconnected communities of which a person may participate as forming a “living landscape of practices” (Wenger, 1998, p. 165). Participation in a landscape of practices reflects not only the multiplicity of roles that are held by social agents, but also the complexity inherent in attributing meaning to the world of everyday experience (Kilgore, 2001), and negotiating identity as ways of being a person.
Identity as lived experience

Identity is the organisation of self into multiple parts relating to the different roles and positions that are held within society (Stets & Burke, 2005). Identity, therefore, is associated with the meaning held through being a group member, or through the roles held within a social group or community (Stets & Burke, 2005). In this way identity is conceptualised as social identity, role identity and personal identity. For instance Oyserman, Elmore and Smith describe these constituent identities thus:

[Social identities] involve the knowledge that one is a member of a group, one’s feelings about group membership, and knowledge of the group's rank or status compared to other groups .... Role identities reflect membership in particular roles (e.g., student, parent, professional) that require another person to play a complementary role. One cannot be a parent without children, a student without teachers, or a professional without clients or peers who recognize one's role. Personal identities reflect traits or characteristics that may feel separate from one's social and role identities or linked to some or all of these identities. (2012, p. 73).

The social construction of identity is regarded as an intentional process in which the individual displays an agency and active role as social actor (Goffman, 1959). The intentionality of identity is shaped by contexts to influence action associated with knowing: “what to do, what to value, and how to behave” (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 73). Through this intentionality social actors are seen to engage in a negotiated process of being and knowing, with identity becoming more fully developed through the integration of the attitudes and values of the community (Henkel, 2005). According to this perspective, the identity construction associated with taking on the role of student is that of an academic identity; involving being able to negotiate ways of doing, behaving and valuing conducive to participation within the academic community. Such perceptions of identity are supported by Wenger (2010, p. 180), who claims that successful competent participation within a social group or community is associated with:
• Understanding what matters, what the enterprise of the community is, and how it gives rise to a perspective on the world
• Being able (and allowed) to engage productively with others in the community
• Using appropriately the repertoire of resources that the community has accumulated through its history of learning.

Developing a self-identity is not a one way process that flows out from the individual (Hawkins, 2005). Rather it also requires acceptance and validation from the external community to which it is related, for instance:

The self influences society through the actions of individuals thereby creating groups, organizations, networks, and institutions. And, reciprocally, society influences the self through its shared language and meanings that enable a person to take the role of the other, engage in social interaction, and reflect upon oneself as an object. (Stets & Burke, 2005, p. 128)

This is along the same lines as Wenger (1998) who claims that identity is not just about what others think of us but is also about our ability to participate and be active in the construction of identity. As such, the construction of identity is influenced by factors internal to the individual and simultaneously subject to the legitimising structures of external agencies (Yoder, 2000).

In terms of the academic learning environment these concepts of identity construction imply that it is not solely the student’s perspective of self as a learner or student that informs their academic identity, but also the external validation of this from the learning community which contributes to the formation of learner identity. Burnett (2006) talks of the self as becoming edited to form a better fit with the identities within any given community. This editing can be an active and on-going process that emerge through the process of participation in a given social group, as described by Wenger (1998, p. 151): “the narratives, categories, roles, and positions come to mean as an experience of participation is something that must be worked out in practice”.
Identity as transformation

Mezirow (2000) talked of students undergoing ‘subjective reframing’ whereby their identities continue to develop alongside the on-going construction of meaning. Subjective reframing enables students to become familiar with the new strategies and skills necessary for effective participation in the academic community (Mezirow, 2000; Northedge, 2003). Examples of such strategies and skills include: “self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognition that others have shared similar transformations, exploration of new roles or actions” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 50).

The student is therefore regarded as an active agent in terms of finding their identity in the new contexts in which they find themselves (Freire & Ramos, 1996), with learning represented as: “a smudge between a self that knows to a self that knows more” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 18). The process of knowing in this sense relates more closely to a transformative experience where becoming knowledgeable has the potential to be more than a cognitive exercise but a holistic experience. The learner in the state of being is affected and changed by the new knowledge they encounter. In this way: “knowing does not mean to be in possession of the truth; it means to penetrate the surface and to strive critically and actively in order to approach truth ever more closely” (Fromm, 1978, p. 40).

Multiple identities

It is argued that social actors hold multiple selves, with multiple identities based on membership of many social groups (Oyserman et al., 2012). The result being that a person may hold one identity status in one aspect of their life and another identity status in a different life domain (Archer, 2010). The lived experience of identity consists of negotiated ways of being within a wide social framework (Wenger, 1998, 2010), and is a dynamic process open to constant change depending on the array of social encounters within which a person participates. Furthermore the dynamic nature of identity construction is compounded by participation in a number of social groups or communities at any one time; each with their own Discourse. This ‘landscape of practice’ Wenger (1998) argues, consists of being both in and outside of any number of social groups at any one time. Points of significance are
associated with the degree of similarity and fit between the Discourse of one social group to another.

For students in FBITE the landscape of practices includes the multiple contexts of early childhood community and the academic institution. Significantly these multiple Discourses include those linked to the professional field and those associated with the academic discipline. Engaging with these multiple Discourses therefore calls for the student to recognise and acknowledge the practices of both communities and the accepted Discourses including what to do, what to value, and how to behave. Student academic identity for those in field-based study, therefore, is contextually informed by the convergence of both academic and professional community Discourses, which at times may feel “worlds apart” (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Pare, 1999, p. 222).

**Identity as social position**

Discourse, forms the backdrop or environmental culture influencing the way in which the individual participates in the legitimated activities of the social group (Gee, 2001). Participation in a social group revolves around the axis of exclusion and inclusion with entry into the discursive practices (Hall, 1996). Through the points of exclusion and inclusion identity can be regarded as much as a positional stance as it is an internal state of continuity of self-consciousness over time (Berzonsky, 2004). This point is further supported in the claim that it is identity which attributes subjects their social position: “identities are the names we give to the different ways in which we are positioned by, and position ourselves” (LeCourt, 2004, p. 30). In relation to students in academic study their identity is defined by their position within the practices of the academic context, as described by Oliva-Girbau & Milian-Gubern who stated: “For first year students, academic identity is defined by their learner status and their perception of themselves within the activity systems of higher education” (2012, p. 64).

It is through social position that social actors mediate the world, which consists of navigating the complex relationship between social, cultural and personal resources (Bourdieu, 1989). It is from this relational mediation that identity emerges. Participation and validation within the
institutions of a social and cultural context inform the emergence of identity (McCaslin, 2009), of which the academe is one such institution with its own forms of knowledge and associated practices. Joining the community involves acceptance to some degree of the communities values as supported by Gergen (2011, p. 204) who reinforces that: “all forms of knowledge carry with them community values. To embrace the claims to knowledge is also to join the community”.

Le Court (2004) emphasises that identities are as much a product of the power play evident in being excluded from a set of practices as it is through being accepted into them. As such it is investigation at the point of the emergence of identity formation that is of significance. The points of entry where identity is not securely formed but still emerging enable clearer investigation into the nature and significance of identity related phenomenon (LeCourt, 2004). As such, being new to a Discourse is argued to provide a better understanding of the differences between social structures, and becoming literate in the new practices of the social group. Further to this point it is argued that by reading identity “against the grain” (Hall, 1996, p. 18), it is possible to engage in the narratives of experience of crossing over into new structures of meaning, positions of being, and ways of looking at and interpreting oneself and the world (Topp, 2000).

**Identity as capital**

The positional nature of identity is related to context and participation within social institutions (Lave & Wenger, 1998). Identity forms a structure through which the self interacts with the world (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996). For instance Yoder (2000) talks about identity as an organisational construct that describes how key aspects of self mesh with context and contribute to both current psychological wellbeing and adult roles and relations. Within this structural conceptualisation, context is seen as an integral aspect of identity formation and aligns with structural-constructivist theories. This acknowledgment of the context in which identity emerges gives credence to the agency involved in identity development; a view supported by Baumeister and Muraven (1996, p. 405) in the following statement:
History, culture and the proximate structure of human relations create a context in which the individual identity must exist. People have individual wants and needs that must be satisfied within that context. Individuals actively choose, alter, and modify their identities based on what will enable them to get along in that context.

According to structural-constructivist theories, for example, attention should be given to both the social structures in which identity are embedded and also the subjective perceptions social actors hold of their reality (Bourdieu, 1994). According to structural perspectives, identity development is considered a relational activity between the perceptions of the individual social agent and the social structures of society. The constructivist aspects of Bourdieu’s theory posits that social reality is not made up of objective relations, rather social reality is under continual construction throughout everyday life (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Furthermore according to Swartz (1997, p. 83): “Bourdieu thus combines constructionist and structural perspectives to offer a theory of symbolic power that tightly couples the cognitive, communicative and political dimensions of all symbolic systems”.

In his structural-constructivist approach to the study of the social world Bourdieu (1989) introduces the concepts of habitus and field. Habitus is associated with experiences of self, identity, and personal dispositions, with field relating to the wider social structures, groups, or institutions in which social engagement takes place. According to Bourdieu it is through the practices and relations between habitus and fields that social ordering or social positions are established and maintained. These social structures are, according to Bourdieu, sites of struggle. The basic principles of habitus and field are outlined by Bourdieu (1989, p. 14) in the following way:

By constructivism, I mean that there is a twofold social genesis, on the one hand of the schemes of perception, thought, and action which are constitutive of what I call habitus, and on the other hand of social structures, and particularly of what I call fields and of groups notably those we ordinarily call classes.
Habitus is said to refer to the socially created self, or identity, with fields being the spaces of struggle in which social position is negotiated in an on-going way (Jones, 2010). In negotiating position, agents draw on resources which Bourdieu (1989, p. 17) refers to as forms of capital: “cultural capital, social capital and, symbolic capital”.

**Cultural capital**

Cultural capital is said to include things such as “verbal facility, general cultural awareness, aesthetic preferences, information about the school system, and educational credentials” (Swartz, 1997, p. 75). Through his exploration of cultural capital Bourdieu departed from understandings of academic success as resulting from natural capacities of for instance intelligence or giftedness. Rather academic success was attributed more to the family environment. Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital is said to consist of three states (Swartz, 1997), which include the:

1. **Embodied state**: internalised dispositions resulting from socialisation strongly associated with successful participation within the educational system.
2. **Objectified state**: referring to artefacts such as “books, art works, scientific instruments that require specialized cultural abilities to use” (Swartz, 1997, p. 76).
3. **Institutionalised state**: referring to a system of educational credentialing especially the mass marketisation of higher education and the power held by such institutions in regards to the reproduction of the unequal distribution of power within society.

The position held by a social agent within the social world is said to be dependent on the volume and the weight of the different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1989). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) describe the place of different forms of capital within the analogy of a game in which the tokens or resources of capital held by a player determine the force, position and orientation the player holds within the game, or social structure. They say:

At each moment, it is the state of the relations of force between players that defines the structure of the field. We can picture each player as having in front of her a pile of tokens of different colors, each color corresponding to a given species of capital she holds, so that her *relative force in the game*, her *position*
in the space of play, and also her *strategic orientation toward the game* ... the moves that she makes, more or less risky or cautious, subversive or conservative, depend both on the total number of tokens and also on the composition of the piles of tokens she retains, that is, on the volume and structure of her capital. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99)

Within this description of personal resources and one’s social position, Bourdieu emphasises the shifting nature of social structures and social positions, which are open to change due to the dynamic relationships between social agents both within and across social structures (Bourdieu, 1994). The value and weight of the resources held by a social actor at any given time are relative to the systems of meaning evident within and across social structures. If this notion is put in the context of credentialing within early childhood education, the credentials sought hold value in relation to not only the academic level and title to which they are associated, but also hold value if the wider social structures such as professional bodies regard this level and title as desirable. The situation in New Zealand at the current time however highlights that whilst value may be attributed to initial teacher credentials at bachelor degree level, when it comes to the social structure of the work place holding a higher level or even a qualification per se may in fact lead to negative outcomes. Due to the current situation in which only 50% of early childhood teachers are required to hold relevant qualifications (Ministry of Education, 2014), for instance, it could be argued that being qualified poses a disadvantage in a market where employers are more willing to pay less for unqualified staff than pay more for qualified ones.

**Social capital**

Social capital refers to the ability of social agents to exist within varied social structures and is regarded as the system of acquaintances and networks, including the collective capital held by members of the domestic unit or family (Bourdieu, 1998). Social capital is thus described as: “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). Trust and
cooperation between acquaintances and across networks and through community involvement are identified as the main means by which social capital is evidenced or experienced. High symbolic capital does not necessarily result in high social capital if social actors isolate themselves and do not form effective networks, and in this way the acquisition of social capital is a social and relational endeavour. Within an *Outline of a Theory of Practice* Bourdieu (2007) discusses the on-going attention that needs to be given to maintaining social networks and in so doing introduces the notion of a “privileged network of practical relationships... which can be mobilized for the ordinary needs of existence” (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 39).

In relation to the teaching profession Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) talk about the importance of having the right kind of network of people around in order to be able to behave in a competent professional manner. Social capital is argued to be significant in education through its association with knowledge. For instance they argue that:

*Social capital* [italics as per original] refers to how the quantity and quality of interactions and social relationships among people affects their access to knowledge and information; their sense of expectation, obligation, and trust; and how far they are likely to adhere to the same norms or codes of behaviour. (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 90)

For Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) social capital is enhanced through sustained involvement within a community, in which they refer primarily to teachers, in order to gain the most from the collective knowledge of the community. In such an instance the gaining of symbolic capital, for instance through gaining credentials, holds limited value if those gaining the credentials do not have the opportunity to engage in a sustained way with an associated community of practice. In this line of argument, expecting more academically of teachers through the academisation of credentials for initial teacher education alone is no guarantee of quality within teachers’ practices; rather it may only serve to improve individual’s status rather than result in collective change. Rather, it is the opportunity to incorporate purposeful learning with professional collaborative engagement, given that group behaviour has more of an impact on change than individuals (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).
Symbolic capital
Symbolic capital is the means by which other forms of capital are legitimated. Bourdieu describes symbolic capital as a form of credit or advance: “it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23). Recognition is associated with forms of respect. For instance, respect is attached to credentials as their ownership wields access to social positions that would otherwise be denied. Therefore, credentials are symbolic capital due to the meaning that is attributed to them through perceptions of power. The credentialing process also provides societies with a standardised set of practices, values and expectations, for instance: “A credential such as a school diploma is a piece of universally recognized and guaranteed symbolic capital, good on all markets” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 21). This universal recognition relates to credentials holding a fixed value across time as well as immediate context. For instance, gaining a degree in a subject or discipline is a degree no matter if obtained in the current year or 20 years prior. However, the social leverage or power that credentials wield may change over time, as can be seen in the current discourse within Aotearoa New Zealand in which there is continued debate as to the minimum academic standard expected for entry into the teacher profession (Education Review Series, 2012).

Identity capital
Further development in forms of capital has seen the introduction of the concept of identity capital (Côté, 2005). Identity capital has been related to structural changes within societal values representing the way in which new ways of making life meaningful are sought. This meaningfulness is achieved through the way a person defines themselves in relation to aspects of society to which they attribute value. In particular, society is seen to attribute value to occupational status and as such career choice has taken on more significant meaning as a way of defining self, alongside one’s place and value within society. This is detailed in the following statement in which career and occupational choices are regarded as a means of boosting one’s sense of self:
The modern concept of a career captures this new meaning of work. The career is a record of promotions, honors, and other marks of distinction that the person can list on his or her resume. Thus, the work ... is done for the sake of identity building, such as by gaining advancement and recognition that validate the good qualities of the self. (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996, p. 411)

As implied within the above statement it is possible to see how professional or occupational identity plays a significant part in terms of attributing value and meaning in life at both a personal and societal level. Within this conceptual framework identity is regarded as a form of capital.

The concept of identity capital has emerged from human capital theory which was introduced by economists to refer to the characteristics of people contributing in economic contexts (Côté, 2005). The concept of identity capital was developed to more specifically acknowledge that identity development occurs inside and outside economic contexts. Human capital is regarded as particularly focusing on work-orientated concerns whereas identity capital has a focus in more general contexts as explained by (Côté, 2005, pp. 224–225) in the following way:

If we reserve human capital to refer to skills that are relevant to the workplace, we can preserve its focal utility in economic contexts and utilize additional concepts with focal utilities elsewhere ... I have suggested the concept of identity capital to refer to more general contexts where identity negotiation and maintenance are paramount, many of which are outside the work place.

In conceptualising student academic identity in relation to FBITE it may be more appropriate to take an identity capital rather than a human capital perspective. This is in recognition of the contributing influences on the development of academic identity, which include: the occupational context of early childhood education, the academic context, and in recognition of the personal attributes and resources, which are brought to the credentialing process. Within the theorisation of identity capital attention is given to the multiple features of
identity rather than an over reliance on psychological ones, with particular recognition being given to the influence of context on identity construction (Côté & Schwartz, 2002).

Identity capital is about the investment an individual makes in relation to the development of an identity or identities and is influenced by the personal attributes that contribute towards how a person negotiates their way through a context (Côté, 2005). These personal attributes become resources, which develop from the opportunities and obstacles experienced during a person’s life. Barriers to identity formation may reflect varied aspects of change at a societal or structural level as historical and on-going processes, and as such a barrier at one point of time may be removed later and likewise new barriers may emerge as new changes take place (Yoder, 2000). These obstacles and opportunities may take many forms ranging from: “outright discrimination through to institutional voids, while the opportunities can range from the emergence of new social norms allowing for diverse lifestyles to new educational prospects among people who previously would not have obtained higher credentials” (Côté, 2005, p. 226). This reference to new educational prospects is significant in relation to student academic identity and the increase in the academic expectations of early childhood FBITE, in which the academisation of credentials acts as a form of passport for entry into wider realms of social participation (Côté, 2005).

**Student academic identity and field-based study**

FBITE draws on the seminal observations of Dewey who considered that all real education results from experience that displays the two major interconnected principles of continuity and interaction (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). The principle of continuity relates to learning experiences being temporally connected in terms of past, present and future. For instance, such learning experiences are described as: “never just isolated events in time. Rather, learners must connect what they have learned from current experiences to those in the past as well as see possible future implications” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 162). The second principle of interaction is associated with transactions, which take place between the individual and the environment of that time.
Closely associated with this understanding of the learning principles of continuity and interaction is the concept of praxis. Whilst commonly associated with practice, praxis is more than action alone. It involves the integration of thought and action, interpretation and action, ends and means into a unified process (Smith, 2011). Praxis therefore embodies learning as an experiential process in which theory becomes integrated into thoughtful action requiring the making of “a wise and prudent practical judgement about how to act in this situation” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 190). Such experiential learning within early childhood FBITE draws on the perception that, in order to more fully understand and apply pedagogical theory, emerging teachers need to actually experience being teachers first hand (Brennan, Everiss, & Mara, 2011). This claim is supported by the following seminal writers on theory and practice within professional education: “Practice must play a central role in the process by which students learn to think like practitioners” (Argyris & Schön, 1974, p. 186).

Within early childhood FBITE experiential learning is comprised of the components of work-experience and practicum. Work experience relates to the regular experience gained on a weekly basis within an early childhood setting, usually of the students choosing. In this context students may take on the positions of volunteer, relief, part-time, or full-time paid teacher. Depending on their role the student may find they have varying degrees of responsibility and influence within the work-experience setting. On the other hand the practicum aspect of FBITE relates to the occasions whereby students are required to attend an early childhood centre selected by the certifying institution for a period of time in keeping within the requirements of the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC). Whilst on practicum the primary emphasis is for students to be regarded as student teachers and not as volunteer or paid teacher in any capacity.

The work-experience and practicum components of FBITE provide opportunities for theory building through the processes of diagnosis and testing. The short term but intense practicum experience within FBITE can be seen to align with opportunities for theory building through diagnosis as students are required to participate in a number of practicum across a range of different early childhood setting: varying in terms of age of children and the nature of the
provider, whether private business or state supported, and may also include variety in terms of geographical areas and experience within diverse socio-economic communities (Brennan, Everiss, & Mara, 2010). It is hoped that this variety will enable student teachers to experience first-hand that there is not a single approach to teaching. The practicum requirement therefore seems to fit well with the interpretation of theory-building through diagnosis defined as practice that:

Consists of immersion in a particular organization, institution, system or culture with the task of description and diagnosis ... The experience should be repeatable in different organizations, institutions, and settings so as to yield understanding of the different perspectives of the world held by different cultures. (Argyris & Schön, 1974, pp. 189–190)

On the other hand, the work-experience requirement encourages students to engage in a more long-term sustained way with teaching, ideally in a single context. The regular engagement in a teaching context enables students to explore and try out ways of teaching. The sustained engagement in work-experience provides opportunity for students to gradually, over the duration of the three year programme, test out new ways of teaching which may not be possible during the shorter time frames associated with practicum.

The intention is that immersion within the work-experience setting will enable the growth of the student teacher to be realised and enhanced. Theory building through work-experience enables not only the diagnosis of theory but also the testing of theory, described as, “There must be an involvement of enough duration, range, and freedom of action to permit development and testing of a theory of action” (Argyris & Schön, 1974, p. 190). Theory testing supports students to challenge established or existing ways of interpreting and responding to teaching situations (Kennedy, 1999). This exposure to alternative ways of being and doing teaching is suggested as playing a significant part in moving students beyond their personal knowledge and experiences, in which being a teacher is typically based on observed ways of being taught as a child (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005). Instead, student teachers are encouraged to engage in relational pedagogy in which attention is given to
students’ own ways of knowing, their personal epistemologies, and the connections they build between experiences and learning (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006). Relational pedagogy is epistemologically aligned with social constructivism, which is also the theoretical basis of FBITE, in which acknowledgment is given to the diversity of knowledge:

> Approaching knowledge from a relational perspective, we can say goodbye to the thorny question arising from mind/world dualism. We can also appreciate the many and varied claims to knowledge, for example, claims to empirical knowledge, intuitive knowledge, practical knowledge, spiritual knowledge, visual knowledge, musical knowledge, tacit knowledge, common sense knowledge and so on. (Gergen, 2011, p. 205)

Furthermore, participating in the early childhood sector in a teaching role enables student teachers to do more than passively observe other teachers. Passive observation is regarded as holding limited value as it takes more than observation of a situation to gain a fuller understanding of the rationale behind teachers’ actions and the process of analysis that they engage in. This is supported by that argument that:

> What students do not see is the thinking that preceded the teaching action, the alternatives she considered, the strategic plan within which she located the action, or the aims she sought to accomplish by means of that action. These are the things that teacher preparation programmes seek to teach, and legitimately so. (Labaree, 2000, p. 232)

Through the overall process of initial teacher education students are provided not only with the knowledge of what and how to teach but also the rationale and skills to analyse their actions (Labaree, 2000).

Alongside the practical teaching experience student teachers from FBITE programmes are exposed to the theoretical knowledge identified by the academe as important in the production and credentialing of future teachers through class-based learning. Students moving between the contexts of the academe and the early childhood centre are posed with the challenge of transferring knowledge of the academe with that of the practice context and
vice versa. In this way academic theory and the theory of practice are tested and in doing so it is argued that learning moves: “from the private to the semi-public domain” (Boud & Symes, 2000, p. 25). Academic and practice tasks required to meet credentialing requirements form another way in which learning is both made semi-public and a process in which the theoretical and practice knowledge is actively engaged with. Within the teaching profession emphasis is given to reflective practice (Brookfield, 1995) facilitating a more conscious connection with events and supporting learning from experience (Argyris & Schön, 1974). This reflective practice encourages students to consider the relation between the knowledge associated with theory and practice, which is derived from the multiple contexts and multiple Discourses in which the student of FBITE is exposed.

**Identity and the multiple Discourses of field-based learning**

Learning within field-based programmes requires that student teachers are exposed to and participate in a variety of learning contexts and experiences. Through the class based and field based learning experiences these student teachers are required to navigate multiple Discourses, for example, all of which may have different governing rules depending on the site in which they are located (Northedge, 2003). Through the credential process students within FBITE are exposed to contexts and experiences, which facilitate and even demand the development of multiple identities. Rather than simply listening, absorbing and imitating, students are required to identify more deeply and personally with the discipline and its accompanying discourse. Such identities relate to academic Discourse and also an emerging professional identity through engagement in teaching practice in the field. The development of such identities draws on the ability of students to become conversant in, or literate in the Discourse of these multiple contexts as argued thus: “People become literate by observing and interacting with other members of the discourse until the ways of speaking, feeling and valuing common to that discourse become natural to them” (Boughey, 2011, p. 2).

Development of identity towards academic Discourse of FBITE is evidenced through the ability to participate effectively within the academic community, which is argued to be conveyed through the development of an academic voice (Lea & Street, 1998). An academic voice, they
argue, is necessary for participation within the academic Discourse. The development of an effective academic voice is necessary to facilitate deep level understanding of one’s own learning as supported in the claim that:

Voice requires a sense of one’s identity within the discourse community. For students with little experience in academic communities the struggle to develop an effective voice through which to ‘speak’ the discourse, whether in writing or in class can be long and difficult. (Northedge, 2003, p. 25)

Furthermore, the struggle to adopt an effective academic voice relates to Brookfield’s (2006) concept of impostorship, which may inhibit participation within a community. Students may feel fragile and that at any moment it will be realised that they do not belong. Such a feeling of impostorship may also be experienced towards the academic community as well within field-based teaching practice, whereby students may feel that they do not belong within the teaching profession (Brookfield, 2006).

As students engage in FBITE existing systems of meaning and interpreting the world are likely to be challenged by the new Discourse in which the student engages. The prior experiences of students may act as filters through which new ways of knowing and being are developed resulting in what Brookfield (2006, p. 90) terms an “intellectual anxiety attack”, when a sense of fit between the self as a learner and the demands of the external learning community do not align. As such new ways of knowing, understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge may contest with those on which one’s life history have been based to date (Lea & Street, 1998; Hawkins, 2005). As a result the student may, as part of their learning, experience on-going ‘subjective reframing’, whereby their identities continue to develop alongside the developmental process of the construction of meaning (Mezirow, 2000).

**Closing statement**

This literature review has situated the investigation into student academic identity within a literacies framework pertaining to field-based academic learning. The chapter has outlined literacies as contextually defined social practices including attitudes, values, feelings and
social relations associated with epistemology, identity and a sense of being. Through this
definition of literacies is understood as being more than just the way in which people engage
with text through reading and writing. Furthermore this definition emphasises the place of
power, empowerment, agency and identity inherent within literacies opening up the
investigation of student academic identity to include consideration of critical issues
associated with the academe and the credentialing process of FBITE.

The literature review describes how identity is a socially derived construct emerging from
interactions between the self and the social world. Identity is said to be dynamic and
constructed through the roles that social actors take on as they participate within a number
of social groups or communities. For students in FBITE the potential for multiple roles to be
held across the various sites of learning adds a further dimension to the construction of
academic identity as they transfer knowledge as they move between the contexts of the
academe and the early childhood centre.

This research investigates the nature of student academic identity as it is experienced by
students new to academic Discourse of higher education and also those with more experience
at the end of the credentialing process nearing the point of transition into professional roles
as teachers. The following chapter presents the conceptualisation of academic identity at the
subjective level of social agents whilst acknowledging the part of the wider system of complex
social structures in which social agents are located utilising structural-constructivist
perspectives.
Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework

My experiences are experiences in the world, and the world is what gives meaning to the experiences I have. So I can’t separate out the world itself from the world as meaningful to me: human being is in Heidegger’s phrase, ‘being-in-the-world.’

(Matthews, 2006, p. 17)

Chapter overview
In the previous chapters I presented a review of the literature relating to the investigation into the academic identity of students in Field-Based Initial Teacher Education (FBITE) in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Within this chapter I introduce and discuss the conceptual framework outlining the concept of student academic identity and the influence this had on the research design and framework. Finally this section ends with a discussion of the value and limitations of the conceptual framework, which are also discussed in relation to the research field.

Conceptual framework
A conceptual framework is said to act as an anchor for the unfolding research (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The processes of both developing and refining the conceptual framework enabled me to visualise the macro and micro features of the research, which is supported by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 22), who state that the conceptual framework: “helps to lay out your own orienting frame and then map onto it the variables and relationships from the literature available, to see where the overlaps, contradictions, refinements, and qualifications are”. Given that identity is regarded as “nebulous and subject to diverse usage” (Bottero, 2010, p. 3), it is essential that clarity is provided to how student academic identity is conceptualised within this research. With this in mind, the underlying perspective is that identity is a phenomenon associated with the lived experience and must be studied through the accounts
As identified by Matthews (2006), as a lived experience, identity exists as an inner experience related to the conscious world in which social actors attribute meaning and belief: the sense of, “being-in-the-world” (Matthews, 2006, p. 17) determined by personal experiences. The core understanding is that identity is experienced as a subjective internal state of being, emerging out of relational activities within a social world. Therefore, identity is understood as an intra-personal and inter-personal experience. The process of developing a sense of self as distinct from other is known as individuation or separate identity (Kaplan, 1978; Stern, 2000). Once a state of individuation has taken place, in which the psyche separates to be able to differentiate self from other, cues from relatedness with the social world inform the self. In this way the ‘I’ or self exists within a social world whereby it is experienced as ‘me’.
Student academic identity refers to the appropriation of academic values and practices within a sense of self, reflecting the willingness and commitment to the practices of the academic community. It is proposed that there are five constituent elements to student academic identity, which can be seen in Figure 3.1 in the central section representing student subjective experiences of academic identity. These five elements being: self-theory, achievement indicators, agency-beliefs, motivation and dispositions. The five elements represent student academic identity at the intra-personal level. Around this intra-personal experience are the inter-personal contexts that inform this lived experience. These contexts include the academic institution, the early childhood community and the associated socio-political context.

The representation of student academic identity as an intra- and inter-personal concept acknowledges the social relatedness of learning, reinforcing the belief that becoming a student is a holistic enterprise. This is a perspective advocated by Wenger who argues that the learner in the process of meaning making is more than a cognitive being:

> It is a whole person, with a body, a heart, a brain, relationships, aspirations, all the aspects of human experience, all involved in the negotiation of meaning. The experience of the person in all these aspects is actively constituted, shaped, and interpreted through learning. Learning is not just acquiring skills and information; it is becoming a certain person—a knower in a context where what it means to know is negotiated with respect to the regime of competence of a community. (Wenger, 2010, p. 180)

**Intra-personal elements of student academic identity**

The following descriptions of the constituent elements of student academic identity inform their place within the conceptualisation of the phenomenon under investigation.
**Self-theory**

Within the theorisation of student academic identity, self-theory holds a prominent place because as Bourdieu aptly states, “nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies” (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 19). In this way it is a person’s own descriptions and words about self which hold significance. Self-theories are based on a combination of internal and externally derived knowledge and are associated with a belief in one’s own self to behave in a particular way (Bandura, 1995). It is through these beliefs or theories about self that experiences are attributed meaning and power. The continual renegotiation of self reflects the dynamic nature of identity and is supported by Bourdieu, in his claim that: “Agents are endlessly occupied in the negotiations of their own identity” (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 21).

Self-theories are made up of self-concepts such as self-efficacy, self-evaluation and self-worth (Deakin-Crick & Wilson, 2005; Rodriguez, 2009). Self-concepts are related to what a person regards as valuable and important (Krause, Bouchner, Duchesne, & McMaugh, 2010). Academic self-concept is associated with achievements in academic contexts, and is connected to successful academic outcomes (Marsh, Kong, & Hau, 2000). Academic self-concept is said to emerge from peer comparison and internal comparison of one’s ability across academic areas (Krause et al., 2010). A connection has been made between academic self-concept and the contextual factors such as class or school, with “equally able students have lower academic self-concepts when attending schools where the average ability levels of other students is high than when attending schools where the school-average ability is low” (Marsh, Hau, & Craven, 2004, p. 269). In the case of tertiary education this relates to the type of study programme selected, whether academic or vocational, and the institutional context such as university, polytechnic or technical college, or private training establishment.

Self-esteem is closely connected to self-concept, in that it is the emotional dimension of self-perceptions. According to Krause, Bochner, & Duchesne, (2003, p. 73): “it consists of the feelings we have about who we believe ourselves to be”. Self-esteem may be positive (high) or negative (low), and is associated with comparisons made between self and others, the forming of relationships, and social participation. In the academic context self-esteem is
linked with self-comparison with fellow students, the relationships formed within the academic environment potentially influencing student engagement and participation in academic tasks.

Another self-theory important within the academic context is that of self-efficacy, defined as: “An individual’s sense of being able to manage a task effectively and successfully in a particular domain” (Krause et al., 2003, p. 75). Self-efficacy is related to skills as well as prior experiences, which may be positive or negative. Higher self-efficacy is associated with higher levels of self-confidence, both of which are important for managing challenges and stresses within academic study. High self-efficacy has also been associated with a personal sense of agency, influence and control, to attain successful outcomes. Conversely low self-efficacy is associated with feelings of powerlessness and inadequacy, which may impact on further elements of academic identity such as motivation.

A further feature of self-theory as an element of student academic identity is that of perceptions of future or possible selves, which, according to Hamman, Gosselin, Romano, & Bunuan (2010, p. 1351) involves, “casting the self in terms of the future and possible [italics in original] also implies a goal that is anticipated and may be realized”. Notions of a future or possible self are derived from desires and hopes, as well as fears, and reservations for the self, which are said to be specific and significant rather than any imagined role (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In relation to student academic identity the future aspirations for self play an influencing role on motivations, self-regulation, and self-concepts associated with the learning behaviours.

Rather than being a sole feature of student academic identity, self-theories are informed by, and also act to inform other elements of student academic identity (White & Lowenthal, 2011). For instance the messages a student receives as to their academic performance either reinforce or undermine theories of self towards academic potential. Such achievement indicators relate to student willingness to engage in their academic study and also their commitment to achieving their academic goals.
Achievement indicators refer to the degree to which a student realises their educational goals (Sepehrian Azar, 2013), and achievement indicators act to gauge the likelihood of meeting with academic success. In relation to student academic identity, achievement indicators provide essential messages informing a sense of self in terms of confidence, efficacy, and a future sense of possible self associated with the likelihood of achieving academic goals. Through the goals set judgments are made as to one’s ability (Was et al., 2009).

Feedback is an example of an achievement indicator, providing information about performance or understanding (Timperley, 2013), enabling students to gain insight into their academic ability, as supported by Schunk & Mullen (2013, p. 435): “Perceptions of progress strengthen self-efficacy and motivation”. Feedback can be both through formative and summative, in that feedback can be used to inform a student as to areas for future development prior to a final measure of success (Brown & Race, 2012). Positive feedback in terms of areas of student success can lead to an increase in positive self-perceptions, and increases in motivation. Negative feedback, on the other hand, in the form of poorer than anticipated or desired grades or lower expectations on competency measures, can be related to negative impacts on self-beliefs and lowered motivation and engagement in academic study (Timperley, 2013). In such a way feedback can be seen as informing self-theories as a feature of student academic identity.

Student responses to feedback and the strategies that the student has access to further relate to agency-beliefs, which form a further feature of student academic identity. Feedback may also be associated with self-regulation when it: “addresses the way students monitor, direct, and regulate their actions toward the learning goal. It implies autonomy, self-control, self-direction, and self-discipline and can have significant effects on achievement” (Timperley, 2013, p. 403). Achievement indicators such as feedback are associated with student organisational skills and attitudes towards learning including academic procrastination (Howell & Watson, 2007).
Agency-beliefs refer to the personal strategies students have access to, and how they use them in order to attain academic success (Walls & Little, 2005). In terms of student academic identity, agency-beliefs equate to whether the means to achieve an academic goal are accessible and usable to the student in question. Agency-beliefs are associated with knowing what to do to achieve academic success, and are closely aligned with, but remain separate from, the motivation to achieve, as explained in the following way:

An example related to the school context is the student who has extremely high ability and wherewithal to expend effort, ample resources, and clear understanding of what is needed for academic performance yet who chooses not to invest himself or herself in school-related activities. (Walls & Little, 2005, p. 24)

Agency-beliefs contain features of self-regulation as the process by which a student directs their own learning as a proactive agent, rather than learning being regarded as a reactive outcome of teaching (Zimmerman, 2002). Self-regulation comprises the thoughts, feelings and behaviours a student holds towards their achievement of personal goals. Self-regulation draws on aspects of meta-cognition through awareness of self as a learner as well as motivational forces to achieve goals. Self-regulated learners demonstrate autonomy through knowing how and when to seek help in achieving goals, with help-seeking behaviour being defined as “requests for assistance, clarification, information, and checking-of-work from teachers” (Calarco, 2011, p. 865).

As stated, self-regulation as a form of agency-belief is further associated with meta-cognition. Meta-cognition includes knowledge of self as a learner, knowledge of strategies to positively influence learning, and the ability to recognise when such strategies need to be used (Lai, 2011a). Accordingly, meta-cognitive skills are said to include: “planning activities, awareness of comprehension and task performance, and evaluation of the efficacy of monitoring processes and strategies” (Lai, 2011a, p. 2). In this way agency within the academic context relates to degrees of activity, passivity, and perceptions of personal control that students hold
in relation to learning. In terms of student actions, such agency relates to strategies such as: time keeping, attending classes, organisation, taking notes, using effective research skills to gather information, managing academic workloads and assessment deadlines, and the prioritising of commitments. These strategies enable student autonomy through self-determined actions.

Academic procrastination, also referred to as temporal discounting (Howell & Watson, 2007), is an example of how self-regulatory strategies influence learning. Academic procrastination is said to consist of avoidance strategies including: “failing to perform an academic activity within a desired timeframe or postponing until the last minute activities one needs to complete” (Jackson, 2012, p. 20). Academic procrastination behaviours may also include a range of behaviours which delay or limit active engagement with academic tasks. Academic procrastination has been negatively associated with academic self-efficacy and most likely to occur in relation to academic reading, writing and examination preparation (Jackson, 2012).

Within identity development agency equates to the concept of will, which is regarded as the: “foundation of educational energy. It brings a sense of the future, and a purpose in that time horizon” (Barnett, 2007, p. 20). The will to learn is acknowledged as central to the act of learning and is expressed through putting in effort, trying and attending to learning activities (Deakin-Crick & Wilson, 2005). Having the attention or the student’s will to learn should not be assumed, but once attained means much (Barnett, 2007). The willingness to learn is associated with personal responsibility and intrinsic motivations within the act of learning; as something done by and not for the individual (Deakin-Crick & Wilson, 2005). Responsibility and the will to learn relate to commitment to learning, which involves the deeper investment of self to the learning situation. A more surface investment represents a lack of will, and is associated with more passive approaches to learning.

**Motivation**

Motivation, as an element of student academic identity, consists of a number of components including beliefs around the value of tasks, goal orientation, and affect (Dweck, 2000; Howell & Watson, 2007; Rodriguez, 2009). Motivation comprises activity as well as orientation, which
is described as the reasoning behind why action is taken (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In terms of the value associated with tasks motivation relates to whether the student is setting out on a learning pathway of their own choosing, intrinsic motivation, or one in which they are fulfilling the academic expectations of others, usually parents, termed external motivation (Dweck, 2000). Intrinsic motivational properties consist of orientations towards learning, such as whether learning is regarded as meaningful and enjoyable. Furthermore, student academic motivation is said to be influenced by factors such as the student’s self-concept and self-efficacy, making a connection across to academic identity as self-theory (Rodriguez, 2009).

Motivation is furthermore associated with goal orientation (Howell & Watson, 2007). Achieving goals is associated with the personal approaches taken within learning situations, and whether students engage in actions of pursuing or avoiding learning situations. Through connection with goal orientation achievement indicators relate to student motivation towards learning situations. Four types of goal orientation have been identified, as described in the following way:

The mastery-approach goal orientation describes those seeking to learn all there is to learn; the mastery-avoidance orientation (newly added to the achievement goal taxonomy) describes those motivated to avoid not learning what there is to learn; the performance-approach orientation describes those motivated to perform better than their peers; and the performance-avoidance orientation describes those looking to avoid performing poorly relative to others. (Howell & Watson, 2007, p. 168)

As such goal orientation relates to student academic identity in a number of ways; motivationally and the achievement of personal learning goals; self-theory, in terms of comparison of self with peers on academic tasks; agency, in terms of energy, the desire to learn and activity applied to learning; and dispositions, associated with intellectual curiosity (Barnett, 2007).

Motivation is influenced by meta-cognition and the awareness of personal knowledge of self as a learner, and the autonomy and control shown by an individual to engage with their learning and achieving learning goals (Zimmerman, 2002). Self-regulated learners are
associated with positive learning outcomes, as argued by Zimmerman: “Because of their superior motivation and adaptive learning methods, self-regulated students are not only more likely to succeed academically but to view their futures optimistically” (2002, p. 66). Self-regulation is particularly associated with intrinsic motivation, with increasing knowledge, and performance achievement expectations (Rodriguez, 2009). Motivation enables continued engagement in depth of thinking, and is associated with the dispositions of effort and persistence (Lai, 2011b). In terms of characteristic features of academic discourse, motivation has been associated with critical thinking, because as according to Rodriguez: “Academic expectations trigger involvement and activate cognitive strategies as these promote deep rather than strategic learning alone” (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 534).

Dispositions

Dispositions consist of “habits of mind” (Freeman, 2003, p. 10), including values and beliefs, strategies and intentions. The dispositions and qualities a student holds are examples of personal resources influencing navigation of, and participation in the social world. Examples of dispositions associated with a positive academic identity include, inclination to open oneself to experience, preparedness to explore, and preparedness to listen (Barnett, 2007, p. 102). Such dispositions are associated with orientations to the world, a readiness to move forward, to take action, and as such relate to motivation, agency, and self-theories. In relation to the academic context general academic dispositions include attitudes towards working hard, paying attention, participation, commitment to academic study, ways of recovering from set-backs, how challenges are approached and points of focus such as seeing personal failings or challenges to overcome (Bandura, 1995).

The term ‘learning power’ has been coined by Deakin-Crick and Wilson (2005) to describe the blend of dispositions, values and attitudes integral to effective learners. The three dimensions within learning power most pertinent to academic dispositions include: the learners ability to integrate, manage and engage with information through meaning-making; a state of critical curiosity through digging into and exploring information in-depth; and a state of creativity in terms of taking risks within learning, imagination, and insightfulness. Some dispositions relate
closely to agency-beliefs but reflect more of a natural tendency, or internal approach towards academic study as opposed to externally identified strategies. Within this line of argument, for instance, being organised may be as much about clarity of thinking, being focused and not getting distracted, as is it is about systems such as keeping tidy files or taking notes. A student may therefore know that being organised may be beneficial to their study but somehow find that they are not inclined to act this way, with organisation emerging from an act of cognitive awareness rather than an intentional way of behaving.

Dispositions also relate to student attitudes towards knowledge construction in the form of information processing styles. These cognitive strategies influence how events are perceived, experienced and interpreted, the meaning that is attached to them, and in turn future patterns of responding to like situations (Berzonsky, 2004; Marcia, 2002; Was et al., 2009). From a socio-cognitive perspective three information-processing styles are said to be important in terms of how students engage with information (Berzonsky, 2004). An informational style involves the active seeking out of information, which is more internally driven. A normative style reflects a reliance on beliefs, values and perspectives held by significant others, and therefore more externally oriented. Finally, a diffuse-avoidant information processing style is heavily externally influenced by situational demands (Berzonsky, 2004). Academic procrastination is associated with a diffuse-avoidant identity orientation typically through the need for constant reassurance, defensiveness, self-handicapping behaviours, and poor academic decision making (Berzonsky, 2004; Was et al., 2009).

Processing styles have also been related to how receptive students are to new knowledge. Differences in how students approach knowledge is further supported by the work of Dweck (2000), with the identification that attitudes towards intelligence influence approaches to learning. Those holding an entity theory of intelligence are said to regard intelligence as fixed, whereas those holding an incremental view regard intelligence as dynamic and flexible. Attitudes towards intelligence can be seen to be associated with student’s relationships to knowledge and the learning process. Personal attitudes towards knowledge, or personal
epistemology, refer to the subjective views held about knowledge, including: “what knowledge is, how knowledge is gained, and the degree of certainty with which knowledge can be held” (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2006, p. 17). Personal epistemologies are associated with the beliefs and attitudes influencing students’ interpretations and constructions of meaning within the social world. Hofer provides a similar definition in which personal epistemology is said to include some or all of the following components: “beliefs about the definition of knowledge, how knowledge is constructed, how knowledge is evaluated, where knowledge resides, and how knowing occurs” (Hofer, 2001, p. 3). In addition Baxter Magolda regards personal epistemology as being inclusive of: “beliefs about self, learning, classroom instruction, and domain-specific beliefs” (2004, p. 31). As such personal epistemologies are associated with the dispositions.

Personal epistemologies are informed by personal experiences and are therefore social constructions enabling movement from dependence on others as authorities of knowledge to self as knower (Brownlee, Thorpe, & Stacey, 2005). Furthermore, as a process of social construction the making of meaning, or knowledge acquisition, is informed by situational factors. Personal epistemologies therefore interact with contextual factors to inform points of learning (Biggs, 1996), and as such are regarded as “intertwined” (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 31), with identity and relationships, which holds significance to the study of student academic identity.

**Inter-personal contexts of student academic identity**

The self relates to the social world through practices associated with the various roles assumed as part of daily living (Bourdieu, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1998). It is through these practices that social experience is given subjective meaning and contributes to the formation of identity (Bottero, 2010). In this way the subjective experience of identity is seen as part of a wider frame of reference as opposed to being constructed in isolation (Fowler, 1997). The wider frame of reference is informed by the norms aligned with social roles which act further
to both allow and restrict participation within social groups. Hence identity is informed by the rules of positionality through inclusion and exclusion contributing to the social order. According to Bourdieu (2007) social roles impact on how social actors behave in social spaces, what they see themselves as being capable of and able to do.

According to the early theories of Mead (1925) who built on the theory of William James (1842 - 1010), messages about the self are taken from the social world informing self-perceptions. In this way the lived experience of the social self, ‘me’, informs the private self, ‘I’ enabling the ability to see your own self as others see you (Elliott, 2014). Such a perspective of self is described by Goffman (1922-1982) as performativ e through the taking on of roles informed through the myriad of social contexts and lived experiences (Best, 2003). As such identity is seen as a trajectory of lived experience as opposed to a project awaiting completion. Furthermore, identity and self are regarded as situationally defined by both time and place. Through being situated the reflexive redefining of identity is undertaken; involving continual monitoring and reflection on the messages given about self through engagement in the social world (Elliott, 2014). For Bourdieu social roles are associated with specific practices. The practices of a given social group act to inform the norms associated with inclusion in the social order of the group. These practices are further defined as Discourses by Gee (2001) and become the ways of being, knowing and doing expected of those included within a said social group; taken on board by social actors as habitus. Bourdieu referred to the social group in which habitus is aligned as fields. Fields of social practice are also embedded within and interact with wider areas of multiple social influences at local, national and global levels.

The rings within Figure 3.1 reflect the different contextual layers pertinent to this study of academic identity for students in FBITE. It is argued that within an educational environment there are three groups of contextual features which play an influencing role on the development of identity: the self, pedagogy, and the institution (Vermunt, 2005). As such the context of student academic identity is seen as being made up of the academic institution, the early childhood education community, and the wider socio-political context in which educational Discourse is embedded.
FBITE draws on the opportunity for students to gain experiences for applying learning within the professional/occupational community (Murphy & Butcher, 2011). For students in FBITE this relates to weekly teaching experience within an early childhood centre throughout the duration of the three-year bachelor degree programme. During this regular work-experience the student is required to be under the supervision of a qualified and registered early childhood teacher, known as the Associate Teacher (AT). ATs are able to provide insight into the development of student academic identity from outside of the academe, as a point at which the academic and professional/occupational fields meet.

Finally, the early childhood community is a part of a wider socio-political context. The wider socio-political context also plays a significant role in terms of expectations and regulations governing initial teacher education, of which academic qualification has been prominent (May, 2010). Insight associated with policy development and regulation of standards within the sector, as set by the wider socio-political field, can therefore inform the student experience of academic identity as they undergo their initial teacher education. The wider socio-political context is also important as education is heavily bound with government agendas, both nationally and globally. The socio-political influences pertinent to the development of student academic identity include, at a national level, requirements imposed by the New Zealand Teachers Council and the Ministry of Education; and, at the global level, the positioning of early childhood education, and wider discourses of early childhood education as communicated by organisations such as the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

This nested approach to the conceptualisation of student academic identity highlights the importance of attending to all layers of influence in the pursuit of knowledge on the phenomenon in question. Whilst the contextual layers are marked by solid outlines, in reality the boundary between contexts is more permeable existing in a state of reciprocal influence. Inclusion of the contexts serves to situate the theoretical gaze of structural-constructivism as it is applied to identity development, as supported by Bourdieu (Fowler, 1997). Within the
structural-constructivist paradigm identity is attended to within the subjective or constructivist level of identity as a lived experience whilst also paying attention to the wider system of social relations in which social agents are situated, the structural system of the social order.

**Limitations of the conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework was important in identifying whose voices needed to adequately inform the research and meet the research objectives. Whilst not being able to predict participant response rates, or the phases to data collection, the conceptual framework did facilitate an overview of the overall research project, from which I could hone in on specific aspects for closer analysis; the starting point being the theorisation of the concept of student academic identity. Furthermore, it is argued that it is not the role of the conceptual framework to show the relationship between key features of the research field (Baxter & Jack, 2008), it is the place of the findings from the data analysis to evidence and identify and explain the nature of influencing factors.

**Closing statement**

In this chapter I presented how the concept of student academic identity was conceptualised. In this conceptualisation student academic identity was seen to exist at a personal subjective level within a sense of self, as a result of the interaction with the social world. The conceptual framework enabled me to place student academic identity within a holistic realm of experience attending to the influences of context on aspects of identity formation as viewed through a structural-constructivist lens. The importance of responding to the features of the conceptual framework was significant in terms of the research design, which will be covered in depth in the next chapter.
Chapter Four: Methodology

Not unlike the poet, the phenomenologist directs the gaze toward the regions where meaning originates, wells up, percolates through the porous membranes of past sedimentations—and then infuses us, permeates us, infects us, touches us, stirs us, exercises a formative affect.

(van Manen, 2007, p. 12)

Chapter Overview

The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed outline and rationale as to the methodological approach taken within this research investigating student academic identity. The chapter begins with a statement regarding the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research, leading into discussion of the choice of an interpretive qualitative methodology. The chosen Interpretive qualitative methodology draws on the principles of phenomenology in directing the gaze of the research as identified in the opening words of van Manen (2007). Subsequent sections detail the selection of data and participant samples, which include discussion of how data sets were defined: student, teacher educator, and associate teacher participant samples. This later leads into discussion as to research design and the selection of data collection tools in keeping with the interpretive qualitative methodology. All data collection tools were constructed in an open-ended format to elicit in-depth rich descriptions of academic identity. Face-to-face interviews with individual participants and focus groups were used alongside text-based questionnaires. The analysis and interpretation of data gathered from the various participant samples is also discussed in terms of coding and thematic analysis. Furthermore, arguments for the credibility, dependability, and transferability of research findings are presented in support of measures of research quality with attention also given to ethical responsibilities.
Ontological and epistemological stance

The ontological position I have adopted asserts that academic identity is a socially derived construct. Ontology poses questions concerning the existence of an entity and whether it exists as an objective entity based in an external reality or alternatively whether it should be considered a social construct emerging from the direct awareness and action of social actors (Bryman, 2004). In terms of the ontology it is acknowledged that matters of identity do not take form as tangible constructs, which can be examined away from the individual or groups of individuals and the social structures in which they emerge. The theoretical background to identity firmly situates it within the psychosocial domain through the early investigations of Mead (1842-1910), Cooley (1864-1929) to more modern identity theorists of Hall (born 1932) and Giddens (born 1938). I have therefore rejected taking an objectivist position towards academic identity in favour of a subjectivist position due identity being regarded as existing within social interactions at both internal and social levels.

As academic identity is regarded as an intra- and inter-social construct it fits within the theoretical framework of structural-constructivism of Bourdieu, who asserts that the social world is constructed through the dual processes of habitus and field. This is portrayed clearly through the following description from Bourdieu (1989, p. 14) that social space consist of: “a twofold social genesis, on the one hand of the schemes of perception, thought, and action which are constitutive of habitus, and on the other hand of social structures, and particularly of what I call fields and of groups”. In this way both the individual and the collective as groups, act in reciprocal ways in the construction of social reality. Furthermore, because identity is argued to be in a continual in a state of modification, an iterative approach to its investigation is appropriate. According to Allen (2003, p. 15), this iterative approach involves: “following leads wherever they may take us. The more that you find out about something .... the more possibilities there seem to be to work with that you had not anticipated before”. The quest for acceptable knowledge leads to questions regarding the epistemology of academic identity as an area of concern.
An epistemological concern is described by Bryman as, “the question of what is or should be regarded as acceptable knowledge” (2004, p. 11). The acquisition of acceptable knowledge about academic identity involves developing an understanding of the perspectives of social actors involved in its construction. Acceptable knowledge of academic identity for students in early childhood field-based initial teacher education (FBITE) necessitates an epistemological position that recognizes that for people meaning is derived from their lived experiences of social reality, with the consequence or implication that the human action taken within this social reality holds meaning and is therefore meaningful (Bryman, 2004).

The role of the researcher becomes that of interpretation through gaining, “access to people’s ‘common sense thinking’ and hence to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view” (Bryman, 2004, p. 14). Interpretivism is aligned with the school of thought emphasising that for knowledge or meaning on an issue to be attained the perspectives of those to whom the issue or concern holds meaning must be gained (Finlay, 2008).

Methodological choice

Research methodology provides the philosophical framework of a research study and, according to Wilson (2002, p. 9), “To state ones methodological position is to describe one’s view of the nature of reality”. This research is epistemologically situated within the tradition of an interpretive qualitative paradigm informed by concepts of lived experience of subjective reality (Sandberg, 2005). Interpretive qualitative methodologies have diverse roots and according to Sandberg (2005) are informed by approaches from social constructivism, critical theory, ethnomethodology, interpretive ethnography, symbolic interactionism, deconstructionism, gender, institutional and sense-making approaches. What is common across the domain of interpretive methodologies is that reality is not an objective entity, as outlined in the following way:

Hence, within interpretive approaches, the human world is never a world in itself; it is always an experienced world, that is, a world that is always related to a conscious subject. Thus, the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the interpretive research tradition reject the existence of an objective knowable reality beyond the human mind. Instead, they stipulate
that knowledge is constituted through lived experience of reality (Sandberg, 2005, pp. 43–44).

The interpretive methodology of this research is informed by the principles of phenomenology in which attention is given to the life world (van Manen, 2007), or the, “everyday world of practical experience” (Ladkin, 2005, p. 112). In this life world it is within the subjective experiences of participants that phenomena are given meaning. Meaning is derived from how social actors look at their experiences, or in the words of Schutz (1967, p. 42), “meaning is a certain way of directing one’s gaze at an item of one’s own experience”. It is the conscious attention to experience that renders it meaningful; bringing an experience into the realm of consciousness through reflection allows meaning to be attributed to that experience.

The interpretive researcher gathers the meaning of lived experiences by asking how and why questions; thereby systemically uncovering the nature of subjective experiences of phenomena in the form of rich detailed descriptions of lived experience from a reflective stance (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Finlay, 2009; Yin, 2009). According to Schutz (1967), it is the act of reflection that changes an experience from the status of pre-phenomenal to phenomenal. Reflection therefore becomes the means by which the researcher can make phenomena evident, and therefore explore meaningfulness. The point in time, the instance of rising to consciousness, influences the attribution of meaning, and as such meaning is influenced by the moment in which the social actor observes, or reflects, on an experience. In the words of Schutz: “the meaning of a lived experience is different depending on the moment from which [italics as per original] the ego is observing it” (1967, pp. 73–74). The wider contextual field in which lived experiences are situated influences these moments. Within this mode of thought student academic identity exists as a subjective experience within the individual; having come about as a consequence of encounters and interactions, within the social world. Just as the act of living experience is subjectively and socially derived, so too is the attribution of meaning to experiences; involving the
interpretation of self in relation to others, as well as how the self likewise assigns meaning to the experiences of others.

**Research Design**

The research design is represented in Figure 4.1 in which both the participant samples and the various data collection methods used are identified. Working from the bottom of Figure 4.1 upwards, the central sections show the specific contexts and participant samples with associated forms of data collection methods. These include the socio-political context of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand; teachers within the early childhood community (Associate Teachers); teacher educators within tertiary institutions delivering programmes of early childhood FBITE and student participants drawn from first year and final year cohorts. The top section of Figure 4.1 shows the five elements of student academic identity as identified in the conceptual framework. These include self-theory, agency-beliefs, motivation, dispositions and achievement indicators. The associated data collection methods include, documentary analysis, interviews, focus groups and questionnaires.

As reflected in the research design, it is through the situating of lived experience within the domains of both the subjective and shared social world that the dynamic quality of lived experience is maintained. In terms of identity this has been acknowledged in the following way by Reveles & Brown (2008, p. 1021): “modern identity researchers have cast identity as a dynamic entity that ought to be examined: (a) within a local context, (b) over developmental time, and (c) through the influence of social and historical frameworks” According to this position identities consist of dynamic features which are “shaped and reshaped as people position and reposition themselves within socio-cultural contexts over time” (Reveles & Brown, 2008, p. 1021). Such socially situated understandings of reality serve to act as a framework from which meaning is derived (Sandberg, 2005), and closely relates to Bourdieu’s view of social reality as an individual and collective endeavour through the concepts of habitus, fields, and practice (Bourdieu, 1989, 2007).
Figure 4.1. Research design
The research design attends to the three features of the local context, developmental time, and socio-historical influence as identified by Reveles and Brown (2008). To be specific in regards to each of these features, the local context is represented through the gathering of student descriptions of their personal experiences of academic identity situated within an institutional frame of reference. The local context is further informed through the gathering of perspectives of teacher educators, as determinants of the academic practices in which students engage. Consequently, the research design involves the collation of perceptions from those for whom student academic identity is a direct first-hand experience and from those who have an influencing role in the construction of such identities.

The need to gather the perspectives from multiple areas of influence in the development of student academic identity required breadth of data including the voices of students, teacher educators, associate teachers and also the socio-political context. In turn, the depth of the study related to the strategies used for data collection for purposes of triangulation, the nature of the questions asked of participants, and meeting saturation requirements, thus enhancing research quality. The interpretive methodology required gathering acts of reflection associated with lived experiences of student academic identity. The research design therefore reflected the need to gather participant lived experiences through interview based techniques at the individual and group level, within the contextual layers of the student, tertiary institution and the early childhood community. In addition documentary analysis was used to gather insights from the wider socio-political context relating to education in New Zealand Aotearoa.

Within the research design, developmental time is represented through sample selection in terms of participation being sought from two distinctive groups of students at different points in time in a course of study: students at the beginning of study in FBITE and those at the end of their study. Seeking student participation from these two different points in time enabled the capturing of insight into student academic identity from different points during academic
study. This selection of perspectives acknowledges that personal definitions of self are informed by both past experience and future potential (Wenger, 1998).

Finally, the socio-historic framework of influence within FBITE was identified as consisting of multiple social structures including: initial teacher education policy development; the field of professional practice including early childhood teachers, early childhood education centres’ management as licensees and employers; and teacher educators. Teacher educators were acknowledged as being important points of connection between the student in the process of becoming an early childhood teacher, and the wider context of the early childhood education community. The perspectives of stakeholders positioned within the socio-historical context of early childhood education were seen as significant in gaining an understanding of the experience of students in FBITE, as a situated learning experience.

Within interpretive qualitative research many methods and techniques are used to explore the essential relationship between social actors and the world (Finlay, 2009; Sandberg, 2005). The nature of this research acknowledged that subjective experiences of student academic identity were situated within a wider social context and so it was deemed inappropriate to separate individual experiences from their context, whilst also taking care to clearly define the contextual features of significance calling for a process of defining the boundaries to data sets associated with the participant samples.

**Defining the data sets**

Within critique of qualitative research designs, it is suggested that there is a tendency for researchers to stretch too broadly in terms of research questions or objectives of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). To avoid being in this situation I set about defining the data sets for study according to the boundaries of time, place, activity; with each data set meeting all of these criteria in the following ways:

- **Time**: for student participant data sets participation was sought from first year students in their first semester of study and final year students in their final year of completion of the programme of FBITE. These time frames were selected as the key
points of transition, whereby identity awareness is argued to be more evident and open to investigation (LeCourt, 2004).

- **Place**: data was sought from tertiary education settings providing a New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) Level 7 early childhood FBITE. Further data was also sought from within the wider early childhood community, as the preparation of future teachers exists within a wider social and historical background, adding to the complexity of the case study approach (Stake, 2005).

- **Activity**: common to each case was the delivery of a NZQA Level 7 programme of early childhood FBITE. Field-based was defined as a minimum requirement for weekly supervised centre-based practice, additional to the formal practicum element of the programme (Murphy & Butcher, 2009). Those programmes where centre-based experience over and above practicum was desired but not required were not included in this study.

To establish the number of possible institutions to approach for participation in the research it was necessary to first establish which institutions offered a NZQA level 7 Bachelor Degree in field-based ECITE. The Ministry of Education (Teachnz Akona a Aotearoa, 2010), document for programmes being delivered in the coming year, in which data was to be gathered, was used to inform this process as it identified all early childhood initial teacher education programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand. Only those programmes specifically stating a requirement for students to be based within an early childhood centre for work/centre-based experience were selected for inclusion in the research.

There were six institutions meeting the field-based requirements for the research study, as outlined above. The six institutions consisted of four Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP), a private training establishment (PTE), and an OTEP (Other tertiary education provider). All six institutions were approached in writing, with a request for institutional access to seek participants from student and teacher educators. From these six institutions one declined participating in the research leaving a total of five institutions. The first institution in which participant data was gathered was treated as a pilot to check the
suitability of data collection tools and the practicalities of data collection (Yin, 2009). The data obtained from this pilot institution was not used and subsequently research data was not collected from this institution.

**Research participants**

Participants were identified according to specified criteria within purposive sampling procedures (Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling is a strategic process involving the deliberate identification of participants who are typical of the phenomenon or case under investigation (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). Furthermore purposive sampling is argued as facilitating in-depth investigation into issues are supported by Cohen et al., (2007, p. 168) who stated that: “Purposive sampling enables the full scope of issues to be explored”. When applied to this research the use of purposive sampling acknowledged that lived experiences of academic identity at the level of the individual were situated within multiple contextual layers. These layers include the academic institution, and the wider socio-political context of early childhood education at the community and national level, with each contextual layer influencing subjective experiences of student academic identity.

Through gaining access to five of the six providers of NZQA Level 7 Bachelor Degree in FBITE I felt that I was able to ensure that the nature and significance of academic identity for students could be captured. From each institution delivering FBITE, participation from first and final year students was sought alongside that of Teacher Educators (TE) involved in the delivering of the programme of FBITE. The participants were defined by the following criteria:

- The first year students were in their first semester of study on a programme of FBITE.
- The final year students were in their last semester of study on a programme of FBITE.
- Participants at the institutional level were all teacher educators on the same field-based ECITE programme as the students within the institution.

Each institution was treated as an individual data set allowing for appreciation of any contextual variation to be represented within the analysis of data. Furthermore participants were sought from the wider early childhood community involved in the mentoring of students.
during teaching practice. These participants were a representative but small sample of Associate Teachers (AT) and their contribution to the research related to the wider socio-political contextual of FBITE, which was further supported by documentary analysis.

**Student participant sample**

Student samples were identified using a purposive sampling procedure, supported within qualitative methodologies (Goulding, 2002). Participants included students in their first semester of their first year of study, and also final year students in their last semester of study as they moved into the professional field as qualified early childhood teachers. The use of purposive sampling procedures, when investigating issues pertaining to identity, is supported by LeCourt (2004) who argues that the study of identity is best when studied at points of transition. The points of transition pertinent to this research consisted of the points of entry and exit within a programme of FBITE. At these key stages of academic study the academic identity of students was regarded as being most accessible due to changing engagement with and participation in academic Discourse.

Sample size is a much-contested issue within qualitative research literature and in a review by Martin (2011) variation was identified from across a range of studies. The variation in sample size across studies identified 25 as the largest, to five as the smallest. With this contention in mind the sampling procedures in this research were guided by the need for rich and in-depth data whilst also allowing for a wide array of realities to be portrayed (Panko, 2004), and the inclusion of contextual and situated features. The knowledge sought from participants was anticipated as being concrete and contextualised, with participation invited from whole populations (Creswell, 2003).

In light of this discussion, the ideal sample size for each case was guided by the principles of gaining rich, in-depth descriptions of academic identity in search for variation in subjective experiences from no fewer than 10 first year and 10 final year students per institution. Sample size was further determined by the size of student cohorts, and the availability of students present during my distribution of questionnaires. The overall class sizes in which
questionnaires were distributed ranged from 13 to 63 and two phases of data collection were
implemented to enhance participant response rates. The actual response rate for student
participant samples fit within the desired sample size of no less than 10 per student year
group. Actual sample sizes are shown in Table 4.1 in which it is possible to see that whilst
variation in participation was evident across institutions and across student year groups the
desired minimum of 10 participants per group was achieved.

Table 4.1. Student participant samples sizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution (pseudonym)</th>
<th>First year cohort size</th>
<th>First year sample size</th>
<th>Final year cohort size</th>
<th>Final year sample size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hibiscus</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mānuka</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kowhai</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohutukawa</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall final</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher educator participant sample
Participation was sought from Teacher Educators (TE) who were active in the development
and delivery of an NZQA Level 7 bachelor degree of FBITE. The TE samples were also selected
using purposive sampling techniques with all participants being involved in the delivery of the
same programme of study from which the student samples were drawn. The perspective of
TEs was significant due to their involvement in determining the academic practices in which
the students engaged, both in the institution and beyond the multiple sites of learning within
the early childhood community.

Associate Teachers participant sample
As outlined in discussion of the research methodology, it was important to situate the
subjective experiences of students and TEs within a wider frame of reference. This contextual
frame of reference added depth and a point of commonality that could be put to beneficial
use in the synthesis of findings. This contextualisation came from the gathering of perspectives of Associate Teachers (AT) involved in the mentoring of students during teaching practices within FBITE. The ATs were all qualified and registered teachers who were selected using purposive sampling methods. Only a small sample of five ATs (n=5) was used with the ATs coming from early childhood contexts of Auckland Kindergarten Association (AKA), private kindergartens and private day care. All the ATs were located in Auckland but were experienced with mentoring students from a number of providers of FBITE. ATs were selected through contact made either through their attendance at an annual AT symposium or through collegial contact.

Data Collection
Because I wanted to investigate academic identity as it was experienced directly by students, and by those who acted to inform the students’ context of experience, I wanted data collection tools which would be open to participants’ voices; their narratives of personal, lived experience. Identity constructs are argued to be in a continual state of modification, therefore an iterative approach to their investigation was called for. According to Allen (2003, p. 15), this iterative approach involves: “following leads wherever they may take us. The more that you find out about something... the more possibilities there seem to be to work with that you had not anticipated before”. Furthermore, I chose to use a range of data collection tools, suited to the varied participant samples making up the research. This research incorporated the collection of both primary and secondary data.

Primary data collection
Primary data was collected directly from student, TE and AT participant samples. This raw data was collected through the use of interview techniques, constructed broadly as a means of eliciting the views of an individual or group and enabling the provision of subjective experiences of academic identity in participants’ own words (Cohen et al., 2007). The interview techniques comprised of both in-person and text-based tools. In-person methods included focus groups and one-to-one interviews. These techniques provided the opportunity for me to ask the ‘how’ as well as the ‘what’ of participants’ lives (Fontana & Frey, 2005).
Questions were broad and general to enable participants to draw on their own meaning of a situation (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative, open-ended structures were uniform across all primary data collection tools, to accommodate the multiple meanings and experiences of academic identity (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009), and to ensure consistency and validity between the theoretical, the conceptual and the methodological frameworks relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Appendix 1 provides all the questions and interview prompts posed to participants and how these questions align with the research questions and also the conceptualisation of student academic identity as part of a construct mapping process.

**Construct mapping and data collection**

Research rigour concerns the demonstration of “integrity and competence” (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82), which involves the careful consideration of the phenomenon under investigation and ensuring that the research measures what it sets out to measure. An important aspect of demonstrating research rigour is through the transparency of the research process. A process of construct mapping was used to ensure a systematic means of investigation (Van Manen, 1997), and that the data collection tools and process were going to measure what they were intending to measure in order to answer the research questions and meet the research aim. The process of construct mapping related to my conceptual framework and enabled me to ensure the validity and reliability of the research tools by firstly defining academic identity as a construct and secondly identifying the construct at an operational level (Yin, 2009).

It was acknowledged that whilst the construct mapping process provided a framework through which academic identity could be explored, it also allowed for new theoretical insight to be gained from the data collected (Stake, 2005). This active engagement with the phenomenon at both a theoretical and experiential level further reinforced the relevance of using a structural-constructivist theoretical framework and an interpretive qualitative methodology (Ladkin, 2005). Furthermore, the careful attention given to the phenomenon of academic identity through the construct mapping process reinforced the rigour of the
research; ensuring that I measured what I set out to measure, and providing transparency to how the research was approached (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

A series of steps were followed to ensure that the construct of academic identity was appropriately represented in the data collection tools, and also allowed for participants to proffer new or alternative insights into academic identity for the specific target group of students in FBITE. Appendix 1 shows the outcome of the construct mapping process whereby the content of data collection tools were mapped against the research questions and the elements of academic identity as identified through review of the literature. The initial step involved reviewing the literature to inform on the elements of student academic identity as identified through previous research studies. This process supported the desired holistic investigation into student academic identity, as I was able to ensure that each element was considered within the development of data collection tools.

Within the construct map (Appendix 1) each of the questions included within the various data collection tools was examined in terms of how it would elicit responses relevant to the study of student academic identity. Each question posed to research participants was examined to see which of the five elements, of student academic identity (self-theory, achievement indicators, agency-beliefs, motivation and dispositions) that they aligned with. The mapping process ensured that the research tools answered the demands of the research question to which they were aligned (Bryman, 2004). Care was taken with the wording within the research tools to ensure that they were free from bias and to avoid leading questions. This process was supported by the piloting of data collection tools (S. Thomas, 2004).

All the research tools utilised an open structure in which respondents were enabled to provide as much information as they wished within their responses. This was evident through the use of terms such as describe, what, how or when, encouraging descriptive responses rather than single utterances. The questions also allowed for the possibility of new construct elements to emerge due to the open wording of the questions, and the opportunity given for
participants to provide their own narrative and description of their experiences of student academic identity.

**Questionnaires**

Text-based interview surveys took the form of open-ended questionnaires regarded as suitable for the gathering of perspectives of lived experiences as part of a situated process (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Questionnaires enabled me to target whole populations, not to meet claims of generalisation, but rather in respect of the potential for extensive range of lived experiences and the gathering descriptions of the nature of academic identity in participants’ own words, their own expressions. The use of open-ended research tools is endorsed as a way of listening to, “what people are saying in their life setting” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8), with an understanding that social reality is made up of, “multiple and sometimes contradictory interpretations” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 168).

The questionnaire for first year students consisted of 23 open-ended questions. These questions can be seen within the construct map (see Appendix 1). First year student questionnaires elicited information relating to the five elements of student academic identity as identified within the literature including self-theory, achievement indicators, agency-beliefs, motivation and dispositions. Basic demographic information was also obtained such as gender, age, culture and prior experience within early childhood education. The questionnaire for final year students consisted of 14 open-ended questions, (see Appendix 1), which again elicited responses associated with the fore mentioned five elements of student academic identity as identified in the literature.

The questions varied in terms of the specific detail being elicited acknowledging the differences between being a student at the start of their academic study with those of being students coming towards the end of their period of academic study. For instance, within the questionnaire for first year students, attention was given to the thresholds of entry into academic study with further attention given to academic practices such as reading, writing, and academic discussions. Within the questionnaire for final year students attention was
given to the move into professional practice and the greater experience gained from field-based teaching practice during their three years of study. Questionnaires for both first year and final year enquired as to perceptions around immersion and participation in academic ways of being, doing, and knowing. The attention to differences between first year and final year students experiences of student academic identity reinforced the importance attributed to contextual features on constructions of identity and the need for research tools to be fit for purpose (Cohen et al., 2007).

Questionnaires were distributed in hard copy format as opposed to through the use of softcopy. This strategy was used as a result of concerns regarding participant response rates for online or digital questionnaires (Monroe & Adams, 2012). The actual practice of distributing questionnaires varied according to the institutional context in which potential participants were based. As part of the process of recruiting participants I asked for the identification of a research contact person within each of the institutions. Under the guidance of the institution’s research contact person, information sheets were distributed to potential participants, describing the research aim and details around participation.

Through this research contact person I also negotiated opportunities to talk to potential participants in person about the research and what participation would involve. During the talks with potential student participants I used a PowerPoint slide show of key information included in the information sheet (see Appendix 2). This facilitated an opportunity for questions pertinent to the research and participation to be asked. Student participants were provided with an the opportunity to complete the questionnaire at the end of the presentation if they wished or they could take the questionnaire away with them for completion at a later date and return by mail or an anonymous drop box system as arranged with the institution. Students were informed that participation was voluntary and also that completion of all questions within the questionnaire was also voluntary.

Focus groups
Focus groups have been used successfully within educational research since their initial development during the Second World War (McLachlan, 2005). Focus groups were used to elicit understanding of academic identity from academic staff teaching students on FBITE at bachelor degree level. The focus group method aligned with gathering the multiple perspectives, interpretations, and experiences inherent within the development and delivery of an educational programme of study. The focus groups enabled rich discussion of the context in which student academic identity is developed, as well as adding to understandings of the concept of academic identity itself. It was considered that a focus group would be more beneficial than individual interviews due to the opportunities for discussion between academic staff bringing richness and depth to the data; enabling me to gain a plethora of perspectives, experiences, and stories of academic staff.

A set of five prompts was developed adding a semi-structured design to the focus groups, as shown within Table 4.2. The prompts covered topics such as contextual issues associated with the design of the programme of FBITE delivered in the institution including: the rationale leading to the development of the degree in early childhood FBITE, the academic practices of the programme, contexts of learning for students on the programme, areas of challenge and success for students on the programme and finally the associated fit between the academic and professional practices of the early childhood sector.

Focus groups were carried out at each case study site through arrangement with the relevant research contact person. Prior to the focus group taking place, an information sheet was distributed to potential participants (see Appendix 3). The focus groups lasted on average one to one and a half hours. Each focus group was recorded and transcribed either by myself or via a paid transcription service, who had signed a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix 4). The transcription was then sent back to the focus group participants for corroboration purposes. The number of participants for each focus group fell within the suggested guidelines (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2010; Bogdan & Knopp Biklen, 2007), with a minimum number of four participants in one focus group and a maximum number of eight in another.
Individual interviews

Interviews are a highly valued means of data collection within qualitative research studies (Bryman, 2004). The interview is regarded as facilitating the construction of knowledge through conversation and is particularly fitting in research into matters of identity (Cohen et al., 2007). Originally the plan had been to gain data from ATs within the early childhood education community through the use of questionnaires. However, as I progressed through the data collection process I felt that using a more personal approach through individual interviews would be more beneficial in terms of exploring the research issue. The value of interviews was particularly associated with the exploration of the context in which student academic identity was associated with field-based teaching practices. The contextual value of interviews being described by Fontana and Frey (2005, p. 698) as: “active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated contextually based results”. Furthermore the interviews were open-ended and semi-structured with the interview prompts being used to initiate discussion whilst also enabling participants to offer their own narratives and perspectives on matters they identified as relevant to the research questions. This use of semi-structured interview techniques is supported by Opie (1999, p. 220) who states that in interviews with limited structure: “The focus is on reproducing the world of the person being interviewed, not attempting to make sense of it from some predetermined perspective”.

The individual interviews enabled me to seek clarity in terms of responses (Cohen et al., 2007) and to be more responsive to the perspectives of the ATs, who carried out the role of AT in a range of early childhood contexts including: Auckland Kindergarten Association, private kindergartens, and private day care. The prompts originally developed for questionnaires were therefore adapted and used instead to form the basis of the open-ended individual interviews (see Appendix 1). A total of five ATs were approached and agreed to participate in individual interviews, which were held at a location of their choosing. For one AT this was my office; another chose to be interviewed in her home; one chose her site of work and a further
two took place over the phone. Information sheets were distributed prior to the individual interviews (see Appendix 5).

Secondary data collection

Secondary data involves the use of information that was originally produced by someone other than the researcher for another purpose. In this research this involves the analysis of documents to inform the context of the research study.

Documentary analysis

Documentary analysis is said to provide rich contextual insight into an experience and as such is regarded as particularly suited to socially situated research of phenomenological design (Bogdan & Knopp Biklen, 2007; Wellington, 2000). Through directive and prescriptive messages documentary discourse was regarded as establishing the contextual features of the field of early childhood education, as supported by Bourdieu: “Administrative discourse says, through directives, orders, and prescriptions, etc, what people have to do, given what they do ... official discourse imposes a point of view, that of the institution” (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 22). The analysis took into account authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning of the selected documents (Mogalakwe, 2006). The analysis of documents included consideration of: Authorship, audience, production, presentation, intention, style, content and context (Bell, 2014).

The documentation covered in the documentary analysis included:

- **Quality in early childhood services** (Education Review Office, 2010).
- **Graduating Teacher Standards Aotearoa New Zealand** (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007).
- **Standards for qualifications that lead to teacher registration: Guidelines for approval of teacher education programmes** (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2005).
• Approval, review and monitoring processes and requirements for initial teacher education programmes (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010).


• Adult Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy (Tertiary Education Commission, 2012).

The use of institutional documents helped in gaining understanding of the philosophical perspectives behind the programme development within each institution and policy related information pertinent to the development of student academic identity within FBITE. Documentation accessed included:

• Publicly accessible institutional websites accessed for information pertaining to the delivery of the programme of FBITE. In the interests of confidentiality and anonymity the webpages will not be divulged.

• Programme documents, where available

• Student information/handbooks.

Findings from the documentary analysis are incorporated in the presentation of findings regarding contextual perspectives in Chapter Six and discussion of findings in Chapter Seven.

**Fieldwork preparation**

In order to begin the actual research I had to take steps to prepare for undertaking fieldwork. The first step in this process involved gaining access to institutions, which would form the case studies from which key participants would be sought.

**Institutional access**

The process for obtaining ethical approval for the research from my awarding institution was carried out through gaining permission to undertake the research from the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC). As part of this process institutional permission was instigated by contacting the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of each of the institutions delivering FBITE in
Aotearoa New Zealand. I made contact with each institution by letter; a copy of which can be seen within Appendix 6. Within this letter permission to seek participants for the research from within the institution was asked for using the standardized proforma on the institution’s letterhead. Whilst six providers of early childhood FBITE were contacted regarding the research only five agreed to participate. Permission was also sought from Auckland Kindergarten Association (AKA) Research Access and Ethics Committee to seek the participation of ATs employed within AKA contexts.

The actual process for gaining access to institutional permission varied due to the idiosyncrasies within each institution. For instance for the pilot institution, Hibiscus, and Pohutukawa, institutional permission was straight forward and was granted quickly within the space of one month of contacting the CEO. For the case of Mānuka and Kowhai institutional permission took an extended period of time involving additional phone calls and emails to meet the criteria of the institutions. For both of these cases additional information was requested such as copies of my ethics application to UREC and, in the case of Kowhai, a short report based on my research proposal, copies of the participant information sheets, and informed consent documents. In the case of Mānuka gaining institutional permission took four months and for Kowhai five months.

Under advisement from my primary supervisor within this introductory letter to the CEO I requested the identification of someone suitably placed to act as a research contact person. The research contact person formed a critical link in terms of gaining actual real access to participants and in managing the logistics of the data collection process. The value of this point of contact was seen in the increased response rates from those institutions where a stronger relationship with the research contact person had been forged and more discussion of the logistics of data gathering was entered into. Contact with the respective research contact persons took the form of email, telephone conversations and in person, as required for each institution.

**Data collection plan**
Planning the fieldwork process was supported by my own involvement as a teacher educator in FBITE. Through my employment position I was aware of how teaching schedules, assessment events and block teaching practice influenced planning for data collection, and arranging access to participants. The realities of these curriculum demands informed the iterative nature of the research process with later phases to data collection being informed by previous data collection experiences in terms of participant response rates and effectiveness of data collection methods.

A plan was created to manage the data collection process. The plan was informed by the iterative nature of the data collection process and dates for data collection were adjusted to be open and responsive to the idiosyncrasies of each case study in terms of gaining institutional access as well as access to students and gathering TEs together for the focus groups. Factors taken into consideration in the management of data collection were the number of student intakes per academic year, periods of time when students would be unavailable for participation in the research due to periods of assessed teaching practice, and semester breaks. Accessibility to students was ensured in line with the research aims. This involved accessing first year students during the first semester of study and final year students during their final semester. Consideration also had to be given to my own commitments in terms of my professional role as lecturer, and not solely as a student. Documentary analysis and AT interviews, informing the contextual features of the research, were planned for periods when access to case study participants was limited due to semester breaks and student intakes and also due to the prompts and focus of the interviews with ATs being informed by initial analysis of the data from student and TE samples for each case.

**Data Analysis**

The primary objective of data collection was to represent students’ experiences of academic identity within a contextual frame of reference. The objective of data analysis was to make sense of these representations, to make them meaningful through interpretative processes of coding and thematic analysis. The data analysis process was developed to ensure research rigour and involved a detailed planning of the data analysis process with careful attention
given to the research phenomenon aiming to produce meaningful results (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). An overview of the step-by-step process identified by Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006), is shown in Table 4.2 with an additional representation of what this looked like within my own research as highlighted in the shaded areas of the table.

The use of inductive and deductive coding complemented the research questions and the phenomenon under investigation, inductive coding being driven by the themes emerging from interpretation of the raw data with deductive coding coming from interpretations and descriptions of academic identity as described in the literature. The process for analysis enabled me to acknowledge my prior interest in, and understanding of, academic identity; obtained through personal experience and through review of the literature.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data analysis steps (Fereday &amp; Muir-Cochrane, 2006)</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Equivalent data analysis steps in this research</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Developing a code manual</td>
<td>Template developed to organise segments of similar or related text for interpretation</td>
<td>Concept mapping process</td>
<td>Identification of major constituent elements of academic identity as evidenced within the literature. Given a node name, what the theme concerns and description of what this would look like within the data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Testing reliability of code</td>
<td>Determining the applicability of code to raw data</td>
<td>Piloting process</td>
<td>Reviewing pilot responses to the concept map to look for consistency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Summarising data &amp; identifying initial themes</td>
<td>First step in summarising data through reading, listening to raw data</td>
<td>Transcribing interviews Transferring questionnaire responses to templates</td>
<td>Transfer of questionnaire responses by researcher and uploading to a template format enabled the researcher to stay closer to the data and forge initial steps in interpreting the raw data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Applying template of codes &amp; additional coding</td>
<td>Matching text to code categories</td>
<td>Apply codes to the text of the raw data Identifying additional code categories</td>
<td>In this instance the codes took the form of nodes within QSR NVivo data management software programme and as post it notes on a wall chart or data analysis journal. These nodes related to the elements within the concept map informed deductively from theory. Additional categories were identified through the creation of new nodes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Connecting nodes &amp; identifying themes</td>
<td>Patterns in the data identified as themes</td>
<td>Looking across nodes for connections.</td>
<td>Rereading the text of the raw data: revisiting transcripts and questionnaire responses. Double coding involving coding sections then coming back to recode and compare. Review of NVivo reporting systems to view points where text was coded under multiple categories or nodes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Corroborating &amp; legitimating code themes</td>
<td>Confirming findings</td>
<td>Opportunity for others to view emerging thematic analysis through presentations and written articles.</td>
<td>Reinforces bracketing and avoids falsification of evidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen within the first point of Table 4.2, the analysis process began at the point of construct mapping whereby I identified the elements of the academic identity as discussed within the literature. Development of the initial construct map was similar to Fereday and Muir-Cochrane’s (2006) notion of constructing a code manual enabling me to develop a coherent grasp of the construct under investigation. Developing the initial construct map was an open and flexible process, in keeping with the iterative nature of phenomenological methodologies, whereby new understandings of academic identity were enabled to emerge as the research progressed.

The piloting process related to testing the reliability of the code, as can be seen in point two of Table 4.2. Piloting of data collection tools enabled me to test their reliability and also feed back into the code manual in terms of what codes would look like in terms of participant responses. This checking and rechecking enhanced the wider reliability and robustness of the research, although it could not identify and overcome all research related eventualities such as participant response rates and all the logistical issues associated with data collection.

I immersed myself in the data through the act of transcribing interviews and focus groups, as well as through the transfer of questionnaire responses onto a template ready for data analysis. This process enabled me to immerse myself in the data in an active and cognisant way; gaining an initial sense of recurring, persistent or novel expressions of lived experience. As the research process progressed with all the AT interviews and from the cases of Kowhai and Pohutukawa, I was able to access a transcriber which speeded up the data analysis process. As identified in point three of Table 4.2, staying close to the data enabled me to gauge saturation levels and to reconnect again with the data analysis construct map.

Data analysis further developed through the process of matching text to code, identifying and legitimating themes as the analysis process deepened, relating to points four, five and six of Table 4.2, involving: matching of text to code categories,
formation of themes through the identification of patterns in the data, double coding and the confirmation of findings. My approach towards early analysis is supported by Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 49) who argue that analysis begin early:

It helps the field-worker cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new - and often better - data. It can be a healthy corrective for built-in blind spots. It makes analysis an ongoing, lively enterprise that contributes to the energizing process of fieldwork.

Early analysis began as soon as questionnaires were returned from participant samples whereby I set about transferring the data to the developed template and uploading these into the QSR Nvivo software. Likewise, as soon as verified transcripts were available I also uploaded these into the software for analysis to begin. A record of emerging thoughts and impressions was collated in a data analysis record taking the form of a hard copy book suiting style for recording initial impressions and musings on the data.

**Data analysis features**

The data analysis processes were informed by the principles of grounded theory as they were deemed valuable to the interpretation of qualitative data. Within this section I describe the features of the data analysis process and relate them to practices of coding, categorisation, pattern coding, memos, the interpretation and presentation of data respectively and finally to describing data.

**Coding**

Coding acted to capture the richness of the phenomenon of academic identity, with connections between codes being identified to discover themes and patterns. The coding process began with the transcription and transference of data into the database prior to engaging in the act of interpretation (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). A systematic, step-by-step approach was taken to the coding of data, occurring at the same time as on-going data collection. The coding process was both deductive and inductive, building on and extending initial codes identified through the literature
through the identification of new codes emerging. The coding process involved my asking key questions of the data as informed by Richards (2009) including:

- What is this an example of?
- What does this information tell me?
- What does it not tell me?
- How does it relate to the research questions?
- What further questions would I ask of this data?
- Why is this interesting?
- Why or how is this different to what I have encountered before?
- What is this category a sort of?
- How can this information be used?

Through the use such questions coding was a dynamic process. This dynamic engagement included immersion in the data at all stages from collection to interpretation and corroboration was embedded within the ontological, epistemological and methodological structures of the research, as supported by Srivastava & Hopwood (2009, p. 77) who state that:

> From our experience, however, patterns, themes and categories do not emerge on their own. They are driven by what the inquirer wants to know and how the inquirer interprets what the data are telling her or him according to subscribed theoretical frameworks, subjective perspectives, ontological and epistemological positions and intuitive field understandings.

The process of coding data enabled me to identify specific examples of the student academic identity in relation to the conceptual framework.

**Categorisation**

Coding enabled the process of categorisation to take place, through which key aspects of the phenomenon of academic identity were identified in relation to the specific context of students in field-based ECITE. Categorisation: “allows us to conceptualize [spelling as per original] the key analytic features of phenomena, but also to communicate a meaningful picture of those phenomena in everyday terms” (Dey,
Categorisation was informed both by previous theoretical knowledge of the phenomena of student academic identity, and by the identification of features particular to this contextualised study of students in FBITE. By engaging with both previous theoretical knowledge and new emerging insights the data analysis process was supportive of the philosophical and methodological design of the research (Holton, 2007). Previous knowledge of academic identity could not be ignored, but likewise it did not override the overall data analysis process; allowing for the interpretations of meaning to emerge from the data. In this way grand theories of academic identity were opened up for scrutiny within a contextualised frame of reference (Kelle, 2007).

**Pattern coding**

Patterns within the coding emerged by bringing together key words and themes between core categories, showing points of connection and relationship. Pattern coding focused the data analysis process, enabling me to engage in interpretation as opposed to merely the organisation of data. Pattern coding enhances the ability to analyse across contexts and with the synthesis of findings through the identification of common themes and relationships (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The pattern coding process was supported through the use of a database and the act of creating memos.

**Memos**

Given the complexity of qualitative research, where: “words are fatter than numbers and usually have multiple meanings” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56), managing the data analysis process was supported through the use of memoing. During memoing ideas and thoughts were captured as I worked with the data to assign codes and identify patterns. Memoing enabled me to stay focused, and clear about the research tasks, whilst also acting as an on-going record of the myriad of thoughts and feelings arising from the research process. I revisited memos as part of the data recoding process, and as a means of developing or revising coding.
Memoing was the place within the analysis where my own presence was most visible. Memoing helped me to stay active in the process of acknowledging my own place as researcher as supported by Lempert (2007, p. 247) who stated that:

Memos are the analytical locations where researchers are most fully present (Charmanz, 1983), where they find their own voices, and where they give themselves the permission to formulate ideas, to play with them, to reconfigure them, to expand them, to explore them, and ultimately to distill them for publication and participation in conversation with others.

Through the act of memoing I was encouraged to acknowledge my own subjectivity towards the research and enabled to put it aside without ignoring or denying it. The memos acted as a way of keeping thoughts and ideas on data as it was being analysed, thereby safeguarding against constraining the inductive process of the research, as proposed by Baxter and Jack (2008). Memos were located in a number of places and formats, including a fieldwork journal, post-it notes and within the QSR NVivo data management software programme (Lempert, 2007).

**Interpreting data**

Interpreting the data was about being able to identify clearly the learning from the research: “attaching meaning and significance to the analysis” (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003, p. 5). Part of the interpretation process was the bringing together of codes, classifications, and themes to integrate the data thereby gain an overall understanding of the case and not parts of the case in isolation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Through interpretation data was re-contextualised drawing together the meaning of themes within individual contexts and together in a synthesis of findings across contexts, to give situated holistic understanding of the nature and significance of student academic identity within FBITE.

**Presenting data**

As this was a qualitative study data was gained in the form of words, anonymous anecdotes from the raw data were used as the primary means of presenting data. A sample of anecdotes was used in relation to each theme discussed in the findings, as
to present all examples would have disrupted the flow of data presentation. Whilst each data set produced a range of themes the most prevalently reported themes were identified for presentation and discussion in the research findings (Sandelowski, 1998). This was again due to the amount of data generated from the participant responses and is supported by the claims of Knafl and Howard (1984, p. 21) who state that for qualitative research: “The presentation must be selective as the investigator inevitably has more data than reasonably can be presented in one report”. The presentation of data was a complex process not only due to the amount of data but also the multiple layers of data in terms of the varied participant samples and the associated contextual layers of the research to which these participants were associated. I wanted to avoid the pitfalls facing the reporting of qualitative data as described by Sandelowski (1998, p. 375):

> Qualitative researchers may offend with turgid prose, seemingly endless lists of unlinked codes and categories, dangling participles, and dizzying arrays of multiply hyphenated and, sometimes, non-existent words that convey nothing more than the writer’s willingness (albeit unintended) to destroy the English language.

With this in mind a decision was made to present data according to the research questions drawing in the perspectives from multiple participant samples where most appropriate.

**Describing data**

In the description of data, attention was given to relaying the essence of the experience of student academic identity from the perspectives of the participants. Through description of data “seeing-meaning” (van Manen, 2007, p. 11) of the phenomenon under investigation was facilitated. The research findings were described in relation to prevalence (Sandelowski, 1998) of themes in relation to the research questions and drawing from cross case synthesis of the analysis of data. The aim of the description of data was to facilitate insight in terms of the nature and significance of student academic identity for those associated with early childhood FBITE.
Establishing quality within qualitative research

Issues of trustworthiness relate to matters of validity or credibility, and are essentially about the quality of the study. Research credibility can be measured at multiple levels including: research methodology, research design, sampling, data collection and data analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Research ethics also contribute towards trustworthiness and hence research quality.

Research credibility through research design

As researcher my role became that of interpreter through gaining access to the sense that participants made to their everyday reality, “to people’s ‘common sense thinking’ and hence to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view” (Bryman, 2004, p. 14). There is a real risk within interpretivist methodologies that the researcher will interpret the meanings of others according to their own meaning structures (Schutz, 1967). The use of bracketing is said to reduce the risk of this risk. Bracketing is a process by which the subjectivity of the researcher is acknowledged and put aside as the research proceeds. Engaging in critical self-awareness was a strategy used to manage the potential for subjectivity to influence interpretations of participants’ reports of reality (Finlay, 2008). The process of critical self-awareness enabled me to acknowledge ‘bracketing’ as an active, on-going process, needing careful attention throughout the research process, and not something neatly undertaken solely at the beginning of the research process.

However, there is argument against bracketing, with the process of epoché being suggested as an alternative. For instance Sandberg (2005, p. 60), argued that, “The aim of epoché is to ensure that the researcher withholds his or her theories and prejudices when interpreting lived experience. The epoché does not mean, however, that the researcher must or can bracket all previous experience” Indeed, Interpretive epistemologies recognise the significance of the social position held by participants, described thus by Bourdieu:

There will be different or even antagonistic points of view, since points of view depend on the point from which they are taken, since the vision that every
agent has of the space depends on his or her position in that space. (1989, p. 18)

Issues of position also relate to sampling procedures. Within this study attention was given to position through situating the perspectives of students within the contextual frame of reference of the academic institution, and early childhood community central to FBITE. Furthermore, the multiple case study methodology enabled me to seek participation from whole populations within each institution, further supporting the avoidance of ethical bias, via the gender, cultural background or age of participants.

**Research credibility through data collection**

Strategies to ensure research credibility involved attention to triangulation. Triangulation allows for depth and richness to investigations through the potential for adding complexity to the inquiry process by exploring multiple perspectives of a complex phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2007; Golafshani, 2003). Approaches to triangulation are argued to operate at the level of individuals, interactions (groups), and collectives (organisations) (Cohen et al., 2007), all of which are evidenced within my research design (see Figure 4.2). As shown within Figure 4.2 triangulation was met in terms of multiple data collection methods, from multiple participant samples, holding multiple positions pertinent to the academic identity of students within the context of early-childhood FBITE. This is highlighted, within Figure 4.2, through the use of different rows and columns within each arrow: The first column denoting the levels of operation including individual, interactive and collective, the second column denoting the participant samples including student, TEs and ATs. The final columns showcase the various data collection methods aligned with each level and sample.
The importance of investigating at the levels of both the level of the individual and the contextual level are supported by Cohen et al., (2007, p. 168): “social reality, experiences and social phenomena are capable of multiple, sometimes contradictory interpretations and available to us through social interaction”. This social interaction, I would argue, is not limited to contact between people, but is also influenced by factors; such as time, place, things (objects, artefacts), history, and nature of communications or discourses. Time was represented through the participation from students in the first semester of their first year of study alongside students in the final semester of their last year of study. Place was represented through the social positions of participants: as student, TE, or AT. Place was acknowledged as referring to the location of study such as the academic institution for example, as well as social position and how perspectives from those holding varied social positions acted to inform the wider experience of academic identity.

**Research credibility through data analysis**

Data analysis techniques contribute towards research credibility through attention to rigour. The use of open coding provided verification, correction and opportunity for saturation of data; said to contribute towards the rigour of a research project (Goulding, 2002). Open coding enabled me to move from description to interpretation.
of meaning, and was supported through the engagement with participants for corroboration whilst working towards saturation; whereby no new categories or themes are emerging from the data. Saturation supports the epistemological search for valid knowledge on the phenomenon in question, which is evident when no inner contradictions are found within the data (Laverty, 2003).

By transcribing some of the focus groups and individual interviews myself I was able to monitor for bias through critical engagement with my own interview techniques as part of the transcription process. I was therefore not only listening to participants’ responses but also to my own ways of eliciting and responding to participant information. Ensuring research credibility through the transcription process was further supported through the sharing of transcripts and the identification of emerging themes with participants, to ensure that the identified themes resonated with participants’ own perspectives of significance. Transparency of themes emerging through data analysis further supported research integrity, with the inclusion of excerpts from the raw data during the presentation and discussion of research findings (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The reporting of emerging findings also facilitated opportunity for peer review of the interpretation of data further supporting the credibility of the research findings and counterbalancing the subjective nature of the interpretation process.

**Dependability**
Dependability in qualitative research is concerned with whether the research measured what it set out to measure (Bryman, 2004). Dependability was evident through the concept mapping processes, data triangulation, peer review and corroboration of data analysis, and principles of replication logic through an audit trail. The dependability of my research was supported through the initial concept mapping process used in the development of questions and prompts for the questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. Through the concept mapping process I was able to ensure that my data collection tools were fit for purpose (Merriam, 1998), and relevant for the participant samples in question and also reduced the likelihood of bias.
The concept mapping facilitated transparency within the data collection contributing to an audit trail of the research process. The audit trail consisted of acts of recording and storing of data. The audit trail began with the concept map extending into the development of data collection tools, data analysis frameworks and the management of raw data. The acts of memoing added to the dependability of the research through enabling me to be truthful and attentive as to my own subjectivities (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Double coding was also used, whereby I coded sections of data and then returned at a later date to recode the same data, comparing the results (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The dependability of the research is further supported through the use of anonymous anecdotes from the data showing the connection between participant responses, interpretation and thematic coding within the data analysis process. The use of participant anecdotes was also beneficial in corroborating and confirming findings (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), being supportive of interpretive methodologies, and providing overall congruence within the research design. The anecdotes acknowledged and gave central stage to the voice of participants within the writing up of the research (Sandelowski, 1998).

**Transferability of findings**

Transferability in qualitative research is about whether the findings of the study in question have a wider importance (Bryman, 2004). Transferability in qualitative research involves generalizing from one case to another according to: “a match to the underlying theory not to a larger universe” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 29). Furthermore within qualitative research transferability is about improving understanding of phenomena in alternative situations and relates to the fit from one context to another. The transferability of qualitative data is further enhanced through the use of multiple institutions within the research design (Schofield, 2000).

The research design enabled me to gather rich in-depth descriptions on the nature and significance of academic identity from students, TEs, and from within the wider
early childhood community through the voices of ATs. This use of thick descriptions is supported by Shenton (2004, p. 70) who states:

It is important that sufficient thick description of the phenomenon under investigation is provided to allow readers to have a proper understanding of it, thereby enabling them to compare the instances of the phenomenon described in the research report with those that they have seen emerge in their situations.

In this research the thick descriptions of student academic identity were gathered through the use of open-ended question prompts using initiators such as how, what and describe; allowing participants to describe their own experiences relating to the phenomenon under investigation (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

This holistic approach to the study of academic identity has been identified as a gap within the literature to date, with a more common focus being limited to that of the student voice without rich contextualisation from wider participants (Berzonsky, 2004; Rodriguez, 2009; Was et al., 2009). The use of multiple contexts enabled me to check the emerging understanding of student academic identity from one context to another, and to synthesise common themes (Dooley, 2002). This research is therefore important in its ability to respond to multiplicity within interpretations of social reality. Whilst the findings are specific to the participants and contexts constituting the research, it is probable that the findings will prove transferable to other contexts. The research may even hold value for other disciplines with experience-based programmes of study; where the academic practices of a discipline are applied within non-academic contexts, given that no educational situation is completely unique (Pring, 2000).

**Ethical requirements**

Before data collection could commence a number of ethical requirements had to be met. These ethical requirements related to satisfying the needs of my own awarding institutions ethical standards as well as being guided by the principles of *Te Noho*
Kotahitanga (Unitec Institute of Technology, 2001), Unitec’s commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. These principles include:

- Rangatiratanga: Authority and responsibility for Maori around the teaching and learning of Maori knowledge.
- Wakaritenga: Legitimacy in relation to presence, freedom of speech and language, and availability of resources to the benefit of all.
- Kaitiakitanga: Guardianship of knowledge.
- Mahi Kotahitanga: Co-operation and generosity guiding actions.
- Ngakau Mahaki: Respect for the heritage partner’s heritage, customs, needs and future aspirations of both partners of te Tiriti o Waitangi (Unitec Institute of Technology, 2001)

These and additional principles are reflected within the ethical considerations within this study.

The overarching ethical consideration within the research was respect for participants, which was demonstrated through the obtaining of voluntary and informed consent. Such protocols both contribute towards and support research rigour through the attention to research integrity and competence (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Informed consent documents can be found within Appendices 7 and 8. This included a non-disclosure agreement obtained from the transcription provider (see Appendix 4). Informed consent ensured that justice and equity of participants was upheld as the decision to participate in the research was free from coercion or force (Wilkinson, 2001). The process of informed consent included both written and oral presentation of the research aims and requirements of participants, which is particularly suited when engagement may occur with participants from multiple cultural groups (Snook, 1999).

Informed consent involved not only informing participants of the aims of the research but also the inclusion of participants’ voices: through the sharing of transcripts from interviews and focus groups and inclusion of anonymous excerpts from the raw data within the reports of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The use of verbatim quotes
from the data reflected respect for the perspectives of participants and their means of expression.

The confidentiality and anonymity of individual participants, as well as institutions and organisations with which participants were associated, were protected during the research process and within the reporting of the research. At an individual level this was managed through the use of anonymous questionnaires, personal details from consents for the digital journals requested that participants chose a pseudonym for use in any communications. At an institutional level this was managed through the allocation of numbers and pseudonyms utilising the names of flora/fauna: Hibiscus, Mānuka, Kowhai, and Pohutukawa. Institutional access, ethical approval, and differing institutional demands again reinforced the appropriateness of the research methodology and being responsive to contextual difference in institutional requirements.

Paying sufficient attention to relationships, even at the point of research protocols, was significant in terms of the research design and also the place of social research within Aotearoa New Zealand; where the forging of partnership and collaboration within acts of social research are of cultural significance (Bishop, 2005). Whilst ethnicity was not identified as a singular point of focus within this research study, it was likely that the participant samples would come from diverse ethnicities. As the research study was seeking to understand the multiple realities of academic identity as a social construct factors associated with ethnicity were seen to enhance understanding of the phenomenon.

Research design was also considered as contributing to ethical practices as supported by Hudson, Milne, Reynolds, Russell, and Smith (2010). The interpretive methodology also supports the opportunity for participants to engage in collective participation of a socially constructed understanding of the phenomenon under investigation with the participants’ voice and story being central to the process. This aligns with the calls from Bishop (2005), to take a more collectivist attitude towards social research, which avoids the potential for othering (Krummer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). As a researcher from a
European background I was sensitive to the need to adopt a culturally aware approach to my research, seeking the necessary cultural advice to support the appropriate engagement with participants. Cultural sensitivity was explored further through the on-going support of the Maori advisors at Unitec Institute of Technology. The advice of Maori liaison was sought at regular intervals throughout the data collection and data analysis stages to ensure principles and practices of Te Noho kotahitanga (Unitec Institute of Technology, 2001) were upheld.

A further aspect for consideration was that of gender. Whilst the study was not specifically setting out to explore gender *per se* the inclusion of male voices and experiences amongst those of woman was important, particularly as the male voice within early childhood education is already acknowledged as a minority voice (A. Williams, 2009). The use of purposive sampling facilitated the voice of male students in early childhood FBITE being heard. Furthermore, the anonymity awarded to the use of participant data also ensured that male participants were not identifiable within the reporting of the research findings.

In relation to the holding and distribution of data the participant’s personal information, responses and as such consent to participate in the research was kept securely in a locked file in the researcher’s office. Any digital records of data used for the purpose of data analysis are stored within password protected cloud based facilities. In relation to *The Privacy Act 1993* the data will not be used beyond those outlined or communicated to participants in relation to informed consent procedures. The data collected will be used for the sole purpose of this research.

**Closing statement**

This chapter has shown how an interpretive qualitative methodology has been applied to investigate the nature and significance of academic identity for students in early childhood FBITE. The research design demonstrates an appreciation for contextual variations in terms of student academic identity, whereby it was believed that the lived experiences of academic identity could not be examined away from individuals,
social groupings, and the social structures from which they emerge. The use of open-ended qualitative methods allowed participants to share their experiences in their own words opening up understanding of student academic identity as it is lived, as opposed to being based on *a priori* assumptions of the researcher.
Chapter Five: Students’ Perspectives

Identity is a set of meaningful definitions that are ascribed or attached to the self, including social roles, reputation, a structure of values and priorities, and a conceptualisation of one’s potentiality.

(Baumeister & Muraven, 1996, p. 406)

Chapter overview

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings from the thematic analysis of data provided by the student participant sample. These findings represent the student perspectives on academic identity as a subjective lived experience aligning with the notion of a set of meaningful definitions that students ascribed to their own experiences of self within the academic context. The themes demonstrate how the five elements of student academic identity are depicted within the lived experience of student academic identity. The findings indicate that the five elements of student academic identity (self-theory, achievement indicators, agency-beliefs, motivation and disposition) were all evident but experienced in a variety of ways, as shown in the naming of each theme. The connection between the themes and the five elements of student academic identity are outlined at the beginning of the presentation of findings for each data set.

These findings align with the constructivist aspect of the theoretical framework. This chapter relates to research question one in determining how students in early childhood Field-Based Initial Teacher Education (FBITE) experience academic identity. Furthermore, this chapter relates to research question two and four concerning the multiple identities of students FBITE and how academic identity relates to these, and the significance of academic identity to the student experience of FBITE.

The chapter is broken down into sub-sections so that the data set from student participants from each institution is reported in turn, with a synthesis of the findings drawing all four contexts together in the final section of the chapter. Each sub-section
begins with an overview of the basic student demographic, as identified within the questionnaires for each data set. In presenting these themes care has been taken to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants and participating institutions. Rather than using the institution’s actual name, and preferring not to refer to them in numeric form, I have instead chosen to name each of them after New Zealand flora/fauna: Hibiscus, Mānuka, Kowhai and Pohutukawa. Themes from Hibiscus will be presented first, followed by those from Mānuka, Kowhai, and Pohutukawa. Data will be presented in the order of responses provided by first year student participants followed by responses from final year student participants from within an institution.

Themes are evidenced through the inclusion of verbatim quotes from the student questionnaires. In keeping with issues of anonymity and confidentiality a system has been developed to denote the source of the verbatim quotes using a number for each participant alongside the following identifiers: S denoting student. H was used for sources from Hibiscus institution study; M from Mānuka; K from Kowhai; and P from Pohutukawa. Finally YR1 was used to signify first year student and FY for final year student. An overall examples being: (HYR1S1) representing Hibiscus institution, year one, student number one, and (MFYS5) representing Mānuka institution, final year, student number five.

**Findings from Hibiscus**

From a participant sample of 49 first year students, 24 respondents returned completed questionnaires, a response rate of 48%. From a sample of 47 final year students 16 returned completed questionnaires, a response rate of 34%.

**Hibiscus first year student perspectives on academic identity**

Data from the questionnaires administered to the Hibiscus first year students identified the 24 respondents as predominantly European/Pākehā, female and under-20 years of age. Overall the first year students’ responses showed that positive experiences of academic identity were represented through willingness to engage in academic discussions, immersion in study, attendance, and the willingness to seek
help or draw on self-reliance to achieve academic goals. Negative achievement indicators held more potential to act as motivators than lead to disengagement. Conversely negative experiences of academic identity were particularly associated with a reluctance to engage in academic reading. Procrastination was only reported by two of the 24 respondents and was aligned with poor time-management. The Hibiscus first year student experiences of academic identity were associated with the emergent themes:

- Academic tasks
- Self-regulation
- Engagement
- Praxis
- Feedback

These themes related to elements of student academic identity as discussed in the conceptual framework. The theme of academic tasks related to ways of being academic, associated with the study tasks undertaken and levels of willingness to engage. The theme of self-regulation related to agency-beliefs. In this data set, engagement was associated with motivation, self-regulation and dispositions. Praxis was related to self-theory associated with preferred learning style. Finally, feedback aligned with achievement indicators through reports on grades, and also agency-beliefs, in terms of responding to setbacks.

**Academic tasks**

Positive feelings towards academic discussions were indicated by more than three quarters of the 24 first year student respondents. This contrasted with just less than half the respondents holding positive attitudes towards academic writing, and less still for academic reading. Academic discussions were enjoyed because they exposed students to alternative views and opinions, as illustrated by one respondent who stated that it was: “Helpful to hear other people’s views, experiences and opinions. Provides different ways of seeing things and dealing with things” (HYR1S23). A couple of participants associated discussions with enhancing understanding towards study, for instance one reported that: “I enjoy face-to-face discussions it is very beneficial to
increasing my understanding of knowledge” (HYR1S17). Preference for face-to-face discussions was identified over on-line discussions, as illustrated by one first year student respondent who reported: “I prefer face-to-face as you can ask questions easier. I do not like forums and on-line discussions” (HYR1S6). The challenges experienced with academic discussions were few and were associated with a sense of safety. The following respondent describes how a sense of safety was related to communicating with others in a respectful manner: “It's hard, [I] don't want to offend others” (HYR1S14).

Half of the Hibiscus first year student respondents reported that knowing what was expected or required was important to enjoyment and confidence with academic writing. Also important was being able to show case learning, as illustrated by one respondent who wrote: “I like written tasks. Gives me a chance to work on it and present my best work” (HYR1S6). Furthermore written tasks left students with something solid at the end of their efforts, which for one respondent led to a preference for academic writing, as it was: “More achievable as have something to show for it when completed rather than reading” (HYR1S12). Stress and doubt were negative feelings associated with academic writing. Furthermore, academic writing was regarded as demanding of time and challenging in terms of the thought involved, as illustrated in the words of one first year student respondent who described academic writing as: “Time consuming – trying to put in words what I am thinking is hard” (HYR1S11).

Reading was the least favoured academic activity. Most respondents were hesitant or ambivalent in their affirmation of academic reading using words such as ‘alright’, ‘relatively good’, or ‘K’. Difficulty with academic reading was associated with complexity of academic language and reading not being a preferred style of learning. Only one of the 24 responses was fully positive with the respondent stating they “Love reading, no problems” (HYR1S14).

*Self-regulation*
Over three quarters of the 24 respondents said they engaged in help-seeking behaviour, demonstrated through showing a preference for peer support. Help was also sought from family, centre mentors or colleagues, and tutors/lecturers; typically taking the form of asking questions, seeking clarification and better explanations, and broadening understanding. A first year response illustrates these aspects: “I will persist to ask questions to understand. If I still don’t understand I will research it online. I will also ask another lecturer or tutor to make sense of the information for me” (HYR1S18). Help-seeking provided the opportunity for students to test out thinking, and gain insight into others’ understanding, as illustrated by one respondent who said: “I discuss with my CoP [community of practice] and other class peers about how they understand it. I discuss with others in my course and I find it helps me to face and understand the challenge” (HYR1S24).

Just under half of the 24 respondents referred to self-reliance, including carrying out research to find out answers; reading to enhance understanding; using dictionaries to seek clarification of terms; or using the internet and library services. The Hibiscus first year student respondents also referred to organisational skills such as list keeping, organising folders, not losing hand-outs. Time-management was associated with self-reliance, time-management was related to effort and enjoyment and just under a quarter of the students had improved with experience, as illustrated in the following response: “I feel my time keeping is not yet under control, its better now than it was at the beginning of the year” (HYR1S24. The following respondent describes how making time to complete study tasks had changed during her study, but feeling overwhelmed; potentially still influencing motivation and effort:

My time management used to be really bad. I would do assignments the night before the due date but now I’m getting better and do them a week or so before.... I put in a lot most of the time but sometimes when I’m stressed or have had enough I do enough that I think will give me a pass. (HYR1S19)

Wider life commitments, roles, responsibilities, interests, and prioritising academic study impacted time-management. Of these family commitments placed the greatest demands on students. Furthermore, being determined, motivated, and committed
influenced time-management and prioritisation of study. For only two of the 24 Hibiscus first year student respondents’ poor time-management was associated with the negative disposition of procrastination. A cause of procrastination was identified as the style of academic language, evident in the following questionnaire response: “[I] go cross eyed, complain about why it can’t be said or written so everyone can understand it!! Why does it have to be so flashy? Who are we trying to impress!” (HYR1S3).

**Engagement**

Engagement in academic study was associated with levels of immersion and attendance. Within the questionnaire respondents were asked to mark on a diagram of four concentric rings where they saw themselves in terms of being engaged in academic study through their sense of immersion (see Appendix 1 question 13 on the first year student questionnaire). Ring one at the centre of the concentric rings represented the level of full immersion, ring two represented a sense of mostly or on the whole being immersed in study, ring three partial immersion and ring four was associated with limited to no sense of immersion in academic study. Data from the first year Hibiscus student respondents is presented in Figure 5.1 with the greatest number of respondents selected ring two implying that on the whole they felt immersed in their study but could be distracted from it.

*Figure 5.1. Hibiscus first year student immersion levels*
Accompanying explanations to these responses highlighted the reasoning behind the choices made in relation to immersion level. For instance, one first year student respondent who selected ring two, feeling on the whole immersed in academic study, identified the challenge of balancing wider life commitments: “I am quite busy but I place a lot of emphasis on study. Sometimes study is not on the main priorities list if other important stuff is occurring” (HYR1S17). Another respondent who selected ring two talked about anticipating a shift in immersion as they spent more time in study: “I think as I get further into the degree I will be more immersed with academic study. Right now I’m still getting a feel for things and learning what’s expected of me” (HYR1S19). Finally, as identified by a further respondent who selected ring two, the time demands of study impacted on a full sense of immersion or engagement: “I am trying really hard to complete all aspects to my best ability but sometimes feel that there is not enough time for the work load” (HYR1S23). For the first year student respondents who selected ring 3 of the diagram, partial immersion in academic study, the most frequently reported reasons behind their choice included adapting to study life and the effort they put into study. These points are illustrated in the following responses: “I am still learning academic study as I have never done it and been out of study for 8 years” (HYR1S11), and “I am interested in my study but could put more time each night to read and go over assignments. I do enjoy it though” (HYR1S15).

Engagement with academic study was also associated with attendance. For well over three quarters of the 24 respondents attendance was important in terms of not missing information, enhancing understanding and increasing knowledge. For the following Hibiscus first year student respondent attendance was associated with being dedicated: “Attendance is crucial. Not only so that you don’t miss information but also as a commitment to the course” (HYR1S13). Furthermore, to describe the importance they attributed to attendance students used the following terms: “vital”, “must”, “extreme”, and “crucial”.

Praxis
Just over two thirds of the respondents identified a preference for experiential learning through self-descriptions as being active, hands-on, and practical learners, or referring directly to the value of praxis and relating theory with practice. The following extract from one respondent illustrates the value gained from engaging in regular teaching practice, learning from other teachers, and the integration of class learnt theory with teaching practices:

I am learning a lot from practical experience in my centre and from the other teachers in my room. I am also learning a lot from class at tech, which I apply in my centre. Being able to apply the theory learnt in class in my centre. (HYR1S23)

A further first year student respondent explained feeling more engaged in teaching practice within the early childhood centre due to personal learning style: “I really enjoy going into practicum more than study – active learning although study is important so I can put what I learn into practice” (HYR1S15). Experiential learning during the teaching practice was seen as rewarding through engaging with the children, seeing learning in action through practice, and integrating theory with practice.

**Feedback**

Just over a third of the 24 respondents said that high grades and assessment success were regarded as making academic study meaningful and rewarding and was associated with increasing student levels of self-confidence and self-belief in academic ability. This is clearly stated by one respondent who described a meaningful academic experience: “Gaining surprisingly high marks believing in myself” (HYR1S12). Conversely low self-esteem was associated with facing setbacks with study. Only three out of the 24 respondents reported responding negatively when given negative feedback such as not achieving anticipated grades or other performance measures, which lead to avoidance and reduced engagement. One first year Hibiscus respondent wrote about the strain of not knowing whether their best was good enough: “I’m worried my best won’t pass” (HYR1S7). Another respondent reported that setbacks with their study made them feel “Overwhelmed, stressed, and negative towards course and study” (HYR1S12).
Further emotions reported were associated with negative achievement indicators; these experiences included ‘upset’, ‘disappointed’, and ‘panic’. Surprisingly, for half of the first year student respondents, negative achievement indicators acted as motivators, prompting the student to put in more effort pulling on student willpower, as illustrated by one student who wrote that: “I feel disappointed but it makes me more determined to work harder” (HYR1S16). Student also talked of using these experiences as a ‘learning curve’, and reasons to ‘work harder’.

This concludes the reporting of main themes for the first year Hibiscus student respondents. The following section provides the data from the final year student participants.

**Hibiscus final year student perspectives on academic identity**

Data from the 16 returned completed questionnaires administered to the Hibiscus final year students identified that respondents were predominantly European/Pākehā, all female, and aged within their 20’s and 40’s. Overall, positive experiences of academic identity were shown through the final year student respondents’ willingness to draw on personal resources to meet academic study demands, with limited accounts of procrastination. Value was attributed to academic study through feelings of achievement, feedback, and informal support enabling students to maintain commitment and keep going. The opportunity for experiential learning, overall gave meaning to academic study. Attitudes towards future academic study were uncertain and mostly associated with learning for professional development rather than academic credits. Perspectives on academic identity for the Hibiscus final year student respondents were associated with the following emergent themes:

- Self-regulation
- Feedback
- Engagement
- Transformation
The themes of self-regulation relates to agency-beliefs. Feedback was associated with achievement indicators. The theme of engagement related to agency-beliefs, future self and dispositions. In addition, for this data set, the theme of transformation was about changes in sense of self within the academic context: representing the dynamic nature of student academic identity.

**Self-regulation**

Half of the 16 final year student respondents described themselves as being self-reliant, which involved drawing on personal resources such as setting aside time to study, setting goals, and taking ownership for learning. For example, one final year student respondent said: “[I] opened an account at 2 other libraries to extend my research and reference to my assignments” (HFYS10). Another describes preparation taken for study claiming: “I plan what assignments need to be done first and plan steps to achieve finishing the assignments” (HFYS4).

A third of the 16 final year respondents identified that they sought help from others, which involved asking for help from colleagues and tutors (teacher educators), rather than student peers. One respondent reported: “Often I have had to seek support from other members of staff at my centre and contact tutors for clarification” (HFYS8). Feelings associated with help-seeking behaviour included panic and stress. Such feelings were also further associated with the reports of procrastination from two of the 16 final year student respondents. For example, one of these respondents wrote: “Sigh. I am a student who is conscientious yet procrastinates and does the bare minimum to get by. I am engaged when I need to be – in class times and study times, and not when I’m not” (HFYS1).

**Feedback**

Positive feedback was valued by over three quarters of the 16 final year student respondents: reinforcing both academic and professional practices leading to increased self-confidence and self-belief through the affirmation of ability. One respondent identified valuing: “Positive feedback from teachers and tutor in regards to my teaching. Helping me to believe in myself more and more!” (HFYS1). High
grades, seeing knowledge in action, and being able to pass their learning onto peers in terms of facilitation of learning experiences were identified as valuable forms of feedback. Furthermore, informal support such as conversations with tutors helped students identify their own personal progression on their learning pathway. This support situation is illustrated in the following questionnaire response:

Getting to an all-time low, thinking I can’t do this and having a tutor take the time to sit you down and explain all the positive things you have accomplished and ways to help you keep going instead of just letting me give up. Very meaningful – helped me to build confidence, show others I can do this no matter what hits me. (HFYS10)

Hibiscus final year student respondents used terms such as ‘satisfied’, ‘excited’, ‘eager’, and ‘keen’ in response to positive feedback. Being close to the end of study and attaining academic success was associated with a sense of pride, relief and excitement in the future, as illustrated by one student: “All assignments I am proud of. I never thought I would be writing at the level I am” (HFYS3).

**Engagement**

As per the first year student questionnaire, engagement was gathered by asking respondents to identify one of four concentric rings most representative of their sense of immersion in academic study. This relates to question 5 within the final year student questionnaire (see Appendix 1). Ring one at the centre of the concentric rings represented the level of full immersion, ring two a sense of being mostly or on the whole immersed, ring three partial immersion, and ring four limited to no sense of immersion in academic study.

Responses associated with engagement and immersion in academic study, are presented within Figure 5.2. As shown the majority of final year student participants selected ring two as their point of most immersion with academic study, with slightly fewer responses associated with the deepest level of immersion represented by ring one.
Explanations associated with the selection of ring two and on the whole being immersed in study, were related to balancing other commitments, being knowledgeable, and a growing sense of importance attributed with academic study. For instance, the following respondent, who selected ring two, talked about how a personal comparison of self with peers is associated with a sense of knowledge acquisition: “I know a lot but I know people in my class do all the readings etc. and know more (like we are meant to)” (HFYS3). Explanations associated with selection of ring one and full immersion in study, predominantly related to time given over to study, as illustrated by the following student who selected ring one: “Most of my time is spent studying for course” (HFYS13).

In relation to continual engagement nearly a half of the 16 gave more ambivalent answers such as: “Honestly no! Maybe in 5 years” (HFYS12), whilst fewer at just over a third of respondents identified a clear desire to undertake future academic study. Final year student respondents expressed attitudes such as ‘wanting to learn’, ‘continual learning’, being ‘eager and keen’. However, most of these responses were associated with learning through continual professional development once qualified rather than credit bearing academic study. In some instances positive attitudes towards learning did not translate into action through the desire to undertake further study. An illustration of this lack of action can be seen in the words of one student.
who stated that academic practices relate to continued professional development as: “It makes you keep wanting to learn and develop as a meaningful teacher”. However, the same student, in response to the likelihood of undertaking further academic study, claimed: “I’ll never study again!! (Well that’s how I’m feeling at the moment)” (HFYS11).

Positive attitudes towards praxis were expressed by over three quarters of the 16 respondents. Regular engagement in centre based teaching practice was reported as helping students build meaningful connections between theory and practice, boosting their confidence, and enabling students to see their own learning in action. For example, one respondent said: “The field-based portion of this study allows ‘aha’ moments between itself and the studies” (HFYS1).

**Transformation**

Half of the 16 final year student respondents commented that transformation was related to feeling more knowledgeable or having more understanding. For half of these students this knowledge and understanding was specifically related to practice. One respondent reported that: “I have changed lots. I understand why children do certain things and understand their development and thinking more. This has been very relevant to my learning” (HFYS11). For half of the Hibiscus final year students respondents’ transformation was about increases in self-confidence as one student wrote in their response: “I am confident in my teaching practice and am able to communicate effectively with the parents/whanau and other members of staff. Gives you confidence of knowing what you are practicing is correct” (HFYS8). Finally for a quarter of students transformation was associated with dispositions including being ‘open-minded’, ‘reflective’, and ‘responsible’.

**Hibiscus synthesis**

The analysis of the responses from both first year and final year student respondents from the Hibiscus institution identify that there is evidence of both points of similarity as well as variation in perspectives on academic identity. For instance:
• Being academically successful did not guarantee willingness or commitment associated with a positive academic identity. In keeping with a literacies perspective, transitioning into academic study posed a challenge to student engagement in academic Discourse, however even those attaining academic success at the end of their study were still predominantly ambivalent about academically focused learning: preference being expressed for learning more aligned with professional development.

• For both first year and final year Hibiscus students, immersion in academic study was hindered by wider commitments held by students: typically family. It was identified that it was dedicated time and effort that enabled a shift towards deeper levels of immersion, which was also reflected in student accounts of self-regulation and the challenge of time-management.

• Feedback provided important messages to both first and final year students in terms of academic achievement. For both first year and final year student respondents, positive feedback in the form of high grades or assessment success was associated with boosting self-confidence and self-belief. In addition, negative feedback was reported on the whole, to boost motivation for first year students. A negative response to negative feedback was in this instance an exception to the norm.

• First year students reported high instances of help-seeking behavior; typically drawing on peer support. The final year students that did engage in this form of self-regulatory behavior were more likely turn to peers as a last resort, preferring to seek input from colleagues and tutors.

• Self-reliance was associated with features of meta-learning and learning how to learn, and was more evident in the final year student responses. Where reported by the first year students self-reliance behaviours consisted of study and organisational skills; final years students being able to draw on more mature personal resources such as setting goals and taking ownership for learning.

• For first year student respondents it was time-management that was associated with reports of procrastination, whilst for the final year student
respondents it was negative affective states such as panic and stress. Reports of procrastination were minimal for both student participant samples.

- Praxis was attributed to making personal learning visible for both first year and final year student respondents. Praxis was also associated with theories of self. For the first year students’ theories of self were associated with preferred personal learning styles. Meanwhile, for the final year students, these theories of self related to self-concepts such as self-confidence.

This concludes the presentation of the main themes emerging from the case of Hibiscus. The following section moves on to present the data from student respondents from Mānuka institution. The same format of presenting data will be followed with first year student responses being presented first followed by the data from final year student respondents.

**Findings from Mānuka**

From a participant sample of 60 first year students 46 respondents returned completed questionnaires, a response rate of 76%. From a sample of 55 final year students, 28 returned completed questionnaires, a response rate of 50%.

**Mānuka first year student experiences of academic identity**

Data from 46 out of a possible 60 respondents identified respondents as predominantly within their 20’s or under, and female. There was wide spread ethnic diversity within the Mānuka first year participant sample, with the majority being New Zealand European/Pākehā, followed by Pacific Island, Fijian/Indian, and finally Māori. First year Mānuka students’ positive experiences of academic identity were associated with academic discussions, a willingness to draw on self-regulatory practices of help-seeking and self-reliance and commitment demonstrated through attendance. Equal measure was given to negative feedback acting as a motivator or an opportunity for self-recrimination and disengagement. Furthermore, the opportunity to engage in experiential learning and praxis contributed positively to student engagement with
academic study. Perspectives on academic identity for the Mānuka first year student respondents were associated with the following emergent themes:

- Academic tasks
- Self-regulation
- Engagement
- Achievement indicators
- Praxis

The theme of academic task related to ways of being academic associated with the study tasks undertaken and levels of willingness to engage. Self-regulation represented an aspect of agency-beliefs. Engagement was associated with motivation and achievement indicators were associated not only with feedback but also with relationship building. The theme of praxis aligned with the learning contexts of field-based learning.

**Academic tasks**

Two thirds of the 46 first year student respondents expressed positive attitudes towards academic discussions. The benefits of academic discussions were related to confidence and self-worth, opening participants up to multiple perspectives, and being engaged and stimulated. One respondent wrote about being open to new ideas through engaging with others: “I think it’s a great idea to open up areas that we could discuss that maybe we hadn’t thought of alone. Get new feedback too” (MYR1S18). Whereas another appreciated having thoughts validated through discussions: “I feel that my thoughts and feelings and opinions are taken on board and are worth something” (MYR1S29).

Just over a third of the 46 students commented positively on both academic reading and writing. Academic reading was positively associated with being interesting, and fun, with students valuing the opportunity to be exposed to new information. One Mānuka first year student respondent reported being particularly passionate about reading: “I love to read, it is a passion and I feel so privileged and blessed to have so many books and articles to increase my knowledge” (MYR1S28). Positive comments
about academic writing included ease of writing, and enjoyment in such tasks. One respondent particularly associated the act of writing with thinking: “While I write my knowledge of the related topic expands. I enjoy it” (MYR1S8).

Negative views were also expressed about each of these forms of academic tasks. In relation to academic reading negative comments from students included strong expressions such as ‘hate it’ and ‘got to and ‘have to’. One respondent openly acknowledged procrastinating about academic reading. Another student commented on the language of academic reading, saying: “Some reading is well over the top” (MYR1S9). Student comments on the negative side of academic writing used terms such as ‘challenging’ and ‘difficulty’. One first year student respondent talked about finding academic writing “frightening” (MYR1S44), whilst yet another expressed more intense feelings: “Essay’s for me are torture I have a blast with presentations and oral work” (MYR1S29).

**Self-regulation**

Within the data from Mānuka first year student respondents, help-seeking and self-reliance were identified as holding equal importance. Help was reported to be sought more from lecturers/tutors and less so from peers. It was typical for help-seeking and self-reliance to occur together within the same student, as illustrated by one respondent who reported: “[I] Ask classmates to help. If still not clear go to library and try to get some books or online searching. Or asking for help from lecturer” (MYR1S11). Questioning others formed the basis of help-seeking behaviour, with self-reliance consisting of reading more, searching the Internet, seeking clarification of academic terms, language and concepts. Everyday internet tools such as Google were favoured for just over a third of self-reliant students, whereas using the library was identified within the response of only one student response. To make academic language understandable first year student respondents reported they would change it into more everyday language, as illustrated thus: “I ask or search for an easier or more layman explanation” (MYR1S24). Respondents used terms such as ‘struggle’, ‘stress’ and ‘frustration’ to describe the feelings associated with self-regulatory behaviour. For one respondent feelings associated with information that was hard to understand,
included: “Frustration, anger, concern, seek help, procrastinate” (MYR1S31). Procrastination was only evident in the comments of one out of the 46 students.

For a third of Mānuka first year student respondents being able to prioritise study was influenced by the demands of time, finance, work and family. Respondents used terms such as ‘forfeit’, ‘sacrifice’ and ‘juggling’ in describing how they met competing demands. One respondent talked about dividing time between study and family: “Go to sleep at 8.30pm wake up at 12.45 around 1 am every Monday – Friday and try to study and do assignments. Saturdays and Sunday - sleep through” (MYR1S35).

**Engagement**

As identified previously in this chapter, engagement in academic study was associated with levels of immersion and attendance and corresponded with responses recoded on selecting rings on a diagram. The majority of the data provided by the Mānuka first year student respondents showed a preference for the selection of ring two, as shown in Figure 5.3.

![Figure 5.3. Mānuka first year student immersion levels](image)

The reason associated with feeling mostly, but not fully, immersed in academic study was associated with family taking first priority even though study was important. This
is illustrated by the following respondent who selected ring two and being on the whole immersed: “Study is important but I also have many other things going on e.g. family issues, work, financial issues, that make me worry and lose track of time management for assignments” (MYR1S36).

The majority of the 46 Mānuka first year student respondents regarded attendance as being important to academic success. One respondent specifically related attendance to being motivated: “Being focused on a topic to succeed you need you be motivated to complete it and hand it in on time and to your best” (MYR1S29). Another first year respondent related attendance to interest levels: “It shows you have a passion for learning” (MYR1S43). Likewise, poor attendance was associated with facing challenges with study: “Attendance is the most important thing if I am wanting to succeed in study. I have missed a lot and now struggling” (MYR1S13). Through attending class respondents reported valuing engaging in class-based discussions with peers: “One of the most important things, considering the ideas class mates give during discussions” (MYR1S19). Furthermore, respondents also stated that attendance was important for understanding assessment expectations and preparation: “It is very important. I wouldn’t be able to complete assignments or have a good understanding if I didn’t attend” (MYR1S26).

**Achievement indicators**

Achievement indicators relate to measures of success. Just less than a quarter of students commented that grades and building relationships with children in the early childhood centre were positive measures of success. For one respondent the grades achieved acted to increase self-efficacy: “To see my academic results. I never thought myself capable of doing a degree course” (MYR1S21). For another respondent such positive feedback was associated with satisfaction with both academic assessments and teaching practice: “I enjoy the relationships I am building with the children and I am enjoying getting good grades after trying my best on all the assignments” (MYR1S28).
A little over a third of the 46 Mānuka first year student respondents said that they treated negative feedback or setbacks in their study as points of learning. These points of learning acted as motivators and were associated with terms such as: “keep going”, “work harder”, get back “on track”, and “get over it”. One respondent identified how the setback acted as a reminder as to the value attributed to study: “It made me realise how important my study was, and helped in keeping me on track” (MYR1S37). For close to a further third of the 46 first year respondents, negative feedback resulted in adverse reactions including self-recrimination and disengagement. Some of the feelings they had to overcome in order to stay engaged with study included: ‘annoyed’, ‘upset’, ‘stress’, ‘anxiety’, and feeling ‘let down’. Self-recrimination was shown through phrases such as ‘disappointment’, ‘let down’, which were further associated with ‘feeling down’. Comments about disengagement were associated with terms such as ‘giving up’, and ‘shutting down’. For one first year respondent an alternative option was considered: “Terrible like I want to give up and find an easy way out” (MYR1S23) and in another response attention was given to the emotional impact of experiencing a setback: “Get depressed, feel negative towards carrying on – go through a process of emotional stress” (MYR1S9).

A limited number of first year respondents (five of the 46) commented that they would respond to setbacks in both negative and positive ways. This is illustrated in the following example in which initial negative reactions changed over time into more positive action: “At times discouragement. I will eat lots. Watch DVD’s and avoid the assignment work a little bit and then I will come around and keep pushing through the problem” (MYR1S28). Another respondent also talked about getting over an initial emotional response: “I get upset as it builds a lot of pressure but all I can eventually do is let it go and move on” (MYR1S31).

Praxis

Praxis was associated with deepening understanding of theoretical concepts as well understanding the reality of being a teacher, as illustrated by one of the Mānuka first year respondents who talked about the importance of opportunities for praxis: “Vital. They give you experience and connections with what’s been taught in class”
Close to a third of students specifically associated knowledge gains with teaching practice, as illustrated by one student:

I believe since I started the programme every day is a new experience for me. I feel like I have entered a whole new world of knowledge and the fact that we get to put our work and what we learn into practice at the centre is a great experience for me. (MYR1S27).

However, some first year respondents particularly identified courses or subject areas that were of value, for instance the following response illustrates the value of learning about infants and toddlers:

I work in the babies room and when I started one child wouldn’t let me change, hold or feed, or put to sleep. Understanding and learning theory in Tech about attachment allowed me to put theory into practice to overcome this and build a relationship. (MYR1S32)

Within questionnaire responses, comments also included how students had used new theoretical knowledge to highlight inconsistencies with actual practice in the field. One respondent illustrates this by talking about standards for practice: “Learning about the regulations and standards criteria which teachers are obligated to work under and comparing it with the reality of centre practices” (MYR1S9). Whilst another wrote in the questionnaire about using new knowledge to contest teaching practices in the centre: “Challenging a situation that I found the theory vs. practice within my centre and highlighting this to [my] supervisor” (MYR1S45). Finally one of the Mānuka first year student respondents reinforced the value of applying learning whilst studying for achievement success: “Learned about how to include special needs children. I had this experience while studying it at the same time. I had an A+ (AWESOME)” (MYR1S35). Finally students commented that praxis contributed to increases in self-confidence in emerging professional teaching practice through gaining direct experience, for example: “They [teaching practice] give me confidence and experience that is needed for working with young children” (MYR1S42).
From a sample of 55 final year students 28 returned completed questionnaires. The final year student participant sample consisted predominantly of female students with ages spanning 19 to 61 years of age; the majority within the 20-40 year age range. In terms of ethnicity, final year students’ predominantly reported being New Zealand European/Pākehā, with fewer being Fijian/Indian, followed by Māori and Pacific Islanders making up the smallest ethnic groupings.

Final year student respondents’ positive experiences of academic identity were associated with grades for academic work. Specific papers, such as those associated with personal philosophy and those of an applied nature, added to positive academic experiences. However, less than half of the 28 students reported valuing academic practices. Negative experiences of academic identity were associated with tension between academic practices and the reality of practice as an early childhood teacher. Further tension was associated with the difficulty of some academic tasks and the academic environment particularly the teacher educators delivering the programme in terms of personal characteristics, assessment clarity and cultural clashes.

Perspectives on academic identity for the Mānuka final year student respondents were associated with the following emergent themes, which will be presented in turn:

- Grades
- Engagement
- Academic tasks
- Value of academic practices
- Consistency

Within this data set grades aligned with achievement indicators. Engagement was associated with motivation and agency-beliefs. As identified for other data sets the theme of academic tasks was associated with ways of being academic associated with the study tasks undertaken and associated levels of willingness to engage. The valuing academic practices related to self-theory and tensions. The theme of consistency related to external features associated with programme delivery, which impacted student experiences of academic study and their associated identity.
Grades

Just over a third of the 28 respondents commented on getting good grades and the sense of value that this gave to study. Such responses align with the element of achievement indicators. One respondent commented: “Receiving assignments back with great marks – feels the hard work is all worthwhile” (MFYS16). Two final year respondents commented on being able to apply the learning, as illustrated by student five: “Writing an essay/assignment and getting an A+ or A then realizing that what I’ve written about is something I have actually learned and can now use if not already using in some way”. Only one of the 28 respondents identified negative responses to academic grades: “Pressure, anxiety, stress, lack of time management affecting progress. You get one fail mark and it’s like “it’s all over” then finding I passed the course regardless” (MFYS22).

Engagement

As per the Hibiscus final year student respondents, immersion in academic study was related to the ringed diagram in question 5 of the questionnaire. As presented in Figure 5.4, ring two, relating to a sense of being mostly or on the whole immersed in academic study, was by far the most frequently selected level of immersion. In explaining their reason for selecting ring two one respondent said: “I have studied before and I have come a long way since year 1. Not something I think about often but know my engagement is more involved than when in year 1” (MFYS5). However, for two of the Mānuka final year student respondents, there was a sense that motivation was dropping as the final year of study progressed. One such respondent said: “It is nearly the end of 3yr degree and it is now starting to feel like it is dragging on” (MFYS4).
In relation to selecting ring 3, which was the second most frequently selected area; Mānuka final year student respondents related their choice to issues associated with balancing life commitments, the challenges of assessments, and the need to still know more. For instance, one respondent talked about the challenge of language needs impacting on study: “I just struggle about using English in my course study. If I didn’t have the education background from my own language I couldn’t do my recent course” (MFYS15).

**Academic tasks**

Just over a third of the 28 final year student respondents commented on specific papers as being important, of which the majority referred to papers on personal teaching philosophy. One respondent reported: “Exploration, discovery, preparation and presentation of my personal philosophy has been by far the most rewarding experience of all” (MFYS19). Another commented on seeing personal philosophies in action: “With the teaching practice philosophy I was able to put practice into theory and I began to understand the importance of beliefs and that theory was just confirmation in my beliefs. It made learning fun for me” (MFYS26). Final year respondents also commented on further applied papers including Te Reo Maori, observation, planning and research. One questionnaire response being:
An understanding of observation methods and planning has allowed me to better understand planning on interests and the importance of it. Research has also demonstrated the importance of further knowledge gaining and the importance it can have on the environment you work in. (MFYS2)

Value of academic practices
Just under half of the Mānuka final years student respondents commented that they valued academic practices because they helped with the professional practice of a teacher. Within the completed questionnaire, comments were made on the benefit of aligning academic study with field-based practice, as illustrated in the following comment: “I feel they fit very well. It is great to be able to put what is learnt into practice daily for me” (MFYS16). Four out of the 28 respondents referred to academic practices as providing a foundational or base knowledge, as explained by one respondent: “They lay the base knowledge from which more knowledge can be built. It also builds a way of thinking and reflecting that will affect all future development making it more in-depth and meaningful” (MFYS23). Just less than a quarter of final year student respondents remarked on tension existing between academic and professional teaching practices. Tension was affected by variation between early childhood centres and roles of teachers and managers, the difficulty of academic tasks and the realisation that being academically successful did not automatically guarantee quality in teaching, as one raised by the following respondent: “I don’t think they do [fit] for a teacher anyway. A teacher can be the best academically but the way in which they present themselves and how they are in a workplace may be very different” (MFYS28).

Mānuka final year student respondents were tentative in their feelings on undertaking academic study in the future, with only half of the 28 considering it a possibility, but not a definite undertaking. Six of the 28 were emphatic about no future academic study, whereas four of the 28 students gave strong positive responses, with one student mentioning: “After my professional 2 years in full practice I would love to
further my education. I have developed this love for learning and would love to carry on this journey of acquiring more knowledge” (MFYS26).

**Consistency**

Over a third of the 28 Mānuka final year student respondents made comments about the programme delivery and challenges with study. The majority of these responses related to the teacher educators delivering the programme. Students comments remarked on lecturers being ‘confused’, having ‘pre-set idea’ or being ‘new lecturers’. Additional comments were also made on the challenge of the learning environment in terms of assessment expectations and group work. For example, the following final year student respondent identified the issue of peer participation in collaborative tasks: “Not having a clear understanding of expectations or instructions. Group work has also been challenging at times as some members do not pull their weight” (MFYS2

**Mānuka synthesis**

From analysis across the responses from both Mānuka first year and final year student respondents points of similarity as well as variation in perspectives on student academic identity relate to the following key points:

- Whilst discussions were the preferred academic task for first year student respondents, reading and writing held equal weighting. Discussions were associated with increasing self-confidence and self–worth, enhancing engagement and opening students up to deeper thinking through being exposed to multiple perspectives. For the final year students preferred academic tasks aligned with teaching practice, such as observations, teaching philosophies and research. A point of tension for final year students was when there was variation between academic tasks and the reality of the teaching context, with academic success not being seen as a guarantee of quality in teaching practice.

- The selected level of immersion was the same for the majority of first year and final year students. Balancing life commitments was the most reported reason for not being fully immersed in study. The prioritisation of study was also linked to time-management and the balancing of finance, work and family, especially
for first year students. There were also reports of feeling less immersed in study as they reached the end of their final year: only half expressed a willingness to undertake further academic study.

- Grades were identified as important indicators of success: more so for final year students than first year students. Negative feedback was more of an issue for first year students with an almost equal likelihood that this would result in a positive or negative outcome.

- Self-regulation was identified as more of an issue for first year students with equal reporting of self-reliance and help-seeking behaviour often with both being reported by the same respondent. Help was reported as sought more from teaching staff than peers for help. Only one respondent identified engaging in acts of procrastination.

- Tension associated with learning contexts related to praxis for first year students and programme delivery for final year students. For first year students tension existed in relation to the consistencies between what was promoted in the academic context and what actually occurred in the practice of early childhood teachers. For final year students tension was associated within the actual academic learning context, and related to assessment expectations and peer group work.

This concludes the findings presented for the case of Mānuka. The following section moves on to present the findings from the student respondents from Kowhai institution.

**Findings from Kowhai**

Of the 63 questionnaires distributed for first year students 26 completed questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 41%. Of the 17 final year questionnaires administered 15 were completed and returned, a response rate of 88%.

**Kowhai first year student experiences of academic identity**
The 26 Kowhai first year student respondents were predominantly female, aged within their 20’s or 40’s, and just over half identified themselves as of European/Pākehā ethnicity. Māori-European students made up just less than a quarter of the sample and less than a quarter as Māori.

Positive academic identity for the Kowhai first year student respondents was shown through a preference for engaging in academic discussions, which facilitated the gathering of multiple perspectives, as did attendance in class. Through engaging in help-seeking behaviour students managed to stay on track and remain engaged in their study. Having a positive experience of academic identity was associated with the opportunity for experiential learning as this was a means by which students were able to try out their learning, see the relevance of academic study to their practice as teachers and thus maintain student motivation. Overall less immersion in academic study was reported with this being affected by time management, other life commitments, and learning challenges. The high reporting of negative feedback, however, acted as a trigger to increase motivation for some students after initial feelings of despondency. By looking at their future or possible selves students were able to attribute value to academic study.

Perspectives on academic identity for the Kowhai first year student respondents were associated with the following emergent themes:

- Academic tasks
- Self-regulation
- Engagement
- Praxis
- Feedback

As identified for previous data sets, academic tasks aligned with engaging directly with academic Discourse. Self-regulation was associated with agency-beliefs. Engagement specifically related to academic practices, self-regulation, motivation and dispositions. Praxis was associated with motivation and achievement indicators. Finally, feedback aligned with achievement indicators.
Academic tasks

More than three quarters of the 26 Kowhai first year student respondents reported enjoying participating in academic discussions, with value being attributed to enhancing understanding and the sharing of information. For instance one respondent said: “I enjoy discussions and feel it is a good chance to get new ideas” (KYR1S8). Another respondent said: “They help a lot. I find I can understand things better through discussions” (KYR1S7). Where stated, respondents preferred face-to-face formats over online discussions, reasons for this were related to confidence, and time as expressed by another student who said: “I think the online aspect would be hard to fit into my already limited time and hectic life” (KYR1S25). Challenges faced when participating in academic discussions included confidence, interest and personality. For example, the following respondent talked about how being more reserved makes it harder to participate in large group discussions: “I am an introvert so I find it really hard to participate in large groups but when its small groups or one-to-one I feel more comfortable and relaxed” (KYR1S19).

Just over half of the 26 first year respondents gave positive responses to academic reading, but that this was influenced by levels of interest in the reading material, and finding time to read. For instance, one respondent stated: “I don’t mind reading but I find the amount of readings we have to do for each class every week quite hard to keep up with” (KYR1S26). For those who were more negative or ambivalent about reading this was associated with preferred ways of learning, retaining information and more general academic skills such as skimming and scanning texts. For instance the following respondent described the challenges of readings due to personal learning style: “Readings are hard for me. I like to see it being done in an example to help understand maybe a DVD then ask questions after” (KYR1S20).

Reported attitudes towards academic writing were equally distributed with such tasks being regarded as both challenging and rewarding, as shown by the following respondent who said: “Can be difficult but rewarding and encouraging when you get a good mark” (KYR1S18). Gaining good marks from written tasks acted as a positive
achievement indicator leading to increased confidence in such activities. Clarity in terms of expectations and instructions were regarded as important especially information was coming from more than one source, as explained by the following first year student respondent: “If I understand it and know where to find the information I like it. This is helped by clear instructions from our lectures as sometimes our books are worded very differently” (KYR1S26).

**Self-regulation**

Kowhai first year student respondents reported engaging in help-seeking behaviour more than self-reliance when responding to challenges and difficulty with academic language. Help was sought from peers, colleagues, family and lecturers. For example, the following respondent discusses how general levels of confidence with academic study influence seeking out help from others:

> If I find information hard to understand, I ask lecturers or peers. It seems to have sunk in when I am around others but soon as I am at home I’m struggling. With any challenge, I like to ask others their thoughts before I go ahead. All I can do is ask because I find anything academic hard. Talking with people who speak that language can scare me because I don’t quite know how to reply, unless it is said in a simplified way. (KYR1S9)

Time-management, issues such as doing things at the last minute, for the most part related to negative outcomes, as identified by the following respondent who said: “I have had very bad organisational skills and this sometimes reflects in assignments. I leave things to the last minute which means less time to fix problems” (KYR1S15).

Three out of the 26 Kowhai first year student respondents identified engaging in procrastination, which was related to understanding discipline terminology, assignments and balancing commitments and the associated challenges of prioritising academic study. For instance, the following student identified responding to challenges faced in their study by: “Procrastinating, understanding what some questions mean as ECE jargon is throughout our assignment questions” (KYR1S12).
Engagement

As identified in the previous sections on student engagement in this chapter, engagement in academic study was associated with levels of immersion and attendance. The majority of Kowhai first year student participants selected ring three on the diagram relating to partial levels of immersion, as shown in Figure 5.5. There were no selections of ring four.

Figure 5.5. Kowhai first year student immersion levels

Reasons for this choice were varied but included academic conventions, commitments, time-management and motivation. For example the following respondent identified that:

I look at how things are written and I want to write like that, but it does not happen. Also the readings put me back because I don’t retain what I have read. I think I know how to take notes from readings but I seem to struggle with that also. (KYR1S9)

Balancing wider life commitments was described by the following first year student respondent: “Because I’m a solo parent who works full time and studies also. I can’t be as immersed as I’d like. But I think I do really well to stay focused on top of my other life factors” (KYR1S25). Time-management was a further feature associated with reasons for selecting ring three, as illustrated by the following respondent: “Due to time management (which is not my forte) I tend to slack off” (KYR1S23). Furthermore,
another of the Kowhai first year student respondents reported a decline in interest in academic study associated with their lack of immersion, for instance: “I find it hard to find motivation to study and find it boring at times. This means I can be a bit blasé about it” (KYR1S15).

Finally, attendance was also reported as being important to all of the Kowhai first year student respondents. Attendance was regarded as providing access to information, showing willingness to learn, as well as being considered important for academic progress. The following respondent explains how being able to attend classes is helped by the design of the programme of only having one day a week to put aside for class based study: “I find attendance deeply important. If I miss a class I feel I might miss out on relevant information. I must admit having only 1 day of class is a lot easier especially because of my busy lifestyle with family and work” (KYR1S21).

**Praxis**

Just over half of the 26 Kowhai first year student respondents identified the particular value attributed to the opportunity to implement and consolidate knowledge and understandings through practical application in centres. For instance, the following respondent related quality of practice to opportunities for praxis saying: “Being able to take what I have learned in class back to the centre and implement it straight away. More practical experience and opportunities to implement knowledge equals higher quality practice” (KYR1S11). Overall, respondents regarded the opportunity to engage in praxis on a regular basis as a motivator to learning, as clearly stated for example, by one first year respondent who stated that work-experience and practicum were: “Most important part – wouldn’t do a course without it. Get to learn/ experience/ experiment/ ideas/theories we learn about. Keeps my motivation up” (KYR1S2).

Praxis was regarded as supportive of achievement success through facilitating participation in study and providing a safe space in which new learning and new teaching practices could be experimented and explored, as discussed by the following respondent who talked about learning through trial and error: “Being able to spend time with the children, get to know their families, and be able to learn through praxis
e.g. making mistakes and learning from those in a centre. Using new knowledge from class and putting it into practice” (KYR1S12). Such opportunities for experimentation and exploration provided opportunity for feedback in terms of performance were important in terms of achievement success. Regular engagement in teaching practice also enhanced motivation and enabled respondents to engage in social learning through critiquing practice with peers and colleagues.

**Feedback**

Achievement indicators related to forms of feedback received by students. Just over a third of the 26 Kowhai first year respondents said that they reacted to negative feedback in a positive way; taking these occasions as points of learning. For instance one respondent said: “I need to tackle it, get in and get stuck in to it” (KYR1S3) and another said: “Take it on board and endeavour to do better next time” (KYR1S7). For a further third of the 26 Kowhai first year respondents, positive responses to negative feedback came after initial feelings of upset, panic or despondency. The following respondent talked about turning around initial negative feelings into a more positive perspective: “I sometimes panic but I try to look at the positive side of my learning” (KYR1S23), and another talked about turning negative feelings into positive actions: “I cried but then I set goals to get me back on track” (KYR1S6). The ensuing positive responses demonstrated first year student respondents’ dispositions of persistence. This was evident through goal setting associated with possible future outcomes when overcoming challenges and responding to setbacks. For instance, one first year respondent said: “I become disheartened and begin to think that I can’t do this and it’s all just too much. I continue to keep trying though” (KYR1S26) and another said they were: “A little upset to begin with but these are here so you learn from your mistakes” (KYR1S17).

For under a third of the 26 Kowhai first year student respondents receiving negative feedback resulted in students feeling upset, panicked, stressed, annoyed, disheartened, and despondent. A drop in self-confidence or self-efficacy accompanied these feelings. For instance, one respondent said: “When I face a challenge I panic as I don’t know what to do or how to handle the challenge as I not the type to really
handle challenges” (KYR1S19), and another said they responded by feeling: “Usually annoyed at myself and then an extreme lack of confidence” (KYR1S14).

Kowhai final year student experiences of academic identity
The 15, out of a possible 17, final year student respondents who completed questionnaires were reported as being predominantly female, aged in their 20’s and 40’s, and identified themselves as New Zealand European/Pākehā. Positive academic identity was associated with undertaking research projects, relating the value of academic study to perceptions of future selves, and through occasions when the relevance of academic and teaching practices align. Whilst a strong desire to be immersed was affected by the reality of balancing multiple commitments, students did report drawing on personal resources such as self-reliance to overcome negative academic experiences, even after strong negative emotional states. Perspective on academic identity for the Kowahi final year student respondents were associated with the following emergent themes, findings from each of which will be presented in turn:

- Value of academic practices
- Academic and professional practices
- Self-regulation
- Engagement
- Transformation

The five elements of student academic identity associated within these themes. The value of academic practices aligned with future selves and dispositions. In addition the theme of academic and professional practices helped highlight the connections between components of the programme of study. The theme of self-regulation highlighted, not only aspects of agency-beliefs, but also the emotional element of academic study. Engagement was associated with aspects of agency-beliefs. Finally, transformation aligned with self-confidence as an aspect of self-theory, and achievement indicators.

Value of academic practices
For just over half of the 15 respondents undertaking their own research project was reported to be a valuable academic practice. The positive aspects of the research paper included facilitating independent learning, opening minds, deepening knowledge, and broadening thinking. For instance one respondent talked about expanding thinking and being open to different outlooks, saying:

Research has prepared me to think outside the box and has shown me that there are many ways to look at the same events or issues. Ethics has been an area that has increased my professional role as an early childhood teacher. (KYRS15)

A further Kowhai final year respondent particularly emphasised the value of the research paper that was applied in the early childhood centre saying: “Research paper within my centre and seeing it implemented and reflecting positive change” (KYRS2).

Meanwhile research enabled the following respondent to recognise their independent learning skills: “[I came] to the conclusion that I can teach myself and not just learn in a formal setting” (KFYS9).

Just under a half of the 15 Kowhai final year student respondents expressed value for academic study by being sure that they would undertake more academic study in the future. For instance, the following student said: “I hope to complete a post-grad qualification in primary teaching and have thought about entering into completing my masters” (KYRS4), and another expressed an overall positive attitude towards learning: “I will try my best to try whatever academic studies will come my way in the near future because I believe that through studies I always learn new things/ideas” (KYRS13). Less than a quarter of the 15 respondents were unsure about undertaking more academic study, some open to a change of mind after initial negative claims. For instance one final year student respondent said: “First answer – not at all!! Then a small part says ‘never say never’ so maybe small chance in the future” (KYRS6). Only two of the 15 respondents made clear claims that they would not undertake more academic study. Negative responses towards undertaking future academic study were associated with the demands of family and professional commitments such as teacher registration.
**Academic and professional practices**

Just less than three quarters of the 15 Kowhai final year student respondents felt that there was a strong connection between academic and professional practices. Respondents reported valuing the opportunity to implement academic learning into their developing professional practice, as represented in the words of the following respondent who said:

> I enjoy study that I can relate directly to my work environment. I enjoy looking for information and reading different perspectives on topics. I believe it’s a combination of academic practice and my role in ECE that make me a better teacher. My knowledge of child development/theorists etc. helps me daily. (KFYS6)

Being reflective and articulating teaching practices were identified as points of connection and fit between academic practices and the practices of early childhood teaching. For instance the following respondent said:

> Doing self-review was a good way to learn about something that is a part of working in early childhood. Reflection is a very valuable tool that I have learned to use for my own benefit and for the benefit of others. (KFYS14)

**Self-regulation**

Over two thirds of the 15 Kowhai final year student respondents identified features of self-regulation within their questionnaire responses. An equal number of respondents identified using self-regulatory acts of help-seeking or self-reliance. Just over a third of the 15 respondents reported engaging in help-seeking behaviours most often involving lecturers/tutors, as illustrated thus: “Asking for support tutor to guide me through and having one-to-one correspondence and time to discuss and ask questions” (KFYRS13). Likewise just over a third of the 15 Kowhai final year respondents reported engaging in self-reliance; evidenced through making study time-tables, breaking down challenges into easier more understandable parts, and seeking more literature. For instance one respondent said: “At first I get very frustrated and then when I break down the challenge into smaller sections and take another look I find I am able to work through to gain better understandings” (KFYRS4).
Over half of the respondents identified engaging in both help-seeking and self-reliance, as illustrated thus: “I try and overcome challenges by myself but will ask for support from my tutor or classmates if required. I ask questions and will persevere until I achieve” (KFYRS6).

Just over half of the 15 responses pertaining to self-regulation included reference to emotions associated with academic study. These included feelings of pressure, frustration, panic, doubt and confusion. As illustrated by the following final year respondent who reported feeling: “Very stressed and when I don’t understand what is being asked it affects my health and relationships. I am not as effective a teacher with study” (KFYRS9). Drive and perseverance were dispositions associated with self-regulation as described by the following respondent: “I try and overcome challenges by myself but will ask for support from my tutor or classmates if required. I ask questions and will persevere until I achieve” (KYRS8).

**Engagement**

For the 15 Kowhai final year student respondents ring two was by far the most frequently selected representation of immersion, as can be seen in Figure 5.6. Ring two as discussed previously was associated with feeling mostly but not fully immersed in academic study.
Figure 5.6. Kowhai final year student immersion levels

The more common selection of ring two was associated with a strong desire to be immersed in study, whilst also being aware that constraints may limit full immersion, as illustrated thus: “Sometimes I felt fully immersed but time constraints stopped me from being able to really delve deeper and do more robust research” (KFYS11). The following respondent talks about how being immersed led other areas of life to be neglected: “I don’t become so fully immersed that I don’t achieve anything else in my life but engaged enough that chores fall by the wayside” (KFYS6). There was one respondent who identified connection between each of the rings in the diagram, highlighting the complexities of student life and academic study, whereby a single answer may not fit all aspects of the issue at hand:

Ring 1 - me; Ring 2 - philosophy/understanding; Ring 3 - teaching practice; and Ring 4 – commitment. In the middle because it’s all about my focus and the benefit I could get like development of my teaching practice affects my philosophy and commitment. (KFYS3)

Transformation

Just less than three quarters of the 15 Kowhai final year student respondents identified that academic study had resulted in increased levels of confidence and self-awareness. Confidence was associated with feeling knowledgeable and competent as teachers, as illustrated by one respondent who reported feeling: “Confidence has grown. I feel I have more to offer to my centre now and are up to date with current knowledge and theory” (KFYS1). For three of the 15 respondents a sense of personal achievement was felt as they neared the end of their study. The following respondent discussed adjusting to academic study and the boost that this new knowledge gave to their self-confidence:

At first struggling to get my head around it, then knowing I am capable of achieving my goals would drive me to carry on and overcome challenges. Knowing I can achieve what I set out to do and can overcome anything. More
knowledgeable and reflective, more confident to share ideas and strategies as I have knowledge to back up what I am saying. (KFYS8)

Self-awareness was associated with a sense of personal growth and self-efficacy related to knowledge gains. Self-descriptive terms such as proud and satisfied were used as illustrated in the following response:

I have learned things about myself as a person and especially when being able to reflect on my teaching practice. Proud of what I have achieved. I have realized I am capable of more than I believed I was. I am also quite excited about the next stage of my journey as a teacher. (KFYS14)

**Kowhai synthesis**

The analysis across the responses from both first year and final year student respondents from the Kowhai institution distinguish points of similarity and variation in perspectives on academic identity. For instance:

- First year student respondent again regarded academic discussions more positively than academic reading and writing. Learning style and academic skills were identified as affecting engagement in academic reading, with academic writing being affected by clarity of expectations and instructions. Final year student respondents identified a preference for academic tasks that were applied, in particular their own research projects.

- Immersion in academic study varied with final year student respondents reporting that they felt more immersed in academic study than the first years. However, when it came to future academic study the final year responses were more equally spread between those who would and those who would not consider it. The main reasons for not taking on future academic study being family and professional commitments.

- The connection between academic and professional practices was associated with opportunity to apply learning through teaching practices. Praxis, according to the first and final year student respondents, was important for the implementation of knowledge. For the first year student respondents teaching practice provided a safe place to try out new learning and gaining feedback. For the final year student respondents teaching practice added
relevance to academic practices through being able to reflect on and articulate learning.

- In relation to self-regulation respondents from the first year student sample reported engaging in more help-seeking behaviour, the majority reported seeking help from peers before lecturers. For the final year students this was reversed, with a preference for seeking help from lecturers over peers. Whilst the first year student respondents identified that poor time-management led to negative outcomes the final year students actually provided examples of self-reliance strategies and dispositions that supported self-regulatory behaviour.

- In terms of achievement indicators, the first year student respondents identified that they were just as likely to respond to negative feedback in a positive way as they were to experience negative outcomes such as drops in self-confidence and self-efficacy.

This concludes the findings presented for the case of Kowhai. The following section moves on to present the findings from the student participants from final institution: Pohutukawa.

**Findings from Pohutukawa**

Of the 41 questionnaires distributed for first year students 38 completed questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 92%. Of the 36 final year questionnaires administered 12 were completed and returned, a response rate of 33%.

**Pohutukawa first year student experiences of academic identity**

The 38 first year student respondents from Pohutukawa institution were predominantly female, aged within their 20’s and described themselves as being New Zealand European/Pākehā. Positive experiences of academic identity were associated with engaging in academic discussions, and being willing to seek help to achieve academic goals. Attendance was regarded as important to willingness to engage in
academic study. Immersion in academic study was reported as being influenced by the academic practices that students were required to engage in. Negative responses to negative feedback were identified as weakening student academic identity. Experiences of academic identity for the Pohutukawa first year students were associated with the following emergent themes:

- Academic tasks
- Self-regulation
- Engagement
- Feedback
- Transformation

The theme of academic tasks related to ways of being academic. The remaining themes related directly to the five elements of student academic identity, as identified in the conceptual framework. Self-regulation aligned with agency-beliefs, dispositions and the emotional impact of study. Engagement was aligned with self-regulation and motivation. Feedback aligned with achievement indicators and finally, transformation was associated with possible or future selves as an aspect of self-theory.

**Academic tasks**

Out of the 38 Pohutukawa first year student respondents two-thirds reported feeling positive towards participating in academic discussions. Just less than a half of expressed positive attitudes towards academic writing, and fewer still, at just over a third reported positive feelings towards academic reading. Academic discussions were positively associated with being involved, comparing and trying out ideas, being fun and interesting. For example, one respondent said: “I love being actively involved and contributing in discussions as this helps me learn” (PYR1S16). The challenges to academic discussions were related to groups being on task, personal comfort from knowing the group involved in the discussion, and personality. Where identified, preference was given to face-to-face discussions with online discussions regarded as a: “Waste of time” (PYR1S12), and open to miscommunication. For instance one first year respondent reported: “Online is good but face-to-face is better and you can read
body language and express more. Sometimes online you get mistaken if writing is not clear” (PYR1S12).

Just fewer than half of the 38 Pohutukawa first year student respondents expressed positive attitudes towards academic writing, associating these feelings with confidence building, sense of achievement, and a feeling that they were worth the effort that they demanded. The following response illustrates the value of learning gained through researching towards academic written tasks: “I don’t mind these as I find I learn quite a bit from researching for my written tasks” (PYR1S3). Conversely struggle, worry and stress, lowered confidence and being time consuming were negative associations with academic writing, as described by the following respondent: “I find them overwhelming at times, but discussing them with peers and working on them piece by piece not picturing them as a massive challenging thing to do helps me to not freak out as much” (PYR1S1). Whether academic written tasks were regarded in a positive or negative light, was also related to the nature of the task, perceived overall value or difficulty, time required and the opportunity for tasks to provide the student with feedback. For instance, one respondent identified the varying value of academic written tasks saying: “Some are annoying others useful” (PYR1S34), whereas the response from another respondent exemplifies attitudes towards feedback: “They’re average I don’t really dislike them because I like the fact I can get feedback on how to improve” (PYR1S38).

Just under half of the 38 first year student respondents expressed positive feelings towards readings and associated this with enjoyment, interest and gaining new knowledge. For instance one respondent claimed: “I enjoy reading and most academic reading tasks we have been given are interesting and engaging” (PYR1S10). For just over a third of the respondents who associated negative feelings with academic readings this was said to be due to motivation, lack of enjoyment, and challenges such as difficulties with understanding and learning. For instance, one respondent found academic reading un-motivating, saying: “I am a bad reader I have not read a single book till now. I get really bored, no matter how hard I try to make myself concentrate on it” (PYR1S15).
**Self-regulation**

Over three quarters of the 38 Pohutukawa first year student respondents said they engaged in help-seeking behaviour as a form of self-regulation. Help was typically sought from more than one source which included lecturers, followed by peers, then family before associate teachers, as illustrated thus: “Depending on what it is I don’t understand I will either ask lecturer or a friend or research myself dependent on what it is” (PYR1S34). Accessing the institutions learning centre was also identified as a possible source of help for two of the 38 respondents, for example: “With the information I find hard to understand I either go and get help from my lecturer or from the learning centre” (PYR1S36).

Just over a third of respondents said they used strategies of self-reliance to overcome challenges or respond to setbacks. For example the following first year respondent talks about how personal dispositions facilitated self-reliant behaviours: “I normally try to find out more about it to better understand it. With perseverance I’m not one to give up because something is too hard it just makes me work harder” (PYR1S16). Another respondent talked about tactical act of stepping back and reassessing efforts in seeking progress: “Calm down take a step back then after a while read over assignment and what I have written/done and see if I missed anything and improve” (PYR1S33). Just over half of the respondents also identified a range of emotions associated with acts of self-regulation, including stress, panic, frustration, and feeling a sense of calm: each of these emotions being reported by more than one respondent. An example of this expression of emotions can be seen in the following response: “I panic but I will finish what’s due first, get all completed and then move onto the next one” (PYR1S15).

**Engagement**

According to the responses from 38 Pohutukawa first year students ring two and ring three of the questionnaire prompt were identified as holding equal importance to their immersion in academic study. This is represented in in Figure 5.7.
Student explanations for selecting ring two related to family and work priorities, interest, and adjusting to study. One respondent identified that different aspects of study related in different levels of engagement, saying: “I find it very interesting and I do all assignments, hand them in on time. But I don’t really engage in class discussions, or read many readings” (PYR1S1). Another first year respondent discussed how degrees of engagement were open to change saying: “Sometimes I am really immersed then others I question what I’m doing” (PYR1S19). First year student respondents who identified as being more at ring three related this to issues such as interest, struggle, distractions and emotional state, as illustrated by the following student: “I feel sometimes I am more into my study than other times. Depending on my mood” (PYR1S20).

Pohutukawa first year student respondents reported mixed attitudes towards attendance. Whilst attendance was considered important, to not have a full attendance record was deemed acceptable; reference being made to the institutional set attendance requirements. For instance one respondent claimed: “If I do not attend 80% of my class I will fail the course therefore it plays a significant role in the success of my study” (PYR1S25). The importance of attendance was particularly related to briefings on assessment tasks, and communicating motivation and commitment, as illustrated thus: “It is important so that I don’t fall behind or miss crucial information.
Also shows my commitment to the programme” (PYR1S22). Only one of the first year respondents was more selective about attendance due to teaching material being accessible online and the specific class in question: “Most of the lessons are from Powerpoints which can be found on Moodle and read at home so I feel, with some less engaging classes, that I could do that at home. Other classes are really worthwhile” (PYR1S32).

Nearly half of the 38 Pohutukawa first year student respondents referred to motivational features associated with academic study. The majority of these responses referred to external motivators: typically family. This external motivation is illustrated by the following response: “This is very important to me and my family and was a decision we took a year to decide on” (PYR1S26), and another respondent who said: “I have a good reason to drive for this, not just for myself but my family” (PYR1S16). Fewer, at just over a third, of the 38 respondents referred to features associated with internal motivation, such as financial security, interest in the field of study, future work and holding a qualification. For instance, the following respondent talked about the importance of future career opportunities and financial matters as motivating them: “What I see for my future with this degree. I just remind myself that I’m doing this so I can go places and earn good money” (PYR1S7).

**Feedback**

Three quarters of the 38 first year student respondents reported that achievement indicators in the form of feedback were important to them. Of these, nearly half reported negative responses to negative feedback: impacting on engagement and motivation. Feelings associated with negative responses to negative achievement indicators included frustration, anger, lowered self-confidence and becoming disheartened. For example, the following response illustrates such feelings and associated self-doubt: “Feel upset, don’t understand what happened and a big let-down. I do ask myself if this is right for me” (PYR1S28). However, fewer of these students, less than a third, reacted to negative achievement indicators in a positive way; drawing on such experiences to move forward and make improvements in their
study, as illustrated by one respondent who said: “I feel down and feel like giving up but I’m not a quitter so I just dig my heels in and move on” (PYR1S19).

**Transformation**

Over two thirds of the 38 respondents thought they would change as result of their study. Whilst responses varied, but the most common aligned personal change with future practice as a teacher, as illustrated thus: “[I] just keep thinking about the end of it all and how good it will feel after 3 years. Improving myself as a teacher and passing my skills down. Love and care for the children” (PYR1S28). The responses associated with future practice as a teacher identified the importance of gaining a qualification and obtaining financial security. Self-knowledge in terms of confidence, perspectives and thinking was common across just less than half of the student responses, as illustrated in the response from one respondent who talked about becoming more open-minded: “I think I will be much more open in my ideas within ECE and in general. Especially towards study as well which I had always perceived as a bit scary. I think I will be a much better teacher” (PYR1S18). Furthermore, another respondent who talked about changes in self-perspectives: “I will view myself differently and be stronger in my view” (PYR1S11).

**Pohutukawa final year student experiences of academic identity**

The Pohutukawa final year student respondents were predominantly female, aged in their 20’s or 40’s, and being New Zealand European/Pākehā. Responses were obtained from 12 out of 36 for the final year students. There were reports of mixed experiences of academic identity with the personal value attributed to academic practices being dependent on whether academic practices were valued in the wider context of the early childhood centre. Respondents’ positive academic identity was associated with reports of gaining key academic dispositions pertaining to critical thinking, critical enquiry and academic literacies. Interest in a specific topic was reported to hold more significance in terms of engagement than did grades. Students were more willing to invest in seeking help from others than draw on strategies of self-
reliance. Negative experiences of student academic identity were related to lack of institutional consistency. Future engagement with learning was associated with general attitudes of lifelong/continual learning rather than further academic study. Experiences of academic identity for the Pohutukawa final year student respondents were associated with the following emergent themes, findings from each of which will be presented in turn:

- Academic value
- Engagement
- Self-regulation
- Transformation

Academic value aligned with the element of self-theory in terms of future selves. Engagement was associated with motivation and achievement indicators. Self-regulation aligned with agency-beliefs and transformation with self-theories and meta-cognition as an aspect of agency-beliefs.

**Academic value**

Academic value was shown through the perceived fit between academic practices and preparation for professional roles. For less than a third of the 12 respondents, academic and professional practices were reported to fit well together in terms of praxis and relating theory to practice, as shown in the response of student seven in extoling the value of this particular programme of study: “Really well. I feel our course gives us really good skills. Workmates studying through other not field-based organisations don’t necessarily have knowledge of theory as others”. A further third of students said that the fit between academic and professional practices depended on the wider context and whether academic practices were valued within early childhood contexts themselves, illustrated thus: “They fit well but I would add that it depends on the teaching team as to whether they are valued by other teachers” (PFYS10).

Two of the 12 respondents raised the issue of standards whilst coming from opposite perspectives, with one student expressing concern as to low standards saying the fit
between academic practices and professional practices was: “Not as much as it should I think standards are low and nobody seems to take responsibility” (PFYS12). Meanwhile another respondent referred to high expectations with students needing to ‘step up’ to the challenge of study:

Well I think the academic practices throughout the course mean people taking it have to step up. If it was too easy we may have the wrong people in the profession. Those that really want to do it will persevere and see it through (PFYS2).

Academic practices were also related to continual professional development particularly in terms of change in knowledge over time and appreciation for on-going and continual learning. For instance, the following respondent discussed the need for continual learning: “They relate because I am conscious of my own learning. It simply won’t stop because I will have a degree, learning continues” (PFYS1). Also being able to effectively target professional development to get better value out of it was raised, as illustrated by another response: “It affects the value I will receive when undertaking PD. I feel more able to engage in lectures, presentations and am able to gain more benefit from them” (PFYS12).

Two thirds of the 12 final year student respondents referred to specific academic papers when commenting on academic value. Such papers typically related to the development of critical thinking, analysing arguments, developing well-reasoned interpretations, evaluating and solving problems and raising cultural awareness. There was quite a spread in terms of the papers referred to; papers relating to the learning of tikanga Māori were referred to most frequently. For example, one student talks about a shift in personal perspective through completing such papers: “As I have learnt about te ao Māori throughout my time at Pohutukawa I have felt a shift in how I view and identify myself as a teacher and as a person” (PFYS4).

Despite the value attributed to academic practices three quarters of the Pohutukawa final year student respondents expressed ambivalent or mixed views about undertaking further study, with most saying they would take a break or consider
family needs before making any further decisions. For instance, one student talks about changes in their aspirations: “In year 2 I wanted to specialize in Steiner, right now, I just want a break. Will probably go back to it at some point though, just not anytime soon” (PFYS11).

Finally the value of academic study was affected by a perceived lack of institutional consistency in terms of expectations between lecturers. Final year respondents talked about the difficulty in understanding assessment briefs, especially when there was inconsistency across written assessment outlines and what was conveyed in class, as illustrated by the following respondent: “Following assignment briefs (sometimes) especially when there are inconsistencies between written expectations and what is told in class” (PFYS8). With another respondent identifying challenges: “Trying to complete assignments when not briefed properly or without enough information. Having different information from different lecturers, and being expected to follow everyone’s advice/demands” (KFYS11).

**Engagement**

For the 12 Pohutukawa final year student respondents ring two in the questionnaire, was the most selected area representing immersion in academic study. The overall spread of data across the four rings as detailed in the questionnaire prompt can be seen in Figure 5.8.

![Figure 5.8. Pohutukawa final year student immersion levels](image_url)
Levels of immersion or engagement in academic study were identified as being affected by interest in specific topic areas, family and other commitments. Levels of engagement were reported to have dropped for a couple of students. The following final year student respondent commented on shifts in immersion and a change in feelings towards the chosen area of study:

Ring 1 year 1; Ring 2 last year (Year 2); Ring 3 Today (year 3). I am still interested in ECE and believe I will continue to work within it for at least 10 years, but am definitely finding myself a lot less interested as time goes on and am definitely looking forward to a break (PFYS11).

Another respondent talked about interest waning due to repetition of course material: “As at the third year my engagement has reduced considerably. I think this is due to covering material already covered, even though at a deeper level” (PFYS12).

Finally for just over a half of the 12 final year student respondents engagement in academic study was reflected in achievement indicators such as grades, which were further related to interest in the subject matter. This is represented in the words of the following respondent who said: “I have found that the quality of my work and my grades are dependent on how interested I am in the particular topic, and this is the learning that stays with me and that I use in my work experience centre” (PFYS4).

Seeing improvement in grades or achieving higher than expected, and seen to be doing well were also important achievement indicators; illustrated by one respondent who said: “Getting an A in some of my papers going from B-C in first year to A-B in third year” (PFYS5).

**Self-regulation**

The majority, at two thirds of the 12 Pohutukawa final year student respondents, reported engaging help-seeking behaviour associated with self-regulation. Students identified seeking support from class members, family and lecturers. Less than half of the 12 respondents identified engaging in self-reliance when responding to academic challenges. In the majority of cases where self-reliance was reported respondents also employed help-seeking strategies, for instance: “Sucked it up and got on with it. I find
speaking with another class member helpful. If I put the time into preparing and do the work required, it’s actually not that difficult” (PFYS2). Self-reliance was associated with gathering more information or insight into areas of study, working out problems and finding solutions. Finally the emotions accompanying challenges faced by final year student respondents with their study included: pressure, confusion, and frustration. For example, the following student said they felt: “Stress and confusion, at first. Am still learning to calm myself and come back to assignments with a clear head. Doesn’t always work” (PFYS11).

**Transformation**

Two thirds of the 12 final year student respondents reported that their levels of confidence had improved as a result of their academic study. This confidence was associated with emerging professional identity as a teacher, self-efficacy, and a general sense of self-awareness. For instance, the following respondent identifies such features: “I have changed HUGELY. I am more confident in my teaching practice, more informed. I have a professional “voice”. I can back up my beliefs, theories and philosophies with literature. Taken more seriously as a teacher” (PFYS1). Furthermore, another respondent said: “I have more awareness of my beliefs and values on both a personal and professional level. I have a stronger awareness of culture and what it means to me and I have gained confidence of myself as a teacher” (PFYS11).

Finally, a quarter of the 12 Pohutukawa final year student respondents identified changes in terms of academic literacies in particular that they had become more analytical and able to consider issues from multiple perspectives, as well as developing awareness of their own personal underlying assumptions. For example, the following respondent talks about changes in perspective taking as a result of study: “I tend to look through different lenses – have more understanding – looking at situations through socio-cultural lens (rather than developmental) look at wider contexts” (PFYS10).

**Pohutukawa synthesis**
Analysis across the responses from both Pohutukawa first year and final year student respondents identified points of both similarity and variation in terms of student perspectives on academic identity. The analysis identified the following key points:

- First year students held a strong preference for academic discussions, with a preference for the face-to-face context. Whilst academic writing could increase self-confidence in terms of a sense of achievement, there was an equal risk of confidence being lowered. The main deciding factor between whether academic writing was experienced in a positive or negative light was the specific nature of the task.

- Students in their final year of study were more likely to actually name the particular academic tasks that were valued. A common theme across those identified being deep thinking and reasoning associated with academia.

- Academic tasks were attributed more value if they aligned well with the professional role of early childhood teacher. Additional contributing factors included the attitudes held within early childhood centres and internal institutional standards.

- A common factor influencing immersion were levels of interest. Waning levels of immersion in academic study were reported as students reached the final phase of their study, with the majority of students being ambivalent about future academic study.

- Help-seeking behaviour was reportedly engaged in more than self-reliance for both participant samples. An interesting variation evident in the Pohutukawa data was that first year students identifying that they sought help first from lecturers then peers: final year students reporting the opposite position. According to the first year responses self-reliance was associated with dispositions, whereas for final year students self-reliance aligned more with study and organisational skills.

- First year students reported being more likely to respond negatively to negative achievement indicators: reporting an impact on self-confidence and interest. Interest levels were also associated with feedback via grades for both first year and the final year student participants.
• Academic study as a transformative process was associated with self-concepts with the first year students associating this more with ways of thinking and final year students associating this more with an emerging professional identity.

Consolidation of findings
The emerging themes provided distinct evidence concerning the nature of academic identity for students within early childhood FBITE. Overall, the emerging themes demonstrate how the proposed five elements of student academic identity (self-theory, agency-beliefs, achievement indicators, motivation and dispositions), were portrayed within the lived experience of student academic identity. The findings indicate that the five elements of student academic identity were all evident and experienced in a variety of ways. For instance, engagement was associated with a number of the five elements, including self-regulation, motivation, dispositions and a sense of future self. Engagement was also associated with contextual influences such as balancing commitments and conflicting demands, programme design and challenges faced in study. Furthermore, multiple connections were evident between the themes from the various data sets and the elements of student academic identity, which highlights the complexity of academic identity as lived experience. Indeed, there was not necessarily a neat delineation between one element and another: rather, all elements were interconnected.

In addition, the student data highlighted some additional features of significance. For example, the emotional impact of academic study related to acts of self-regulation. Relationship building was identified as an aspect of achievement indicators due to the practice-based nature of the course. The relationships were associated with opportunities for professional practice, which reflected a wider consideration of what achievement might look like for these students. The connection between the academic and practice aspects of the programme was also raised as a separate theme. Reference to the field-based nature of the programme and the connections between
academic and professional practice reinforce the need to explore identity as a holistic and contextualised experience that is not limited to the academic context alone.

**Closing statement**

Student academic identity has been investigated according to a structural-constructivist theoretical framework. Accordingly, personal constructions of student academic identity have been considered in light of structural influences such as tertiary provider, wider community of professional practice, and the wider socio-political context of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The central aim of this chapter has been to present perspectives on student academic identity from the constructivist aspect of the research: that of the student voice. Through the presentation of the analysis of data from the student participant samples, it has been possible to represent academic identity using the language of those for whom it holds subjective meaning. The portrayal of perspectives from those at the initial transition into tertiary study on a field-based programme of initial teacher education with those about to end their study, and transition into professional roles as accredited early childhood teachers, accounted for two significant points of transition in the student experience of academic study. The perspectives from the representative sample groups were presented according to the institutional context from which respondents were recruited. The following chapter will draw on the analysis of findings from the structural layer of the research to present an extension of the contextual aspect of student academic identity.
Chapter Six: Contextual perspectives

*History, culture and the proximate structure of human relations create a context in which the individual identity must exist. People have individual wants and needs that must be satisfied within that context. Individuals actively choose, alter, and modify their identities based on what will enable them to get along in that context.*

(Baumeister & Muraven, 1996, p. 405)

Chapter overview

Whilst the previous chapter presented the findings of students for whom academic identity was a lived experience, the aim of this chapter is to extend this understanding by informing on the context in which academic study is situated. As identified by Baumeister & Muraven (1996) the contexts in which identity are experienced include a myriad of social encounters both past and present, which enable the dynamic altering and modifying of identity to occur. These encounters represent the inter-personal aspect of identity.

In relation to the wider theoretical framework of the research this chapter represents the structural level in which the organising features of the social world influence subjective experiences of identity, as shown in Figure 6.1, in which the inter-personal contexts include the academic institution, the early childhood community and the socio-political context of education in Aotearoa New Zealand. In so doing, this chapter draws on the findings from the focus groups with Teacher Educators (TE) and the individual interviews with Associate Teachers (AT). This chapter also contains the outcomes of the documentary analysis relating to the wider socio-political structures influencing the field of early childhood education within Aotearoa New Zealand. This chapter reports on findings relevant to research question three as to how academic identity relates to the multiple contexts of learning for students in early childhood
Field-Based Initial Teacher Education (FBITE), and research question four in relation to how the development of academic identity is significant to the student experience of FBITE.

In the presentation of the findings, care has been taken to respect the anonymity of the participating institutions. In keeping with this commitment a general overview on delivery of FBITE is provided before the themes from the data are presented. Institutions will be referred to by pseudonym and participants will be referred to numerically when verbatim quotes are used. For example, PTE1 identifies the institution named Pohutukawa and the TE number 1. In a similar vein, the anonymity of AT participants will also be maintained through the use of a numeric to refer to individual ATs (AT1, AT 2 etc.), with anonymity being maintained in relation to their specific location within the early childhood community.

**Institutional context of programme delivery**

Participating institutions demonstrated variation in terms of programme design and delivery. For example, enrolment of students into the programmes of FBITE varied according to institutional requirements with the majority taking in two student intakes.
per annum. Class based teaching contact between students and TEs was another point of variation, with an equal spread between either a single day a week per semester for campus based classes or a day and an evening per week per semester. Additional study hours were classed as independent, self-directed study. One point of consistency was that all TEs were involved in campus based teaching, work experience site visits, and practicum visits to students within a range of early childhood education contexts.

A further aspect of variation was the number of weekly hours required of students in their work experience setting. The term work-experience is being used to differentiate from the practicum, in which students are allocated to early childhood centres for teaching practice according to criteria set by the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC, 2010). At the start of this research project there was no set minimum requirement in relation to student weekly field-based within early childhood centres, and hence there was variation across programmes in terms of requirements ranging from between 15 to eight hours per week across the participating institutions. A minimum requirement of 12 hours per week was however, established during the NZTC consultation process (NZTC, 2010), and came into force part way through this research project.

There were common themes within the philosophical frameworks of the various institutions with consistent commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Other points of commonality included connectivity through relationships, community and principles of applied learning; evidence based practice through being research informed and the concept of best practice; and critical approaches aligned with concepts of social justice, equality and quality within the sector. Finally there were some points of connection with the learners themselves through the different institutions’ references to lifelong learning, engagement and the developmental nature of learning.

**Socio-political context**

The wider social and political context of Aotearoa New Zealand influences the delivery of programmes of field-based initial teacher education. Data from this context has
been informed through analysis of documentation central to early childhood initial teacher education. This documentary analysis included that commissioned by:

- New Zealand Teachers council (NZTC)
- Education Review Office (ERO)
- Ministry of Education (MoE)
- Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)

Findings from the documentary analysis are incorporated into the reporting of the identified themes from the group and individual interviews with TEs and ATs respectively.

**Synthesis of themes**

A synthesis of the themes arising from the combined data sets from the TEs, ATs and documentary analysis are presented, which include:

- Academic expectations: literacies, skills, cognitive demand and task format
- Self-regulation
- Dispositions
- Consistency
- Field-based programme design
- Value of academic practices

Each of these themes will be discussed in turn.

**Academic expectations**

Data associated with the theme of academic expectations were further categorised into the subthemes of academic literacies, skills, cognitive demand, and task format.

**Academic literacies**

Analysis of relevant documents from the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) highlighted the role of literacies in regard to social participation and citizenship; particularly pertaining to qualifications and workplace practices. This is evident within
the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Strategy (Tertiary Education Commission [TEC], 2012, p. 6), where it is stated that: “Higher literacy and numeracy skills are associated with higher earnings, improved workplace productivity, better workplace safety and increased chances of stable employment. The skills support success in higher level qualifications and attainment of other workplace skills”. Within this document acknowledgment is given to the need to improve literacy and numeracy within Aotearoa New Zealand. In light of this wider socio-political landscape, it was identified that the providers of FBITE were responding to these literacies concerns.

TEs identified that attention to academic literacies of students was playing a prominent role in the overall student experience. This attention was associated with programme entry expectations, student histories, curriculum design, and provision of academic support. For example, it was identified that there had been a shift in the focus given to academic demands over dispositional features associated with early childhood teaching with the shift from providing level 7 diplomas to level 7 degrees. According to the Kowhai TEs there was a sense that students were now expected to be more academically literate at the commencement of their study. For instance KTE1 stated that “The expectations are certainly higher from the word go rather than stepping them in” with “A lot more of our interviews are focused very much on the academic knowledge of our students” (KTE4).

Participants appreciated that students came into academic study with varied histories. TEs from both Mānuka and Kowhai identified that as part of this history students were currently less likely to be coming into the programme with prior experience in the field: meaning they were less conversant in the language of early childhood education. TEs from Mānuka discussed this change in knowledge and common culture, which had been evident with previous student cohorts and referred to a loss in “a common language of early childhood and a common experience” (MTE3). This decline in experienced practitioners being equated with an increase in students who were more academically prepared: “I think we’ve got a lot more academic thinkers. The practitioners are starting to fade a little and that’s been noticeable” (KTE2). However, there remained concern as to perceptions of the early childhood sector. For example
there was discussion around students still being regarded as: “Nice girls but not too bright” (HTE2) and likewise early childhood TEs being regarded as: “Nice ladies” (HTE6).

Literacy demands were identified as being important to curriculum design. Pohutukawa TEs who discussed the scaffolding of students in aspects of academic literacies as they progressed through the three-year structure of the programme supported this. Terms such as ‘stepping stones’ and ‘building blocks’, were used in reference to this scaffolding process. Mānuka TEs identified previous attempts to frontload a focus on academic literacies at the beginning of the programme had been ineffective. Instead a ‘just in time’ approach was being taken. This ‘just in time’ approach included the provision of a range of support systems that could be accessed according to particular student needs. These included a programme specific academic advisor, timely feedback systems, and academic skills workshops, as represented in the following section from a group interview.

Likewise, in their group interview, the Kowhai TEs identified the need to undertake direct teaching of academic skills associated with becoming academically literate, such as skimming and scanning texts. For instance one participant commented: “We’ve often had to teach them in broken down steps” (KTE4). Finally, Mānuka TEs identified that student uptake of academic support was influenced by the relationships they had with lecturers, with being approachable essential to student update of support services. This is emphasized in the words of one participant: “Those relationships are really important and it’s also understanding where they’re coming from and what issues they may be facing so in some ways you can’t separate that pastoral [support] from academic” (MTE1).

**Academic skills**

The TEs went into specific detail to outline the academic skills that students found challenging within their study. Some of these underlying skills included referencing, paraphrasing, finding the main idea within texts, skimming and scanning texts as well as academic writing, and reading. For instance, participant KTE3 talked about the
challenge of: “Learning how to read quickly or skim read or go back and look at the key points” and KTE4 added “It’s about how you read, what you read, how you skim, how you pick out the main points and all of those things that we’ve often had to teach them in broken down steps.” Furthermore a colleague further discussed skills associated with basic research such as: “Identifying by a title of an article or a textbook. Is this going to give me the information I need? That’s a skill some of them lack” (KTE1). However it was not all negative, with one participant identifying that whilst some academic skills were challenging this did not mean that students could not achieve: “Most of our students, they might struggle but they achieve it” (KTE4).

Finally, it was identified that awareness of academic expectations did not always transfer into an act of doing. This aspect of student willingness to engage in academic practices was demonstrated through responsiveness to feedback and a sense that some students were content to just get by, rather than show a commitment to deepening engagement with academia. The frustration associated with student responsiveness to feedback is evident in the following response: “It feels like a waste of my time. I wish I could predict which students are not going to read it so I could save my time” (PTE1). In relation to this variable uptake of feedback TEs identified that there was a sense that doing the bare minimum to get through was sufficient for some students and associated this perspective with the phrase that “C’s get degrees” (MTE4 and PTE3). This limited commitment to academic study was further associated more with school leavers than mature students, which is interesting given the previously identified claim from Kowhai TEs of a demographic shift attracting more academic thinkers.

**Cognitive demand**

It was identified that the cognitive demand of academic tasks posed differing degrees of challenge for students; particularly the move from lower to higher cognitive demand. For example, TEs talked about the struggle facing students in terms of engaging in more critical and analytical thinking and being reflective. These deeper
levels of thinking were associated with moving from discussing the ideas of others into paying attention to their own developing theories, which HTE2 associated with the “Chew and spew stage you know when they can discuss ideas, or ideas of other people but they, at the point when we ask them to move into abstract thinking with a lot of analysis, you know”. The challenge of academic tasks requiring that students demonstrate understanding was seen as an extension of academic reading: “It’s not just reading it. It’s showing you’ve actually comprehended and understood it and been able to put it out there” (KTE3). Furthermore, the challenges of deeper cognitive demand were associated with progression through the degree. For example, PTE2 talked about the programme culminating in an expectation that students use “Higher order thinking and ability to synthesise all of that information”. Furthermore reference was made to specific examples of academic tasks, which show such an expected progression in cognitive demand: “Moving from the annotated bibliography forward to actually critiquing and doing the small literature review” (MTE4).

The need to engage in tasks of higher cognitive demand was less well evidenced within the official documents associated with early childhood teaching. In review of documents spanning from 1996 to 2011 it was identified that there was a tendency for very generalised and vague terms to be used in relation to expectations of early childhood teachers, which may sit at odds with academic expectations. For example, in An Agenda for Amazing Children (Early Childhood Task Force, 2011) terms such as “well educated” (p. 31) and “have good subject knowledge” (p. 107) are used. The Education Review Office (2010) also refer to those within early childhood services being “well qualified” (p. 4). Finally within the curriculum documentation there is reference to teachers being knowledgeable, skilled and thoughtful (Ministry of Education, 1996). Whilst potentially extending the longevity in terms of the validity of the documentation it does little to inform on the specific details inferred within this generalised terminology.

Within the prescribed course level descriptors (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2013, p. 21), for non-University tertiary qualifications, it was noted that expectations in terms of knowledge, skills and application for level 7 courses referred to:
• **Knowledge**: Specialised technical or theoretical knowledge with depth in one or more fields of work or study

• **Skills**: Select, adapt and apply a range of processes relevant to the field of work or study

• **Application** [of knowledge and skills]: Advanced generic skills and/or specialist knowledge and skills in a professional context or field of study.

Furthermore, the outcomes for a bachelor’s degree include reference to a spread of cognitive domains which were placed against the cognitive domains of Blooms revised taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002) see Table 6.1.

*Table 6.1: Example cognitive demands within Level Descriptors and Graduating Teacher Standards*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 7 Descriptors (NZQA)</th>
<th>Remembering</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Analysing</th>
<th>Evaluating</th>
<th>Creating</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have Seek Accept</td>
<td></td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Demonstrate Apply</td>
<td>Analyse Assess</td>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>Adapt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduating Teacher Standards (NZTC)</td>
<td><em>Use Show Modify Plan Utilise</em></td>
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*Representing 5 out of a total of 23 terms coded for this level of cognitive demand

The table shows that the ability to engage in critical thinking, analytical rigour, ability to assess information, communicate and collaborate would be positioned as higher than those of understanding and demonstrating (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2013).

Table 6.1 highlights the preponderance of verbs, 23 in total from the Graduating Teacher Standard (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007), within the middle range of the cognitive learning domains. It is acknowledged that there was a degree of
openness in how some verbs could be interpreted. For example, to promote something does not automatically mean that analysis or evaluation has been applied to the issue at hand. Instead, the promotion of an issue could in actuality involve conformity to pass on a preordained message. A further example is the act of reflection, which could be an act of application, analysis, evaluation or creation dependent on the actual depth of thinking applied to the reflective act. Where variation was likely, the lowest level of cognitive demand was assumed as the baseline. Overall, the cross analysis of NZQA and NZTC expectations highlighted the variation in attention given to cognitive demands across the realms of the two main regulatory bodies associated with FBITE, with the Graduating Teacher Standards (GTS) being predominantly aligned with midrange cognitive demand of the application of learning.

**Task format**

The format of academic tasks was reported as influencing student willingness to engage in academic study, with student reluctance to engage with academic reading being identified within a number of the focus groups. This reluctance to read was as much about breadth of reading as depth, and furthermore was associated with access to resources and prioritization of academic reading tasks. In the following response, KTE1 discusses the impact of not reading: “For some reason or other, they’re not reading enough in order to develop a good knowledge base there. I’m amazed at how many students will quite openly admit they actually don’t read. They don’t like reading so they don’t read”. Desire to read was associated with being passionate about not just academic work but also professional practice:

> If they are passionate and they’re wanting to learn and they’re wanting to understand, they will read widely, they’ll read anything and look into it and be examining and thinking. Not just academic written work but looking at what’s happening in the community and what are the issues in the community (KTE1).

Reading was not the only academic task to pose a challenge to students. For example, the need to show depth of thinking within written work was seen as posing a challenge
to students at any point in their academic study, even in their final year, and was associated with academic styles of writing and demonstrating depth of thinking. For example, MTE2 talked about the challenge of “Being able to put their thoughts down in a clear, concise way that flows”. A concern was also expressed that without written tasks and with a move to draw on more group related academic assessment tasks, the true nature of individual student achievement could be misrepresented. For example, HTE2 discussed the impact of group presentations for assessment purposes: “Students can pass by getting very high marks in [group] presentations which have quite a high weighting in some courses, which rescues them from very poor marks in others”.

**Self-regulation**
Time-management, goal setting, and self-monitoring were the aspects of self-regulation that TEs referred to most. From the perspective of Hibiscus TEs, poor time-management was associated with feelings of frustration, causing variation in terms of student motivation, confidence, and engagement. For first year students, developing effective time-management skills were associated with acclimatisation to the academic environment, and adapting to changing academic demands, especially assessments. For example, MTE1 identified the messiness of student’s lives and the risks taken with assessments: “Some of them tend to leave it to the last minute to do the assignment and that’s when something else happens and then they struggle”. Furthermore, being organized and planning were aspects of time-management, which were associated with cognitive processes as well as physical actions. For instance, PTE2 identified: “I think that we are expecting some degree of organisation in their thinking and the fact that they can physically organise a folder and put things in specific places”.

**Dispositions**
The documentary analysis revealed that within the GTS there is a broad statement regarding teacher dispositions, stating that in regards to developing positive relationships graduating teachers should, “have the knowledge and dispositions to work effectively with colleagues, parents/caregivers, families/whanau and communities” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007, pt. 6). The dispositions referred
to are not made explicit. However, passion, curiosity, reflection and responsibility were dispositions identified by the TEs and ATs as impacting student engagement with academic study. For instance, PTE3 related student achievement not with the need to be inquisitive and reflective saying that success was more associated with, “It is not because they are necessarily smarter... but they are willing to get out there and find out and they’re interested”.

Curiosity was described by AT1 as being demonstrated through students asking questions and being receptive to taking on board new information. It was appreciated that the asking of questions was not an easy task but was a benefit associated with their position as students, as identified by KTE1: “I always tell them that they can make a huge difference because they can use that as a way of finding out and making people think. Some of them do feel they’re getting slammed for asking questions”. Furthermore, curiosity was associated with the desire to learn and achievement through students taking responsibility for their own learning, which was seen to be a responsibility of the teaching team to encourage.

**Consistency**

The data identified that consistency was an issue associated with academic expectations at both internal and external levels. Internal consistency relates to issues within the contextual boundaries of a specific programme or provider. Internal consistency was evidenced within the responses of Pohutukawa TEs, and related to the concerns regarding academic expectations within the teaching team. For instance, PTE1 identified such team member variation in academic ability and expectations: “I think that the team has a range of academic abilities and therefore expectations and I think that sometimes that is quite difficult for students” which PTE3 further associated with “playing the academic game... actually it isn’t a completely level playing field”, resulting in the need to know what each lecturer expected in order to be successful.

The acknowledgment that the actual academic identities of the TEs themselves had the potential to influence academic expectations of students was evident from a few
of the focus groups. For instance, both the Kowhai and Mānuka TEs discussed the need to raise their own academic profiles. Mānuka TEs identified the impact on their own professional identities, especially in relation to wider perspectives of the field of early childhood education:

There’s a bit of a history of how early childhood was perceived as being fairly low level... there was another sort of dialogue, a discourse which was about: ‘How could you possibly think you could develop a degree because you don’t have the capability and the capacity?’ (MTE3)

Consistency was also identified as an external issue across the various providers of programmes of field-based ECITE. For instance Kowhai and Hibiscus TEs related programme choice as being in part associated with student perceptions of varying academic expectations with terms such as being a “soft option” or “easier” being evident in the discussions.

From the ATs’ perspectives consistency was an issue across providers in relation to the professional capability of graduates and academic rigour. For instance AT3 discussed her own personal experience with colleagues having different understanding regarding early childhood assessments (learning stories) despite them all being qualified. AT5 questioned the moderation of providers in relation to universal levels of expectations. AT4 felt that more attention was paid to the practicum component with less rigour and depth required for the work experience component of field-based programmes.

The issue of consistency between providers of ITE was also evidenced within the wider socio-political discourse. For example, a report commissioned by the Ministry of Education identified differences in the perspectives of TEs dependent on their context of delivery: “The university teachers from a range of disciplines saw their primary role as being a researcher/scholar, while the college teachers were strongly orientated towards supporting the learning of others, through being a good teacher.” (Cameron & Baker, 2004, p. 34). The Early Childhood Task Force (2011, p. 150) recommended a review of providers of ITE be undertaken to: “ensure the consistency of programme
delivery of qualifications”. They go on to define the focus of this review to be more on content of programmes than wider concerns regarding consistency in relation to delivery:

The review should include the content of early childhood education teaching qualifications, and the extent to which they promote elements, such as education in cultural competence, positive behaviour guidance, working with children with special education needs and their families, working with under two-year olds, and leadership education. (p. 150)

**Field-based programme design**

According to the TEs and ATs, the amount of time spent in centres was deemed important for student learning in terms of thinking about practice as well as developing a sense of belonging within the early childhood centre. Getting the right balance between centre experience hours within the programme was conveyed as complex. Whilst according to the data students in both the first and final years of study attributed a strong sense of value to the field-based components of the programme, the TEs expressed concern that increased academic demands were taking students away from and diluting these experiences. Phrases such as ‘attached to’ rather than ‘embedded within’ were used to describe the place of the field-based component of the degrees: “It seems somehow we have moved to a field-based programme, which is a full-time degree programme with some practice attached to it” (HTE2). Furthermore, the place of the field-based element of the programme was regarded as compromised in terms of the messages given to students from within the academic institution. These messages were about the time they would need to invest in the academic aspects of the programme over working in the centres, as emphasized by Hibiscus TEs: “Right from selection apparently, students are told that you should only work 12 hours a week” (HTE2).

This tension between the academic demands of the programme and the need to engage in praxis was further evidenced in TE’s concern regarding students only doing minimal work experience hours and their self-perceptions. It was reported that
students advised to only do the minimum required field-based hours within centres impacted on the roles and responsibilities they could undertake. A result being that they risked not being fully part of the early childhood teaching team. According to MTE2 this could lead students to: “Often talk like they sit outside the programme, and they do see themselves ‘only’, they use the term ‘only’”. Likewise, more time spent in practice was associated with higher levels of confidence and higher quality of academic work. MTE3 concludes that: “So it seems like more hours equals students who think more about their practice”.

How students balanced the various responsibilities and expectations held of them was also important, given their role in their work experience centre. This was especially an issue if they were also paid employees within their work experience centres whereby decisions had to be made between the prioritisation of professional responsibilities or study. Meeting inflexible academic deadlines was reported by HTE3 as being weighed against completing portfolios of children’s learning, which, if necessary, were to be completed outside of work hours.

On a more positive note, the field-based nature of the programme conversely enabled TEs to build relationships with students with the closer contact they had during work-experience or practicum visits. This was balanced with those occasions whereby teacher educators faced a large class of students with whom they had little or no previous contact. For instance, regarding both these points. PTE5 talked about the significance of building one-to-one relationships with students through visiting: “The one to one relationship and I think that is really powerful and will support the student so much more than in the classroom situation.” It was through such knowledge of students in their field-based contexts that TEs gained more understanding of student’s academic work. For example PTE3 reported that through visiting students in their work experience centre: “I can picture them in a space that they’re describing so it just makes it easier for me to give really good authentic feedback because I know their context.”

Value of academic practices
As presented within the theme of cognitive demand, the NZTC documentation referred more to the cognitive domain associated with the application of learning, whilst the NZQA documentation referred to a wider spread of cognitive domains with more attention at this level of study given to acts of higher cognitive demand such as critical thinking, analysis, assessment of information and responding to complex problems. The challenge of engaging with higher order thinking was evident at programme level regarding the relationship between academic and teaching practices. For instance, TEs expressed frustration at how critical thinking and critical theory were regarded as not only "disruptive and nonsensical" and that "that they would really rather we would just stick to the practical stuff" (HTE2), but also posing a challenge for existing early childhood teachers, as identified by HTE1, "They don’t want to encourage because it challenges them". This challenge was interpreted as a preference for students to "Just go and work" (HTE7) and be "Good obedient staff" (HTE2), as opposed to being critical thinkers.

Less tension was identified between academic and practice expectations when there was a sense of practical fit whereby critical thinking was given more recognition and acknowledgement. Examples referred to included professional inquiry, reflective practice, the need to articulate practice in a way that is understandable to academic and non-academic audiences. MTE2 talked about the importance of working alongside work colleagues and ATs in this process, developing skills of working with other people saying: “Gathering information or sharing ideas... They need to be able to articulate what they are doing and why they are doing it so that people can help them and offer advice”.

Authentic assessment was also deemed essential to supporting both the academic and professional practice aspirations of the programme. Building the right connections between the academic expectations and how this related to what was actually involved in the students’ centre-based experiences, and being able to make the connections was important for student engagement. For instance MTE3 talked about the time invested in assessment preparation asking questions such as: “Is this what they should be doing in early childhood centres? Does this match with the real world
as well as the academic strand of writing essays and reports and doing research, literature reviews”. Furthermore, MTE2 added how final year students start to question academic tasks: “If it’s not relevant to what they’re doing then they start to question why are they doing it, so to them it needs to support what they do in their centres or what they plan to do with their future careers”.

Aside to building authentic assessments it was important to the TEs that student awareness was raised regarding the impact of academic practices on professional practice, especially those of a transformative nature. Reinforcing the connection between academic and professional practice was associated with putting theory into practice and being transformative. This transformation occurred through being “movers and shakers” (KTE2) and through being more aware of the social responsibility of teaching, as discussed by KTE1: “I hope those academic practices will make them think about their children and their children’s families in the wider context of the community and how everything that’s going on in that community is affecting them and ultimately themselves as practitioners”.

Despite the perspectives of the TEs towards the alignment of academic and professional expectations, variation was identified between the cognitive demands associated with teaching practice as identified in the GTS (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007) and that of academic study from NZQA (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2013). Furthermore, counter to the attitudes of the TEs the ATs reported that the academic practices of initial teacher education were not supported post-qualification in terms of being maintained and applied to everyday working practices. For example AT2 identified the value that having students can bring to the AT in terms of providing opportunities to engage more cognitively with teaching practices: “When I have a student on practicum, a very enriching part of it is being able to legitimately have those discussions. When you’re working with workmates that is not a discussion generally that they’re going to go into”. Likewise, the support given to students was associated with the willingness of the AT to engage thoughtfully with the student.
A concern was expressed that post-qualification teachers may leave behind a depth of thinking to engage in more immediate professional matters, with an impact on mentoring of students: “This is only my observation, but they’ve done the qualification and they leave it behind and get on with what they see as immediate. So I don’t know what level of engagement the students will necessarily get” (AT2). AT3 echoed the sentiments of AT2 in terms of ongoing attitude towards learning post qualification. AT3 talked about her experience within the field as a recently qualified teacher, and how attitudes towards learning and professional development varied. AT3 discussed how in centres where ongoing learning was not valued, teachers could easily become unmotivated and less committed: “They’re not so driven. They don’t want to better themselves. It is kind of like ‘I got my degree or my diploma, I know everything’. I’ve observed that they lose that motivation, they lose that passion and they fizzle out”. Attitudes towards continual learning were further supported by AT5 who said: “We can’t sort of think “I’m there”. Even after all these years of teaching you’re never there, you’re always changing. The appraisal process is always changing, you have to have action plans in place and be changing and learning”.

Within the wider socio-political arena a commitment to on-going learning was identified within the documentation from the Early Childhood Task Force: “The Taskforce acknowledges the importance of having a well-paid, professional early childhood education workforce with an embodied culture of continuous learning, improvement and critical self-review” (2011, p. 152), and by ERO: “Engagement in ongoing learning is critical to the provision of high quality education and care” (Education Review Office, 2010, p. 13). This sentiment is supported by the Early Childhood Task Force who stated: “Good teachers understand that qualifications are just the starting point in their learning” (2011, p. 154). Furthermore, according to ERO, despite the qualification status of teachers it was continual engagement with and opportunity to engage in learning that contributed to the high quality provision: “ERO has found that services with a mix of qualified and unqualified educators can provide high quality early childhood education, when all have the opportunity to participate in learning that develops their knowledge and practice” (Education Review Office, 2010, pp. 13–14).
Consolidation of findings

The findings from the TEs ATs and documentary analysis identified that programme consistency, academic demand, and the balance of academic and practice domains of early childhood FBITE potentially impacted student academic identity. In addition to these programme level issues, it was identified that less experience within the field prior to study was evident, with students demonstrating a higher level of academic preparedness for undertaking early childhood FBITE than previously. This change in student demographic was thought contentious, with the concern that despite this academic preparedness, students still found academic demands challenging, with parallel attitudes that ‘C’s make degrees’ being reported. Furthermore, reports as to graduate capability and academic rigour alongside programme, were evident and related to issues of consistency. Internal consistency within a programme was associated with the academic variability of TEs themselves, and hence the academic expectations they had of students. External consistency, across providers of early childhood FBITE, was questioned in terms of attitudes of some providers being an “easy option”, in terms of academic demands placed on students.

Furthermore, at the student level, the current study identified that the complexity of student lives had the potential to impact negatively on academic study; time management being a particular area of concern. The time needed to invest in academic study was identified as challenging in terms of the inflexibility of the academic programme, which was regarded as a particular issue for those students who were also in full time employment in early childhood centres. Likewise, the careful balancing of academic and practice demands was identified as a particular tension, with the fear that increased academisation of early childhood FBITE was taking students away from, and diluting their practice-based experiences. Field-based experiences were regarded as potentially being sidelined, and regarded as being “attached to” rather than “embedded within” programmes.
Closing statement

This aim of this chapter has been to present data on the structural levels of influence informing student experiences of academic identity. In this instance the social groups at the structural level include: institutional providers of FBITE, the early childhood education community, as well as the wider socio-political context of initial teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Each of these structural layers influences how programmes are designed and delivered and ultimately experienced by the student: thereby informing understanding of student academic identity. It is further acknowledged that the structural context is further complicated with each social group consisting of constituent sub-groups: all of which bring their own tangent to the delivery of FBITE and therein the experience of student academic identity. The following chapter will bring together the findings from both the constructivist and structural levels in a detailed discussion of findings as to the nature and significance of academic identity for students in early childhood FBITE.
Chapter Seven: Discussion of Findings

It is only when I begin to grasp the other person’s point of view as such, or, in our terminology, only when I make the leap from the objective to the subjective context of meaning, that I am entitled to say that I understand something.

(Schutz, 1967, p. 217)

Chapter overview

In this chapter the findings are discussed according to the research questions in keeping with the research aim. The aim of the research was to critically examine the nature and significance of academic identity for students in early childhood Field-Based Initial Teacher Education (FBITE) in Aotearoa New Zealand. The research questions were:

1. How do students in early childhood field-based initial teacher education experience academic identity?
2. What are the multiple identities of students in early childhood field-based initial teacher education and how does academic identity relate to these?
3. What are the multiple contexts of learning for students in early childhood field-based initial teacher education and how does academic identity relate to these?
4. How is the development of academic identity significant to the student experience of early childhood field-based initial teacher education?

This chapter is divided into four main sections relating to the research questions:

1. Nature of student academic identity - Research question 1
2. Multiple identities – Research question 2
3. Multiple contexts of learning – Research question 3
4. Significance of student academic identity - Research question 4

For example, the nature of academic identity includes discussion of the relationship found between elements of academic identity. Within this, attention is also given to the place of personal epistemologies, as an aspect of the element of dispositions. This
section follows with discussion of the multiple identities of students in early childhood FBITE. These identities are connected to the membership of communities including the academic community, professional community and personal community. Findings associated with the multiple contexts of learning relate to academic task and self-directed study. Finally, discussion as to the significance of student academic identity is framed within the themes of changing student demographic, compromised programme design, academic relevance, and consistency.

**Nature of student academic identity**

In keeping with the words of Schutz (1967), it is through the sharing of lived experiences that the phenomenon of student academic identity can be understood. The design of the questionnaires and the participation of students at key points of transition in academic study enabled context specific insight into the nature of student academic identity to be obtained in keeping with research question one, as to how students in FBITE experience academic identity.

At the beginning of this thesis, academic identity was defined as the appropriation of academic values and practices within a sense of self, reflecting willingness and commitment to the practices of the academic community. At the outset student academic identity was conceptualised as consisting of five elements: self-theory, dispositions, agency-beliefs, achievement indicators and motivation. It was proposed that, the combination of these five elements contributes to the development of student academic identity, which is informed by and communicated through ways of knowing, being and doing (Lea & Street, 1998).

The findings indicate that each of the five elements identified within the conceptualisation of student academic identity are evident. This research has provided new knowledge into student lived experiences of academic identity and, as evident in the discussion of findings, exposes the specific aspects of each of these five elements that were meaningful to participants. Furthermore, the research provides evidence of the specific nature of the connections between the five elements of
student academic identity, as presented in Figure 7.1, which form the focus of this discussion of findings. Figure 7.1 provides a visual representation of the direction of influence between connections, and also the nature of the connection in terms of whether beneficial or detrimental to the development of student academic identity.

**Key:**
1: Procrastination 2: Self-doubt 3: Procrastination 4: Lower self-confidence
Self-regulation, effort & attendance

*Figure 7.1 Element connections*

In Figure 7.1, positive connections between elements are shown in blue and negative connections in red. The green two-headed arrow represents a bi-directional influence existing between motivation and agency-beliefs. What each arrow specifically
represents according to the findings is detailed within the key. For example, blue arrow number one represents a passionate disposition found to influence motivation. As can be seen in Figure 7.1 there are a cluster of arrows, of all representative colours, connecting with the element of agency-beliefs. These connections highlight the significance of agency-beliefs in the development of a student academic identity.

The direction of influence associated with agency-beliefs is both one that influences and is also influenced by other elements. Dispositions, self-theory and achievement indicators influence agency-beliefs in a positive way, as indicated by the blue arrows. In the particular instance of the green bi-directional arrow, agency-beliefs and motivation are equally influential in terms of self-regulatory behaviour consisting of attendance and prioritisation of study. Prioritisation of study and attending classes influences motivation and vice versa motivation influences the prioritisation of study and attendance: the same specific features of elements playing a dual influencing role.

According to the current research, agency-beliefs, through self-regulation, involve the personal capacity to actively engage and direct ones participation and involvement. According to the evidence, personal awareness of the actions students can take in their learning is strongly influenced by confidence and the self-belief that personal resources are sufficient to do what is required. It was evident that self-doubt undermined self-regulation, which supports the view that a lack of confidence has the capacity to undermine belief in personal control and capacity in academic situations (Ryan, 2009). In addition, the disposition to procrastinate negatively influences student agency-beliefs and is associated with self-doubt.

Achievement indicators, from the current research, have the next highest number of connections, after agency-beliefs. Achievement indicators provide messages into the likelihood of meeting with academic success. On the whole this influence is positive, as represented by the predominance of blue arrows. However, achievement indicators in the form of negative feedback can lower student levels of self-confidence, as denoted by red arrow number four. In support of the literature, the capacity for students to respond to negative feedback was found to relate to negative
impacts on self-belief and engagement (Timperley, 2013). It was evident that student self-efficacy, self-belief and confidence could be negatively impacted. However, evidence from this current research indicates additional opportunity for such negative experiences to produce positive outcomes. Contrary to what was identified in the literature (Timperley, 2013), the current research shows the capacity for students to respond to negative achievement indicators in positive ways. Such positive responses were associated with the capacity to draw on personal resources to view negative experiences as learning opportunities. Thus boosting motivation and agency through self-determined goal setting.

According to the current research, connections between agency-beliefs and achievement indicators are significant to student experience of academic identity due to the willingness and commitment to engage in academic Discourse being more than a desire to learn. Rather, it is also about knowing what to do to achieve academic success. Knowing what to do is embedded within agency-beliefs and the evidence from the current research shows that, whilst a student may hold positive self-beliefs, the right dispositions and be motivated, unless they know how to use this knowledge to navigate academic Discourse their academic identity is likely to be impacted. An example from the literature presented the scenario of a student who had: “high ability and wherewithal to expend effort, ample resources, and clear understanding yet chose not to invest and engage” (Walls & Little, 2005, p. 24). In this scenario agency-beliefs were deemed ineffective without the necessary motivation.

Conversely, according to the current research findings the opposite is also so, in that being highly motivated has limited traction in terms of navigating the academic space unless there is also the capacity to gain the knowledge of how to navigate. Motivation alone, albeit important, is not enough. This line of argument aligns well with a literacies perspective and transition into the academic Discourse, in which ways of knowing, being and doing may be at odds with existing ways and therefore not accessible and useable (Gourlay, 2009). Becoming academically literate relates to degrees of involvement and participation within the academic community, and as such requires knowledge of how to go about this.
Dispositions were shown to take on a more influencing role rather than being influenced by other elements: implying that they are more static in nature and less open to change. The current research identifies that passion, in particular, relates to student motivation, whereas curiosity, being self-reflective, responsible, and dedication were personal resources associated with agency-beliefs. Whilst not of high occurrence, procrastination was negatively associated with both motivation and agency-beliefs. Procrastination was reported to influence both willingness to invest in study, associated with motivation and was found to be also strongly aligned with agency-beliefs through the prioritisation and time-management. Furthermore, negative emotions such as stress, anger, frustration and panic were also associated with accounts of procrastination. Alongside a tendency to procrastinate, such negative emotions add to the challenge of engaging with academic Discourse.

**Personal epistemologies**

Furthermore, the importance of student dispositions was associated with approaches to knowledge, or personal epistemologies. Personal epistemologies relate to how information is perceived, processed, the acts of decision-making and problem solving, and in turn inform how social agents will act in relation to social structures. Attitudes towards knowledge are central to engagement in academic study and, therefore, with the development of student academic identity. In particular, personal epistemologies are regarded as important within initial teacher education as these beliefs influence how student teachers learn and ultimately inform their own emerging teaching practices (Villegas, 2007).

Part of the challenge in becoming academically literate is becoming aware of how subject knowledge is created, engaged with and disseminated (Ratangee, 2006). Absolute ways of knowing identified by Baxter Magolda (2004), were evident in relation to student concerns regarding responding to discussion based tasks and the fear of not saying the right thing: relating to fixed mindsets and dualist perspectives on knowledge (Moore, 2001). Absolutist perspectives were also evident in the predominant attitudes reported by first year students towards the value of teacher
led classes. These classes were related to not missing information and clarification over assessment briefings. If lecture material was available online the value of attending class diminished. Such engagement focuses on transmission modes of knowledge, in keeping with absolute epistemologies (Brownlee, 2003), with a reliance on authority figures to provide necessary information, as opposed to students taking an active role in the construction of knowledge. This is important given that students appeared more willing to engage with learning in the online space when it involved being a passive recipient of knowledge, rather than being an active contributor as shown through the overall dislike of online discussion forums. In the context of the discussion forum, the student is required to risk self-exposure through formalised sharing of what they know (or fear of not knowing) with peers and lecturers. The online discussion forum makes the conversation to be had more formal and lingering, unlike the face-to-face peer discussion, which offers an opportunity for more everyday Discourse to be engaged with.

For final year students, the findings identified an epistemological shift of a transformative nature. Academic study was associated with developments in perceptions of knowledge. The findings showed that final year students aligned more with transitional ways of knowing, in relation to the move from acquisition to understanding of knowledge (Baxter Magolda, 2004). This transitional epistemology was exemplified in the talk of drawing on theory to support and inform their teaching practice. However, these reports did not provide insight into whether a change had occurred in terms of the certainty of knowledge (multiplistic perspectives) or how context informed the justification of knowledge claims (relativistic perspectives) (Baxter Magolda, 2004). The transformational impact of academic study was however related to self-concepts such as efficacy, confidence and awareness in terms of personal assumptions, beliefs and being able to use knowledge to support practice.

Student willingness and ability to engage in academic processes was found to relate to the prominence that personal epistemologies were given within academic tasks. Indeed, in the current study students were far more able and willing to engage with academic tasks requiring them to situate their knowledge within the experiences of
their own teaching practices in the early childhood centre. In this way personal experiences gained during field-based experiences were attributed value due to the student being validated as knowledge creator and knower. Through the experiential learning of the work experience and practicum teaching practice components of FBITE, students were enabled to contextualise theoretical components of the programme with the actuality of being a teacher. Such experiential learning acted to “validate the student as knower” (Hofer, 2001, p. 23) which is not about relying on subjective knowledge based on personal feelings, but rather a move toward the integration of received and subjective knowledge (Brownlee et al., 2005). This epistemological shift reflects a move from naïve beliefs that truth is certain to more sophisticated beliefs in which: “individuals actively transform the new information in some way so that it becomes linked to prior knowledge” (Brownlee, 2003, p. 2). Within the findings tasks relying solely on reference to theoretical (received) knowledge left students feeling disconnected and unanchored.

**Multiple identities**

This section relates to research question two regarding the multiple identities of students and how academic identity relates to these. This research question draws on the understanding that social actors hold multiple selves and as such multiple identities based on membership across a myriad of social groups, or communities. This alignment provides the opportunity to attend to the multiple social groups and roles of students, which is in keeping with a structural-constructivist approach to investigating student academic identity.

**Community membership and identity**

Identity is associated with the meaning and role held as group member (Stets & Burke, 2005), which may vary significantly from one social group to the next. It has been identified that identities associated with any group include:

- *Social identity* associated with feelings around group membership and status therein
• *Role identity* reflecting the interrelationship between group members and the complementary positions that members hold

• *Personal identity* associated with traits, characteristics and dispositions, which may feel separate from or be related to social and role identities (Oyserman et al., 2012).

In addition, these group identities also relate to the multiple contexts across which FBITE is situated. According to the findings from the current research, all of these identities play a contributing part in the development of a student academic identity, as identified in Figure 7.2.

*Figure. 7.2. Multiple communities and identities*

As can be seen in Figure 7.2, the social groups, or communities that students belong to include academic, professional and the personal communities are denoted by the large coloured circles. Associated with each community are a number of identities. Student academic identity is represented through the centre point where all communities intersect.
Academic community
The findings from the current research show that when it came to being a member of the academic community self-perceptions, relating to personal identity and associated with traits, characteristics and dispositions influence how students approach and engage in academic study. Role identity is about position or status, which determines how students are expected to participate in relation to other group members. Through participation role identity becomes associated with a sense of belonging (Wenger, 1998), with attendance being a physical representation of this. According to the findings from the current research, by physically attending classes students communicate a willingness and commitment to participate in the academic community. This physical presence for the most part plays an important part in being able to successfully navigate the boundaries of participation in terms of checking expectations, and information gathering. However, minimum attendance requirements set within programme regulations communicate an acceptance for only attending for the minimum required time.

The findings from the current research indicate that social identity, consisting of feelings associated with membership of the academic community, is on the whole temporary or transitory in nature. Few students identified holding a future self as one involving further participation in the academic community in terms of on-going academic study. Student academic identity therefore, performs a functional role as it is the means by which academic Discourse is navigated and professional credentialing achieved. For the majority of students in the current research there was a stronger identification with the professional community in relation to future on-going learning through non-credential bearing professional development. In the current research social identity within the academic community was influenced by personal identity through dispositions (Barnett, 2004, 2007; White & Lowenthal, 2011). Positive dispositions were found to align with more positive engagement with the academic community, and in the current research were expressed as engagement in study. However, negative dispositions led to less engagement with the academic study and a more fraught attitude towards the academic community in terms of relevance and value.
Professional community

The findings from the current research identified a relationship between membership of the professional community and membership of the academic community and student academic identity. Student participation in the professional community enables students to maintain an academic identity through supporting their continued interest and engagement in academic study, and hence the academic community. Student engagement with the academic community was found to be stronger when experiences within the professional community could be drawn on. For instance, praxis was reported to enhance deeper cognitive engagement with study through the opportunity to apply learning. Also, directly linking academic learning to experiences in the professional domain, added relevance and value to the academic process as learning (Gee, 2006).

The findings from the current research show that when it came to membership of the professional community the multiple social, role and personal identities all held influence. For instance, student membership and participation in the professional community is associated with personal identity aspects of future selves as early childhood teachers. Social identity was found to specifically relate to interest in the early childhood sector, and equated to becoming a full member of the professional community through an emerging professional identity. The preference for engagement in praxis and experiential learning was further associated with personal identity. This was fortuitous as FBITE supports such participation in the professional community through the regular work-experience and practicum components of programmes.

The current research findings indicate differing perspectives regarding student status in terms of membership and role within the professional community. For example, although TEs favoured students being advocates of change within the early childhood community there was concern that students referred to themselves with the prefix ‘only’ denoting a limitation to their status and capacity to impart influence and agency within their teaching roles. Once again the interrelationship between academic and
professional community memberships become evident. The status of student is assigned by role within the academic community, which in the context of FBITE then becomes transposed into the professional community. This adds another layer of complexity due the nature of FBITE, in which multiple roles may come into play at any one time. For example, a ‘student’ undertaking academic study may during weekly work-experience also be a paid ‘teacher’ in the early childhood centre. In other cases findings from the current research show that the ‘student’ undertaking academic study may be a volunteer with more limited capacity. Despite this complexity the findings show that it is membership of the professional community that is of most importance to students in FBITE.

In this way, according to the current research, academic identity was enhanced by an emerging professional identity. Such an interrelationship between identities and communities reinforces the dynamic nature of multiple identities held by social agents within and across social structures (Bourdieu, 1989). Given the complexity of the context of early childhood teaching within New Zealand Aotearoa it is possible to hold the role of teacher without holding a formal credential, as indicated in changes to the strategic plan (Ministry of Education, 2002), in which required ratios between qualified and unqualified teachers dropped from 100% to 50% (Ministry of Education, 2014). The outcome of changes meaning that not all teachers within the early childhood sector are required to obtain academic credentials in order to practice. However, without a credential membership, role and position within the early childhood teaching are limited. For example, credentialing opens up potential for full membership of the professional community supported through the post-qualification teacher registration process. In this way the academic community informs the means by which full membership of the professional community becomes possible. Credentials, therefore, equate to capital as a form of symbolic power with the volume and weight of capital held in terms of credentials determining community position (Bourdieu, 1989).

The evidence from the current research indicates that it is membership of the professional community that holds longevity (Thomas, 2012). The academic aspect of
the credentialing experience is a tolerated part of the process to achieving the ultimate professional goal. As such, engaging with the academy, as the providers of initial teacher education credentials, is unavoidable. This toleration of the academic aspect of the credentialing process equates to a temporary form of identification with academic Discourse. This temporary identity (Conde, 2011), performs a functional role as it is the means by which academic Discourse is navigated. It is also functional because through this engagement with the academic aspect of initial teacher education, a professional identity can emerge through sustained involvement in the credentialing process. According to the current research, as students move through the credentialing process their emerging professional identity becomes more pronounced, as can be seen in Figure 7.3.

Figure 7.3. Student academic identity as temporary

The grey arrow represents the movement of students during the credentialing process, through to completion and into professional roles as qualified early childhood teachers. The blue section, to the left hand side, outlines the five elements of student academic identity. The blue triangular section, representing student academic identity, is shown as higher on entry into academic study, which begins to tail off as study progresses. Likewise, the purple section indicates student emerging professional identity as steadily increasing during time within early childhood FBITE. According to the current research, the academic identity of students in early childhood FBITE, on the whole, diminishes as professional identity grows, as shown by membership of the
academic community as being more of a means to an end rather than a desired long-term affiliation.

**Personal community**

In this particular context, the personal community is used to encompass the multiple social groups outside of any direct relation to their study. For instance, such personal community is conceptualised as consisting of family, church groups, sports groups and so forth; all with their own social, role and personal identity features. In relation to student academic identity this personal community is of particular relevance due to the tension commitments to multiple roles places on engagement with academic study and, therefore, on student academic identity. Of particular import is the acknowledgment, from the demographic data, that students are typically female, aged between 20 and 40 and with family responsibilities.

Overwhelming, it was family commitments that meant that students reported being unable to feel fully immersed in study, through being the dedication of sufficient time and effort. Given that the data identified that the typical student in FBITE was female, aged between 20 and 40 years of age with family, it is no surprise that prioritising academic study proved challenging. Respondents used terms such as ‘forfeit’, ‘sacrifice’ and ‘juggling’ in describing how they met competing demands. Despite this challenge the following excerpt from one student highlights the lengths would go to in dividing time between study and family: “Go to sleep at 8.30pm wake up at 12.45 around 1am every Monday – Friday and try to study and do assignments. Saturdays and Sunday - sleep through”. The current research findings support the understanding that whilst a cohort of students may be studying the same course or programme the totality of the experience may be perceived very differently for different students (Yorke, 2006). Indeed the “trade off” (Yorke, 2006, p. 4) students make is identified as leaning towards the concept of a good enough experience rather than an optimal one due to managing multiple demands and commitments. Overall immersion in academic study did not vary between first year and final year student; highlighting that longer duration of time spent in academic study did not equate to deeper levels of immersion, as the challenges of multiple roles remained the same. This runs counter
to the overall understandings of community involvement becoming stronger with increased time (Wenger, 2010).

It is identified in the literature that adult learners struggle to meet the multiple demands placed on them due to the complexity of multiple roles that they hold in society: “Adult students in particular have to be adept at juggling multiple responsibilities and demands on their time” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 94). The current research findings show that although academic identity may not be the driving force for student engagement in FBITE, it is none-the-less significant. For those who participated in this research, academic study was identified as a big undertaking, drawing on drive, persistence, resilience and perseverance to see it through amidst the many competing demands of their wider lives. The challenge for students was not solely the closeness of fit between Discourses between social groups and the academic community (Thomas, 2012). Rather, it was also about the logistics and practicalities of managing competing demands. In this instance, the current research evidence suggests that students with family commitments struggle more with developing a positive academic identity due to the challenge to prioritisation of the demands of the academic community over their other roles and responsibilities from their personal communities.

**Multiple contexts of learning**

The specific contexts, or social spaces, in which learning occurs hold potential to influence student perceptions of their willingness and commitment to engage with academic ways of being, knowing and doing. This section relates to research question three as to the multiple contexts of learning for students in early childhood FBITE and how academic identity relates to these. Examination of specific contexts provides insight as to how each is connected to the overall learning experience and how identity development is influenced. This approach is supported by Jones (2010, p. 10) who states that the structural-constructivist approach can help expose how: “actors interact differently in different situations depending on the ‘fit’ between habitus, capital and the structure of the ‘spaces of social struggle’”.
The analogy of the game, as introduced by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), can be used to enhance understanding of how students navigate across multiple contexts of learning:

At each moment, it is the state of the relations of force between players that defines the structure of the field. We can picture each player as having in front of her a pile of tokens of different colors, each color corresponding to a given species of capital she holds, so that her relative force in the game, her position in the space of play, and also her strategic orientation toward the game... the moves that she makes, more or less risky or cautious, subversive or conservative, depend both on the total number of tokens and also on the composition of the piles of tokens she retains, that is, on the volume and structure of her capital. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99)

Successful navigation is seen to be dependent on a student knowing the rules of the game, and being able and willing to play by them in order to achieve own goals (Gee, 2001). The reference to force can be likened to how much influence, agency or power that the student holds over their learning environment, rather than being passive in the learning process. The reference to position can be associated with where in the game the student is situated, which could relate to multiple facets such as: being an ‘A grade’ student, being a student transitioning into study or at the end point and transitioning out of study amongst others. Finally, the reference to strategic orientation to the game can be aligned with how a student approaches their learning and is strongly aligned with aspects of identity in terms of their motivations, dispositions, agency-beliefs, and self-theory in relation to learning. As such this concept of the game aligns well with an academic literacies approach, which emphasises the place of power, agency and identity, in student development of an academic identity.

This description of the game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), highlights the shifting nature of social structures and social positions due to the dynamic relationships
between social agents both within and across social structures: the value and weight of the resources held by a social actor at any given time being relative to the systems of meaning evident within and across social structures. Furthermore, this concept of shifting and dynamic social structures and positions aligns well with consideration of the multiple contexts of learning informing and contributing to the overall experience of FBITE, and hence to student academic identity.

Typically the contexts of learning most associated with field-based programmes of study are differentiated as theory and practice (Coombes & Downie, 2014). However, findings from this research highlight how understandings of contexts of learning within FBITE can be redefined and broadened. This redefining of learning contexts extends consideration from a binary perspective of theory (Zeichner, 2009), typically associated with the teacher-led class, and practice associated with teaching practice in early childhood centres. A rejection of a binary perspective draws attention to context as inclusive of: academic tasks, self-directed study, and epistemological context. In this way learning and the learner are redefined and re-situated within a wider and more inclusive frame of reference (Fowler, 1997; Merriam et al., 2007), which includes attending to systems of social relations as purported by structural-constructivist paradigms (Bottero, 2010; Fowler, 1997). In this redefining of context the student as social actor becomes more centrally positioned and hence given more attention. Furthermore, this redefining of context aligns with the insights into the multiple identities within the academic, professional and personal communities integral to FBITE. This redefining of context allows for a more critical understanding of knowledge as being shaped by many social actors (Delanty, 2001). The findings associated with the additional contexts of learning will be discussed in detail.

**Academic task**

The specific nature of an academic task was identified in the current research as playing an important contributing role in the development of student academic identity in terms of drawing students into, or distancing students from their study. It was clearly evident in the current research that in their initial stages of study students were more drawn to discussion-based tasks in which they can talk about, rather than
read or write about, course content. Through discussions students could share information and gain insight into other realities. Such tasks also provide students with a sense of being active participants within their own learning: with learning not being something that happened to them but through them (Brookfield, 2005). The verbal nature of discussions also boosted student self-confidence, self-efficacy, and gave them a sense as to their own learning growth. Socially oriented academic tasks such as class based discussions met these demands due to the relational aspect of being in contact with other learners.

In essence, discussion tasks are socially oriented learning contexts and draw on the underlying principle that learning from and with others is a basic feature of both formal and informal learning (Brookfield, 2005; Mercer, 1995). According to Aspelin (2011, p. 7), “All meaning emerges from co-action, i.e. human beings create meaning in collaboration. Relationships are processes that individuals cannot be separated from”, and as such, for many students the act of discussion and opportunity to talk with peers about their experiences and understanding was the most valued means of engaging with academic knowledge. The willingness to engage with academic knowledge was therefore associated with opportunities for personal interactions about academic related knowledge.

Within constructivist paradigms knowledge is regarded as actively constructed through interactions with “time, space, objects, and people” (Nuttall, 2003, p. 167), and learning is regarded as an active process driven by meaningful interactions. Within the peer interaction of the discussion tasks, students are positioned as co-constructors of knowledge. Peers act to assist each other as both agents and recipients in the learning process (Schacter, 2000). For students in FBITE academic discussions, whether face-to-face or online, can become places where theoretical knowledge and examples of personal teaching practice can be shared with peers. Academic study therefore becomes a relational endeavour in which personal epistemologies, assumptions and biases, can be aired, shared and challenged in the pursuit of developing deeper more critical forms of thinking (Howie & Hagan, 2010).
However, a challenge to effective learning with peers is the complexity of facilitating effective talk within discussion tasks. There is a wealth of evidence identifying that students working in groups, collaborative or discussion based activities does not guarantee effective or desired learning will occur (Barnes, 2010; Mercer, 1995; Simpson, Mercer, & Majors, 2010). Unless, through the discussion process, participants are encouraged to use talk that allows them to: “explore unknown social or cognitive territory” (Simpson et al., 2010, p. 1), there is a risk that the talk used does not achieve the demands of academic Discourse and for students to “arrive without having travelled” (Simpson et al., 2010, p. 1). Discussion tasks can be regarded as lower risk environments in that discussion with peers may permit students to remain within their known Discourse base – their Discursive comfort zone. In this way discussion tasks can permit formal academic ways of being, knowing and doing to be kept somewhat at a distance. This distance can be maintained through the use of everyday language systems, interpretations, and expressions in the process of meaning making through being able to talk with peers.

Meanwhile, through bouncing ideas off each other and grappling with alternative perspectives discussion based tasks provide an opportunity to engage in deeper thinking through exposure to multiple perspectives: both of which are key aspects of academic Discourse (Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008). In this way academic ways of engaging with knowledge may be encountered without the concern for communicating using a formal academic style – using their academic voice. Barnes (2008), distinguishes between two types of talk within formal learning contexts: exploratory talk and presentational talk. His concept of exploratory talk is described as a less formal type of talk in which attention is given to developing personal understanding rather than attending to audience:

> Exploratory talk is hesitant and incomplete because it enables the speaker to try out ideas, to hear how they sound, to see what others make of them, to arrange information and ideas into different patterns. The difference between the two functions of talk is that in presentational talk the speaker’s attention is primarily focused on adjusting the language, content and manner to the needs of an
audience, and in exploratory talk the speaker is more concerned with sorting out his or her own thoughts. (Barnes, 2008, p. 4)

Talk-based activities, therefore, allow students to try out new ideas, thoughts, meanings and alternative realities.

For students, challenges with discussion tasks were reported in the current study when they took place within online environments, which as well as posing technical challenges also moved the discussion out of the verbal and into the textual realm. Discussion activities within online contexts position participants differently as thoughts and ideas are necessarily more formalised and then communicated in a less flowing and conversational manner (Yang & Yuen, 2010). It is not necessarily that online discussions require an academic voice, especially for students transitioning into study. Instead the discussion or talk holds a different position within the social space of learning as when the talk occurs between peers alone it is not open to the scrutiny of authority figures such as teachers. The relational nature of learning then shifts, as illustrated by Goodfellow (2005, p. 483) who says that: “Recognising that identities of participation in online learning environments have to be negotiated against a background of implicit appraisal of one’s words by both peers and ‘authorities’”.

Online discussions, therefore, highlight the role of text within academic Discourse and the development of an academic identity (Goodfellow, 2005). Through academic writing students are encouraged to use an academic voice and not their everyday voice: aligning with a shift from exploratory to presentational talk, whereby audience is given more attention (Barnes, 2008). Hence, there is potential for the level of Discursive dissonance to increase due to the degree of disparity between everyday Discourse and academic Discourse (Grenfell, 2008). For instance the qualities of academic Discourse that cause tension are identified as its: “verbal economy, logical coherence, clarity, dispassionate demeanor, comprehensiveness and certainty” (Gergen, 2011, p. 222). Challenges with academic writing were associated in part with students being able to take on board this way of writing and replicate in their own text. Therefore being able to not only recognise but then also replicate Discursive
expectations of a social group is significant to developing a sense of identity with that group.

Academic reading and writing place different demands on students in relation to engagement with academic genres (Aranha, 2009). Compared to discussions and writing, reading is a relatively passive enterprise in that it does not allow an actual exchange of communication directly between author and audience within the creation and dissemination of knowledge. The distance between creator and receiver is increased by the nature of academic language itself. A point well represented by the words of Gergen:

The flat formality establishes a barrier. The reader is effectively informed, “I will reveal nothing personal to you, because ultimately you mean little to me.” Or more dramatically, “I am primarily interested in your admiration”. Further, I am not invited to have a voice in the issues at hand. The logic is complete within itself; it strives to reach a conclusion that is so perfectly developed that the reader’s admiration and sense of inferiority are sufficient to the day. (2011, p. 223)

In a discussion the participant can, for instance, question challenge, and clarify (Askell-Williams & Lawson, 2005). In the act of reading academic works the reader, as audience, is more alone; a passive recipient of a message and more dependent on their own competency with the Discourse of the academic genre to be able to engage with the content of the reading. Academic reading requires the student to become more immersed in academic Discourse (Buehl, 2011), and is different again to discussion or written tasks in relation to how the student is positioned in the Discursive process, as represented in Figure 7.4.
Figure 7.4. Academic task and immersion in academic Discourse

Reading of academic text is the primary way in which students are exposed to and become immersed in academic Discourse. Such exposure therefore also breeds familiarity with the disparate qualities of everyday and academic Discourses (Heller & Morek, 2015; Wyborn, 2005). This is an area of significant concern when the data from the current research evidenced student resistance to academic reading. Through this familiarity Discursive dissonance can potentially be reduced. The student has to not only be on the receiving end of such Discourse but also, as part of the process of acquiring an academic identity, demonstrate the ability to produce work of this same nature (Flower, 1990). Such production involves the student conveying their academic voice, a primary means of which is through academic writing.

Academic writing is a focal point of interest in research into academic literacies and is documented extensively within the literature (Bazerman, Bonini, & de Carvalho Figueiredo, 2009; Ivanič et al., 2007; Lea, 1998; Lea & Street, 1998; Oliva-Girbau, 2011; Oliva-Girbau & Milian-Gubern, 2012). However, evidence from this current research specifically highlighted that academic writing plays an important role as an achievement indicator. Through the collating of thoughts and ideas, which are then presented through written work, students in this current research valued the opportunity to ‘see’ their own learning through their academic writing. This awareness of learning was associated with increased feelings of self-confidence and reinforced
for students that the hard work was worth it, especially if they received good marks. In the current research the value attributed to academic writing was also associated with the production of tangible outcomes and that they provided an opportunity for feedback. However, a contributing factor to positive experience towards academic writing was clarity of instructions and expectations. Finally, in the current research academic writing was regarded as time consuming, especially due to the complexity of finding the right words to convey thinking, and so demanded a lot in terms of self-regulatory behaviour such as time-management.

This section has highlighted how the nature of academic tasks contributes to identity processes with some academic tasks calling for more engagement with academic Discourse than others. Overcoming Discursive dissonance and stepping out from a zone of comfort with everyday ways of being, knowing and doing has implications for curriculum design. This is particularly the case with field-based programmes of study, which draw on applied pedagogies (Downing & Herrington, 2013), with relevance to academic processes emerging from their alignment with practice requirements and realities. From these research findings it can be argued that, as the preferred form of academic task, discussion based activities provide worthy opportunities to transition students into academic Discourse at the point where they reside at the periphery of the academic community (Gee, 2001; Smith, 2009; Wenger, 1998). In this space of co-construction students can begin to step more fully into academic Discourse.

**Self-directed study**

Success at tertiary level is widely associated with being the degree of agency that students show for their own learning (Zimmerman, 2002). Such agency relates to becoming active participants and proactive agents in the learning process rather than regarding learning as a passive outcome of teaching (Warburton & Volet, 2013; Zimmerman, 2002). An example of agency can be seen through student engagement in self-directed learning in which emphasis is placed on the responsibility for learning positioned with the student. Such autonomy in learning is argued to be associated with feelings of self-determination, self-competency and motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Zepke & Leach, 2010). An important vehicle for the promotion of autonomy in
learning occurs through opportunity for self-directed study, in which responsibility for
learning shifts from being teacher-guided to being learner led (Warburton & Volet,
2013). By acting autonomously students demonstrate agency and influence over their
own engagement with academic Discourse.

According to this current research, self-directed study forms a significant component
of FBITE programmes, with only up to one day and one evening a week comprising
teacher-led sessions. Self-directed study draws on student ability to select learning
materials and ways to approach their learning and draws on self-regulatory systems,
which include strategies such as time keeping, organisation, and a range of study skills
(Lai, 2011b). Furthermore, self-regulation relates to self-reliance as well as knowing
when and how to seek help through demonstrating help-seeking behaviour. Self-
regulatory behaviour, and learning to be an autonomous learner, are important
aspects of navigating academic Discourse and as such are central components of
academic literacies, with increased learner autonomy aligning with increased
academic level of study.

Engaging in self-directed study relates, not only to willingness, but also to the
practicalities of process and strategic knowledge of the ‘how to’ (Errey, 2011).
Knowing how long a task will take, having necessary resources to hand, and being in a
conducive physical space, are just some of the factors that might enable self-directed
learning to happen. From a literacies perspective being autonomous and self-directed
requires being resourceful in adapting to the academic context. For instance all
students entering the academic context need to become aware of: “the need to
engage with the pragmatic “rules” which govern new ways of interacting with
lecturers and other students, new ways of finding, selecting and researching
information, new ways of reading and critiquing knowledge, and new ways of writing
about it” (Errey, Cho, & Ota, 2004, p. 5). Furthermore, the student needs to develop
an understanding of their role and responsibility within the academic environment
(Errey et al., 2004). It is acknowledged that a willingness to engage with academic
tasks may not be easy. Dweck talks about self-regulation, in the “painful process of
learning” (2000, p. 153), as being essential particularly when tasks are uninteresting,
complex, unpleasant, or long: this she argues is when people need to learn how to apply themselves.

As evidenced in the current research, typical examples of self-regulatory behaviour related to time-keeping, organisational skills, as well as seeking help when necessary. The current research findings show that engaging in self-regulatory behaviour was challenging for students. Such challenges were evident through the use of terms such as ‘struggle’ ‘stress’, ‘frustration’, ‘anger’, ‘panic’, ‘doubt’, ‘confusion’ and ‘concern’ accompanying their reports on self-regulation. These feelings hold potential to undermine self-confidence and efficacy in being able to resolve one’s own issues, and hence being self-reliant. According to the current research findings help-seeking behaviour was more prevalent in first year students who typically asked others if they were unsure of academic work or tasks. The final year students reported a more equal likelihood of engaging in either help-seeking or self-reliant behaviour, however, when sought, help-seeking was associated with strong emotional states such as feelings of panic and stress. In addition dispositions that supported self-regulation were reported as including perseverance and drive.

Interestingly, overall help was more likely to be sought from peers rather than those in more expert positions, such as lecturers, associate teachers or academic support services. Whilst help-seeking can be positively associated with self-regulatory behaviour, and a sign of being actively engaged in and aware of learning, the current research findings raise concern as to the tendency for students to seek out help from peers rather than academic staff, as more knowledgeable others (Williams & Takaku, 2011). By not seeking help from authority figures, such as TEs and ATs, adaptive/strategic help-seeking is not fully utilized and instead an aspect of avoidant behaviour becomes evident. Factors affecting this avoidance of seeking help from authority figures may relate to mindsets and the fear that such an external show of facing an academic challenge may be perceived as personal failure which would align with an entity or fixed view of intelligence (Dweck, 2000). The reported extent of help-seeking behaviour raises questions as to the strategic nature of such help-seeking and whether or not a form of “help abuse” was taking place in terms of the bypassing...
wider self-regulatory processes (Ogan et al., 2015): it being easier to ask for help than to try and be self-reliant and work things out for oneself.

Self-directed learning is strongly associated with adult learning theory in which attention is given to the concept of autonomy involving resourcefulness, initiative and persistence (Ponton & Rhea, 2006). However, it is identified that autonomy, and as such self-directed learning, is not itself context free. The adult learner may be more or less self-directed given the immediate situation in which they find themselves, as stated by (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 123), “there is a relationship between the personal and situational variables that must come into play for a person to be autonomous in certain learning situations”. The argument being that, whilst an adult learner may attribute value to learning situations, adulthood brings with it many pressing demands that can overtake the prioritisation of learning. This is evident within the data when students talked about the multiple roles they hold in relation to family, work and community: a student being only one of many identities they hold. It does not mean that the student does not value learning, rather that other matters are more pressing: “In terms of value to a particular adult’s long-term development, learning may still be the most highly prized activity, but the roof may need fixing today (as an example)” (Ponton, Derrick, & Carr, 2005, p. 124).

**Significance of academic identity**

This section relates to research question four as to the significance of the development of academic identity for students of early childhood FBITE. The findings from the current research highlight variation in expectation of students undertaking FBITE, which impacts on the development of a positive academic identity. These variations relate to: demographics, programme design, academic relevance and consistency. Variations of expectation exposes the ‘sites of struggle’ (Bourdieu, 1989), associated with how students, as social agents within FBITE, are classified and classify themselves. Such classification is compounded by the complexity of FBITE in terms of multiple identities and multiple contexts of learning the student is required to navigate many competing expectations. From a literacies perspective such navigation potentially
impacts on the development of a positive academic identity and academic success as students adapt to different social practices of the different social structures of the multiple contexts in which their learning is situated. Each of the points of variation in expectation identified within the findings will be discussed in turn.

Changing student demographic

Field-based programmes of study for early childhood initial teacher education are historically associated with the credentialing of teachers already working within the field (Kane, 2005). However, it would appear that this is now a shifting space in which fewer students are entering FBITE with experience in the sector. As such the TEs identified that students are more likely to enter FBITE with limited knowledge of the ‘common language’ of early childhood education and also the tacit knowledge associated with the actuality of being within the early childhood sector (Brennan et al., 2010). Within the discourse of the TEs there was concern about societal expectations regarding early childhood teachers as being less academic than teachers within the compulsory and post-compulsory sectors. This is somewhat subtly reinforced within the messages regarding the quality targets for the early childhood sector, in which even credentials are questioned through the reduction in requirements for registered teachers (Brennan et al., 2010; Ministry of Education, 2014). However, despite concern regarding societal perceptions of the early childhood students as being non-academic, the current student base was reported to be more academically inclined, of a younger age, and with limited experience in the field.

The findings from the current research identify that more attention is being given to student academic profiles than to the dispositional nature of students aligned with becoming a teacher, as was the previous practice. For example, the TEs identified that there had been a shift in the focus given to academic demands, with programme selection criteria focusing more on student academic preparedness than dispositions aligning with being an early childhood teacher. However, despite this apparent rise in the academic preparedness of students transitioning to FBITE, the findings highlighted that academic literacies were still of central concern within programme design. There are various ways in which academic literacies support is provided: ‘just in time’
approaches, embedded literacies and the provision of additional support. This variety of approaches aligns with the view that ‘one size does not fit all’ (Leach, Zepke, Haworth, Massey University, & Isaacs, 2010). Whilst particular concern regarding academic literacies is associated with transitioning students (Kift, 2015), it was found that there are ongoing literacies challenges facing final year students. These challenges were particularly in relation to deeper critical thinking. Even through the participants’ acknowledgement that the current student demographic was likely to be more academically inclined these students were reported to continue to struggle with transition to tertiary study and academic Discourse.

**Compromised programme design**

According to the current study a further site of struggle associated with this attention to student academic profiles was the concern that the value of field-based learning is being overridden or compromised by increased academic demands. Despite the claim that field-based programmes: “could lend themselves more easily to the explicit integration of the theoretical and practical components of the qualification” (Kane, 2005, p. 222), the findings highlight concern that programmes are becoming more academically focused with field-based learning seen as an attachment, or an aside. The findings identify tension in respect to how the minimum hours students required to be in centre-based teaching practice (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010), is being interpreted as an ideal or a desirable maximum due to the time needed to invest in meeting the academic study demands. It was found that advice to keep to the minimum 12 hours per week (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010), impacts on student involvement in centres, their sense of belonging within a teaching team and the roles and responsibilities they can take on board to support their developing teaching practice.

According to the current research opportunities for praxis are significant to both first year and final year students. For first year students praxis supports achievement success in terms of: aligning with preferred learning styles, deepening understanding, seeing learning in action, testing out and exploring learning in a safe space, challenging inconsistency between theory and the reality of teaching and providing opportunity
for feedback. Meanwhile for final year students’ praxis supports transformational experiences increasing self-confidence and self-efficacy as emerging teachers. Therefore the findings indicate a detrimental impact from the tension between sufficient centre-based teaching practice and academic demands on student engagement and achievement success. This is significant given that students on FBITE are only engaging with academic Discourse because of their future aspirations of self as early childhood teachers and the relevancy of academic study is enhanced through engagement in the field of teaching practice. The development of an academic identity can become a positive rub off from the practice component of field-based learning. Therefore it is important to pay attention to the changing place of experiential learning with the increased demands within the programme design of FBITE.

**Academic relevance**

According to the findings from the current research the co-existence of the academe and the early childhood sector is fraught due to conflicting perceptions as to the relevance and value of the academe in the working context of the early childhood teacher. Given that field-based programmes of education draw on the opportunity for students to become immersed in teaching practice so that they can reflect on and apply knowledge (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Coombes & Downie, 2014), it would be expected that there be a ground of shared understanding in the bringing together of the social practices of the academe with that of the discipline/field of practice. As such the boundaries of each social structure are required to take on a more permeable quality to enable the coming together of ‘theory and practice’, which become integrated through the experiential learning process. The precarious position of students in FBITE is exacerbated by the tension that exists across structures in relation to how academic practices are valued and positioned within the early childhood community.

The findings from the current research highlight varying regard for academic ways of being, knowing and doing in relation to continual professional learning and actual practice as an early childhood teacher. Even within the wider socio-political context of FBITE there was found to be variation in terms of the depth of cognitive demand
expected of graduates of FBITE, with the professional regulatory body of the NZTC (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007) attributing more attention to the application of learning over the higher order cognitive demands of analysing, evaluating and creating required by Level 7 qualifications approved by the NZQA descriptors (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2013). From a practice perspective, those academic tasks that had a practical fit, or if the centre could benefit directly from students’ efforts, were regarded as being more likely to be endorsed by centre teachers, over those requiring critical thinking and also consideration of critical issues associated with social justice. In turn this issue of relevancy led students to also question why they were being asked to undertake academic tasks in terms of their fit with future practice as a qualified teacher. This questioning of the relevancy of academic tasks negatively impacts on student academic identity through their willingness to engage and the value attributed to the academic expectations.

Interestingly, the evidence from the current research highlighted that the academic tasks set for students can involve Associate Teachers in more in-depth and critical discussion, enabling them to engage more cognitively with their own teaching practices. The benefit of supporting a student was a means by which to engage in a form of on-going professional development (Sanders, 2005). However, it is noted in the current research that attitudes towards on-going learning are more aligned with general professional development opportunities of a non-academic nature. It was found that obtaining a credential can easily equate to a sense that ‘everything had been learned’, which supports the concept of entity mindsets to learning as identified by Dweck (2000). In the current research, such entity mindsets are associated with the avoidance of challenges, deflecting feedback, and a lack of effort: all of which do not support the development of a positive academic identity and are not positively aligned with the teaching profession. Furthermore, such mindsets relate to concerns raised that once qualified, if they do not have a commitment to continual learning, teachers can easily lose motivation and passion (Kung, 2013).

Consistency
The findings from the current research identify that consistency within and across institutions and programmes of FBITE is a concern in the development of student academic identity. In relation to matters of internal consistency, TEs from within the same programme of FBITE varied in relation to their own academic identities. This variation in teacher educator academic identity led to varying academic expectations of students. A common example of such expectations is evident in the attention given to the application of referencing conventions within student work.

Given the variation in the academic expectations of TEs it was acknowledged that navigating academic Discourse was not as simple as learning the rules of the game: with rules varying between TEs. Strategic game playing was exemplified as students seeking out what a particular TE expected of them so that they could respond accordingly in order to achieve academic success. In this way students learned to successfully navigate the academic landscape without, necessarily, buying into the Discourse itself. Again opening up potential for students to gain a credential without actually engaging fully in the process of knowledge production, at the heart of academic Discourse, reinforcing the notion to “arrive without having travelled” (Simpson et al., 2010, p. 1).

Willingness and commitment, therefore, was more about achieving end goals rather than valuing academic Discourse per se. This “strategic orientation towards the game” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99), could be likened to fighting the war without agreeing to the cause, in that students will do what needs to be done in whatever ways necessary in order to achieve success. Success is being influenced by student ability to notice, accept, and respond strategically to the uneven playing field constituting FBITE. Such findings indicate that positive student academic identity cannot be assumed through achieving academic success alone.

Whilst variation between academic expectations was identified in relation to this internal consistency, the findings from the current research also show external consistency as an area of concern. According to the findings not all programmes of FBITE are viewed as equal in terms of academic standing. Soft or easy options were
identified as attracting those students who regarded themselves as less academically inclined. Student academic identity needed to be good enough to achieve in order to become a qualified teacher. According to the findings it is future self as an early childhood teacher that provides the drive to strategically navigate the credentialing landscape. The means by which credentials are obtained is more aligned with opportunities for praxis and experiential learning, hence the draw to FBITE, than is the desire to engage with academic ways of knowing, being and doing. Finally, the findings from the current research also indicated that graduate preparedness for work was also open to variation depending on where credentials were obtained. However, despite this suggested variation in academic expectations across providers, a credential awarded from any of the participating institutions indicates the graduate has met the necessary practice requirements for an early childhood teacher. Therefore, for students in FBITE, an emerging professional identity supported through opportunity for praxis plays a more significant role in achievement success than student academic identity.

**Closing statement**

This chapter has focused on discussion of the findings on student academic identity in relation to programmes of FBITE. Attention has been given to discuss the findings in relation to the research questions and in doing so present evidence pertaining to the research aim. Student academic identity as a contextualised experience has been identified as complex, with the interpretive research approach providing in-depth data leading to rich and detailed discussion of the issues at hand. The final implications and conclusions to be drawn from this research will be presented in the following and final chapter.
Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Knowing does not mean to be in possession of the truth; it means to penetrate the surface and to strive critically and actively in order to approach truth ever more closely.

(Fromm, 1978, p. 40).

Introduction

To echo the sentiment of Fromm, (1978), the aim of this research has been to critically and actively penetrate the surface of the nature and significance of student academic identity in relation to early childhood Field-Based Initial Teacher Education (FBITE) in Aotearoa New Zealand. This final chapter provides a summary of how the findings have addressed the research aim. A model of student academic identity is proposed to clearly encapsulate the knowledge gained from the research. Attention is also given to the challenges and limitations of the study alongside discussion of the implications of the research findings and possible directions for future research.

Meeting the research aim

The aim of this research was to critically examine the nature and significance of academic identity for students in early-childhood FBITE in Aotearoa New Zealand. This aim acknowledged the limited literature on student academic identity as applied to students in FBITE. A further aim of the study was to critically investigate the significance of academic identity given the multiple roles, contexts and Discourses in which experienced by during their FBITE. Four research questions were developed to respond to this aim:

1. How do students in early childhood field-based initial teacher education experience academic identity?
2. What are the multiple identities of students in early childhood field-based initial teacher education and how does academic identity relate to these?
3. What are the multiple contexts of learning for students in early childhood field-based initial teacher education and how does academic identity relate to these?

4. How is the development of academic identity significant to the student experience of early childhood field-based initial teacher education?

My approach to the research was informed by an understanding of identity as an intra- and inter-personal structure, in which subjective experience is informed by the contexts in which social actors are situated. Identity therefore was identified as being contextually informed. This initial conceptualisation of student academic identity is represented in the initial conceptual framework (see Figure 8.1).

*Figure 8.1. Initial conceptualisation of student academic identity*

At the beginning of this thesis I argued that student academic identity was the demonstration of willingness and commitment towards the appropriation of academic values and practices within a sense of self in the process of becoming academically literate. As seen in Figure 8.1, it is proposed that student academic
identity consists of five elements (self-theory, achievement indicators, agency-beliefs, motivation and dispositions), and that a holistic study including all of these elements is of most benefit to developing a full understanding of the phenomenon in question. It was also initially acknowledged that FBITE is particularly complex due to the multiple identities, roles, contexts and Discourses negotiated by students as social agents. In light of these assumptions, a structural-constructivist approach was taken to meet the research aims.

Given the importance of context on identity development, research participation was sought not only from students for whom academic identity was a lived experience, but also from across academic, community, and socio-political contexts in which FBITE is situated. Furthermore, the research was cross-institutional in that multiple institutions providing early childhood FBITE participated in the research. The research findings emerged from analysis of data collected through open-ended questionnaires from 205 student participants: 134 first-year students in their first semester of study, and 71 final-year students in their final semester of study. Data was also collected through focus groups with teacher educators involved in the delivering of the programme of FBITE from each of the four institutions. Additional data was collected from individual interviews from a small sample of five associate teachers, who, as qualified and registered teachers supported students from a range of institutions in the teaching practice components of their teacher education programme.

It was anticipated that this range of participation from across contexts associated within FBITE was in keeping with the ontological stance that identity could not be examined in isolation from social structures. Furthermore, my approach aligned with the epistemological position that it is through lived experiences that meaning is attributed to, and derived, from social reality (Bryman, 2004). The research design responded to the position of Reveles and Brown (2008, p. 1021) who state that: “modern identity researchers have cast identity as a dynamic entity that ought to be examined: (a) within a local context, (b) over developmental time, and (c) through the influence of social and historical frameworks”. In this study the local context was that of programmes of FBITE in Aotearoa New Zealand; developmental time was reflected
in the participation of first year and final year students; with social and historical frameworks represented through participation from, and analysis of the early childhood community and its socio-political context in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The gathering of qualitative data in the form of participant reflections through open-ended questionnaires and interviews enabled me to gather participant perceptions of experiences of student academic identity, rather than researcher identified or predetermined ones. This was important, as rather than determining what and how student academic identity was experienced, I drew on existing literature to provide a guiding framework that could then be interpreted and informed by the participants’ own reflections on experiences pertinent to FBITE. Whilst the findings are acknowledged as being specific to the participants and contexts included in the research, it is proposed that the findings will prove transferable to some degree to other contexts, given that no educational situation is completely unique (Pring, 2000). The potential for transferability was enhanced through triangulation of data and the inclusion of participants from multiple institutions and contexts (Schofield, 2000).

The study shows firstly, that the five constituent elements (self-theory, achievement indicators, agency-beliefs, motivation and dispositions), proposed at the onset of the study were evident. A high degree of connection between the five elements was found, however, not all elements were equal in terms of influence. In this instance agency-beliefs were found to hold the most significance in the development of a student academic identity. The direction of influence associated with agency-beliefs is both one that influences, and is also influenced by, other elements. Furthermore, the difference of influence between the five elements is associated with student academic identity being on a continuum of experience; ranging from positive to negative experiences.

Secondly, the study shows that student academic identity is intertwined with an emerging professional identity, with the reason for undertaking academic study being professional credentialing. The academic aspect of the credentialing experience, and as such academic identity, was identified as being a tolerated and more functional
aspect of achieving this ultimate professional goal. This temporary identity (Conde, 2011), performs a functional role as it is the means by which academic Discourse is navigated. It is also functional in that through this engagement with the academic aspect of initial teacher education, a professional identity can emerge through sustained involvement in the credentialing process. Praxis was identified as the means by which both academic and emerging professional identities could be supported. As students move through the credentialing process, the emerging professional identity becomes more pronounced.

Thirdly, the study indicates that personal epistemologies play an important part in the transformative and dynamic nature of student academic identity and are particularly important to a literacies perspective. Personal epistemologies were found to be strongly associated with praxis and also with the position of students within the knowledge making process, which also relates to contexts of learning and the format of academic tasks. Students were far more able and willing to engage with academic tasks requiring them to situate their knowledge within the experiences of their own teaching practices in the early childhood centre.

**Elements of student academic identity**
As well as contributing to understanding of field-based initial teacher education, this research adds to the understanding of academic identity as a holistic and context rich experience. It can be concluded that not all of the five constituent elements of student academic identity (self-theory, achievement indicators, agency-beliefs, motivation and dispositions) hold equal influence. Agency-beliefs were both strongly influencing aspects of student academic identity and, likewise were, influenced by the other four constituent elements. As identified in the literature agency-beliefs are associated with knowing what to do to achieve academic success and relate to self-regulation, meta-cognition, autonomy and a will to learn (Barnett, 2007; Deakin-Crick & Wilson, 2005; Lai, 2011a; Ryan, 2009). It can be concluded that knowledge of both what to do and how to do it are necessary even if students are highly motivated, confident and manifest appropriate dispositions. Having the motivation to learn is not enough in itself to succeed at academic study.
Agency-beliefs place the student at the centre of their own learning, with the focus on personal capacity and autonomy. This personal capacity calls for a sense of ownership and active engagement with the process of learning as well as course content. This line of thought highlights the role of help-seeking behaviour as an example of such personal capacity in how students direct their own learning towards achieving their personal goal. This research highlights the prevalence of student help-seeking behaviour and also the sources from which help is sought. The reported extent of help-seeking behaviour raises questions as to the strategic nature of such help-seeking and whether or not a form of “help abuse” (Ogan et al., 2015, p. 231) was taking place in terms of the bypassing wider self-regulatory processes with it being easier to ask for help than to try and be self-reliant and work things out for oneself.

Furthermore, a connection was found between identities associated with the personal community of the student and self-regulatory behaviour, as an aspect of agency-beliefs. It was time-management that was most adversely affected by the social roles associated with student personal lives. It was not so much a matter of Discourse alignment between academic and personal communities as it was the logistics and practicalities of managing competing demands, with students prioritising responsibilities associated with their personal communities over academic demands (Thomas, 2012). In the specific context of this research the evidence suggests that students with family commitments struggle with developing a positive academic identity due to the challenge to prioritisation of the demands of the academic community over their other personal communities. This knowledge aligns with adult learning theory with participation in learning regarded as linked to roles as workers and family members (Merriam et al., 2007). As such this research enhances understanding of the current demographic and complexities of being a student whereby student academic identity is situated within a wider frame of reference.

Finally, in relation to the element of achievement indicators, this research adds to the existing knowledge base on negative achievement indicators being used for positive ends. In support of existing literature (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Timperley, 2013),
there was evidence of students drawing on personal resources in order to use negative achievement indicators as a source of value and insight. This connection with personal resources again signifies the importance of agency-beliefs through the use of self-determined actions associated with thoughts, feelings and behaviours as proactive agents in the learning process.

Student academic identity was described according to positive to negative experiences. Further to this, student academic identity was found to be precarious and contradictory in that one and the same person could report both positive and negative states of academic identity. It was through the reflective process, inherent in qualitative research, that the precarious and contradictory nature of student academic identity was evidenced. This is represented well in the words of one participant who talked positively about being conscientious but then also identifying negatively as a procrastinator. Such responses relate to the understanding of Schutz that: “the meaning of a lived experience is different depending on the moment from which [italics as per original] the ego is observing it” (1967, pp. 73–74). Such conflicting responses add insight into how interpretations of experiences and the attribution of meaning can shift and as such how student academic identity does not develop in a predictable way. This unpredictability is in keeping with the notion that identity development is not about reaching a final end point akin to a project awaiting completion. Rather, student academic identity involves continual monitoring and reflection on the messages given about self and meaning making through engagement in the social world (Elliott, 2014).

The unpredictability of student academic identity was also evident in relation to changing identity over time. For some participants, time spent in the academic environment resulted in feeling more engaged, whereas for others the reverse was the case with time diminishing interest and motivation. Furthermore, different aspects of the experience can be placed at different positions on the continuum, with all contributing to an overall sense of academic identity. This was exemplified by one respondent who attributed different levels of immersion to different aspects of the overall study experience with point of commonality being the focus on overall self
gain: “Ring 1 - me; Ring 2 - philosophy/understanding; Ring 3 - teaching practice; and Ring 4 - commitment”. (KFYS3). The placing of self at the centre in ring 1 related to: “it’s all about my focus and the benefit I could get like development of my teaching practice affects my philosophy and commitment” (KFYS3).

The new understanding of student academic identity also fits with notions of identity as a trajectory of lived experience as opposed to a project awaiting completion involving continual monitoring and reflection on the messages given about self through engagement in the social world (Elliott, 2014). Furthermore, this view of academic identity aligns well with the holistic experience as learner: “It is a whole person, with a body, a heart, a brain, relationships, aspirations, all the aspects of human experience, all involved in the negotiation of meaning” (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). At any point in time any of these elements, and their constituent parts, can be positioned and repositioned at varying points on the positive-negative continuum, yet all contribute to the overall experience of the learner. As such, any consideration of student academic identity as a neat, ordered and predictable phenomenon is diminished.

**Emerging professional identity**

The ultimate goal of becoming an early childhood teacher was the driver through which academic identity was confronted. It is concluded that student academic identity is intertwined with an emerging professional identity, with the reason for partaking academic study professional credentialing, with the academic aspect of the learning experience can become a tolerated part of achieving this ultimate professional goal. To gain full participation in the professional community requires engaging, albeit temporarily, in the academic community. The academic community therefore act as gatekeepers to the teaching profession, which is interesting given the contentious relationship between academics and teaching (Henkel, 2005).

This research highlights the role of experiential learning and praxis with student academic identity by supporting continued interest and engagement in academic study. It was through praxis that student interest in academic study was initiated with
the selection of a field-based programme of study and sustained through ongoing experiential learning. Student participation in the professional community enabled students to maintain an academic identity through supporting their continued interest and engagement in academic study, and hence the academic community. Student engagement with the academic community was found to be stronger when experiences within the professional community could be drawn on. However, it can be concluded that membership of the academic community was more of a means to an end rather than a desired long-term affiliation, with ongoing professional development being associated with non-academic modes of learning. This research sheds light on the potential points of tension for programmes balancing academic and professional or work oriented needs, which is significant given the intertwined nature of student academic identity with an emerging professional identity.

In light of the current research findings associated with student academic identity and emerging professional identities, it is proposed that the initial conceptual framework of student academic identity can be refined into a model.

**A model of student academic identity**

The model (as seen in Figure 8.2), presents a succinct synopsis of the findings associated with the intertwined relationship between student academic identity and an emerging professional identity.

![Figure 8.2. A model of student academic identity](image-url)
Within this model, student academic identity the five elements in order of importance in relation to the research finding are shown in the side blue box of Figure 8.2. The main blue triangular section represents student academic identity. Student academic identity is shown as higher on entry into academic study and beginning to tail off as study progresses: shown by the grey arrow, representing the movement of students during the credentialing process through to professional roles as qualified early childhood teachers. Likewise, the purple section indicates student emerging professional identity as steadily increasing alongside time within early childhood FBITE. Meanwhile, the underlying white section illustrates the place of praxis to the identity development of students in FBITE.

The intertwined nature of academic and emerging professional identities relates to the evidence that students are starting FBITE with higher academic preparedness, and hence have already engaged with academic Discourse to some degree. Likewise, as indicated in the findings from TEs, fewer students are entering FBITE with experience in the early childhood sector, as had been the case in previous years (Brennan et al., 2010; Kane, 2005), and hence professional identity is less of an established personal aspect and more of an emerging one. However, as study in FBITE progresses, students accumulate experience in the early childhood context and, according to the findings of this study, the significance of their emerging professional identity increases.

Academic identity, therefore, performs a strategic and functional, albeit temporary, role in enabling successful navigation of academic Discourse, which is imbued within the credentialing process. For students in FBITE, it is characteristic for this academic identity to be stronger and play a more significant role at the beginning of the credentialing process, as acclimatisation to the academic context takes place. It is also functional in that, through this engagement with the academic aspect of initial teacher education, a professional identity can emerge through retaining student interest in the credentialing process. As students move through the credentialing process the emerging professional identity becomes more pronounced.
Praxis sits alongside the student experience as an on-going aspect of FBITE from the outset. Indeed it is through praxis that the academic aspects of FBITE are attributed meaning and value. Praxis was identified as significant to student academic identity due to alignment with preferred learning styles, deepening understanding, transparency of learning within action and the opportunity that praxis provided for safe exploration and feedback during the credentialing process. Furthermore, it was praxis that supported transformation in learning. As such, praxis is the vehicle by which academic success, through obtaining credentials, is made possible. Furthermore, praxis performs a connecting role bringing together the academic and professional worlds of not only the student teacher, but also others involved in the credentialing process such as teacher educators and associated teachers.

Personal epistemologies
The findings from the current research, however, highlight that personal epistemologies play an important part in the transformative and dynamic nature of student academic identity and are particularly important to a literacies perspective. Personal epistemologies are strongly associated with praxis and also with the position of students within the knowledge making process. This was evident in that students were far more able and willing to engage with academic tasks requiring them to situate their knowledge within the experiences of their own teaching practices in the early childhood centre.

It would be too simplistic to assume though that all experiential learning leads to developing and deepening epistemological shifts. It not enough to merely provide opportunity for teaching practice to ensure that epistemic change occurs. Rather, it is the opportunity for deep cognitive engagement with the practice of teaching that provides the necessary impetus for epistemic change. This is in keeping with Vygotsky’s ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1978), in that a sufficient degree of cognitive discomfort needs to be present for existing theories to be reconstructed using viable alternatives (Hofer, 2001). Indeed, if the student is not required to critique and evaluate ways of knowing in their own and others’ practice
then experiential learning may not be a guarantee of transformation in learning and associated shifts in personal epistemology.

The role of the AT and TEs in the process of initial teacher education is to provide and facilitate the opportunity for this challenge and critique to occur (Brownlee et al., 2005), which, according to the findings, can be somewhat hit or miss. Indeed whilst asking questions during teaching practice was encouraged by the TEs it was understood that not all teaching practice contexts encouraged or responded well to students doing this. The evidence therefore echoes the concern of Brownlee, Thorpe and Sharpe regarding the belief systems of those involved in teacher education: “If teacher educators hold naïve beliefs then it is highly unlikely that they will be able to successfully implement teaching programs that help their students to develop more sophisticated beliefs” (2005, p. 6). If this deep cognitive engagement within the learning process, in any context, does not take place then the relationship that a student has with knowledge can remain in a state of stasis, rather than one of growth and development. For example, the ATs talked about how challenging it was within everyday teacher’s work to engage critically in a cognitively stimulating way with their practice. As such, mentoring a student could actually help legitimate having in-depth discussions around issues of teaching which otherwise were not guaranteed to take place within the everyday practice of teaching.

Implications for practice

This research has responded to the gap in understanding of student academic identity in relation to early childhood FBITE. The research has shown that, by taking a holistic and contextually informed approach to the study, student academic identity can be associated with a whole person experience, in support of Wenger, (2010, p. 180), “It is a whole person, with a body, a heart, a brain, relationships, aspirations, all the aspects of human experience, all involved in the negotiation of meaning”. Further value of the research lies within the implications for practice, of which three points have been identified:
1. Provider consistency and the need for a systematic review of early childhood FBITE providers;
2. Praxis and the function of student academic identity and the impact on programme design;
3. Enhancing transition practices through raising student meta-awareness of academic identity.

**Implications for provider consistency**

Firstly, concerns regarding the consistency of programme provision potentially undermine claims as to the value of early childhood FBITE (Brennan et al., 2010; Coombes & Downie, 2014; Murphy & Butcher, 2009). This study exposes the variation in expectation both within and across tertiary providers of FBITE. Internal inconsistency within providers was noted between the academic expectations of teacher educators. External, or across programme provider variation, was identified in relation to consistency of academic expectations: some providers being regarded as an easier study option. This consistency was associated with student strategic learning and a fear that students could gain a credential without deep engagement in the learning process (Simpson et al., 2010), which further adds to the wider discourse as to the value and purpose of teacher education per se (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford, Berliner, & Cochran-Smith, 2005).

Concern regarding programme consistency adds fuel to the already turbulent discourse on quality and early childhood teacher credentials in Aotearoa New Zealand (May, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2002, 2009, 2014). Despite there being consistency in academic entry requirements (Kane, 2005), concerns regarding consistency of academic expectations highlight the value of reviewing all providers of FBITE to support not only the standardisation of expectations, but also graduate preparedness for work (Ord, 2010). Such a review would align with, and extend, the call made by Kane (2005), for a review of initial teacher education, so that as well as attention being given to the content of initial teacher education programmes, attention could also be given to the consistency across providers of early childhood initial teacher education programmes.
Secondly, the research findings highlight concerns that early childhood FBITE is being put under increasing tension with the academisation of early childhood credentials. An implication of this research is the concern regarding the on-going place of praxis within FBITE with the increase in academic demands.

These research findings identified a tension between academic demands and practice requirements, which are significant given the relationship between praxis, student academic identity and an emerging professional identity. In particular, praxis was found to be significant to student academic identity due to alignment with preferred learning styles, deepener understanding, transparency of learning within action, and the opportunity that praxis provided for safe exploration and feedback during the credentialing process. Furthermore, it was praxis that supported transformation in learning.

The research findings draw attention to the decision-making process regarding minimum work-experience hours, which is the signifying feature making FBITE different from pre-service programmes. The ‘who’ and the ‘what’ of the decision-making process is central to on-going early childhood FBITE programme development. The findings highlight the need for determinants of the minimum requirements for practice to be made in light of the fact that more opportunities for practice alone does not automatically equate to better teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Furthermore, decisions regarding minimum work-experience hours are determined by central agencies such as the Education Council, replacing the New Zealand Teachers Council in 2014 (Parata, 2013). This study emphasises that, unless such central agencies are adequately informed as to the whole scale of the role and place of praxis within the student experience of early childhood FBITE, there is capacity for misalignment in the determination of the needs surrounding praxis within programme design. The role and place of praxis could be reduced to discourse regarding time spent in practice, rather than the finer qualities of praxis requiring the making of, “wise
and prudent practical judgments about how to act” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 190) as an early childhood teacher.

**Implications for academic preparedness and transition**

The third, and final implication relates to the acknowledgment that students enter tertiary education with varying levels of preparedness for engaging with academic Discourse (Kift, 2009). As an aspect of this preparedness, degrees of meta-awareness vary, which can pose a significant challenge to academic study (Graham & Phelps, 2003). This meta-awareness has been closely associated with knowledge of cognitive processes as a part of self-regulation within agency-beliefs (Biggs, 2000; Lai, 2011a).

In light of the findings from this study, it is proposed that student connection with their own personal capacity for learning can be supported through enhancing student self-awareness of their preparedness for tertiary study, which is an important aspect of becoming academically literate (Biggs, 2000), and supportive of student transition to tertiary study. It is proposed that the following five prompts be used to support programme selection and also during the transition period into tertiary study, as a means by which students can explore preparedness for academic study through developing meta-awareness associated with each of the five elements of student academic identity. These prompts include:

- How do I learn best?
- How will I approach my learning?
- How will I manage my learning?
- How will I know how I am doing?
- How will I keep going?

**How do I learn best?**

This first prompt relates to preferred ways of learning, and in this instance whether experiential learning and praxis are important to a student’s choice of programme provider. Knowledge of learning preferences is an aspect of self-theory, and as such, this prompt relates to self-theory as an element of student academic identity. The implication for practice relates to the significance of praxis in supporting student
academic identity through providing relevance to academic tasks, and attributing value to students as knowledge makers. Self-theories are associated with both internal and external perceptions about self as a learner and are informed through the contexts and relationships of the social world.

**How will I approach my learning?**

This second prompt is about acknowledging personal attitudes and values, or dispositions, associated with learning. In relation to the academic context, general academic dispositions include attitudes towards working hard, paying attention, participation, commitment to academic study, ways of recovering from set-backs, how challenges are approached and points of focus such as seeing personal failings as challenges to overcome (Bandura, 1995). It was found that academic study requires drive, resilience, persistence and dedication. Given that in this study it was found that different dispositions aligned with different elements of student academic identity, this prompt has practical value in informing students as to how their attitudes and values to learning can impact on the learning process. Furthermore, dispositions are associated with personal perspectives on knowledge construction, and as such personal epistemologies.

Developing personal awareness of one’s own orientations to knowledge and the world enhances the ability to become more receptive to experiences, preparedness to explore and readiness to listen. Furthermore, becoming aware of one’s attitude towards knowledge construction facilitates opportunity for the development of more adaptive epistemologies; a known struggle for tertiary students (Greene, 2007). In addition, such epistemological probing can facilitate programme development to enhance multiple epistemologies, and as such align with knowledge of adult learning as learning in, “many different ways for many different reasons” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008a, p. 8), and that knowledge of personal epistemologies impact on student teachers’ own teaching strategies (Yadav, Herron, & Samarapungavan, 2012). As such, raising student awareness of their own personal epistemologies can be used to enhance teaching and learning experiences, including those aligned with practice, as part of programme design and development (Spray, Scevak, & Cantwell, 44-57).
**How will I manage my learning?**

The focus on managing learning, in this third prompt, attends to the personal capacity and strategies associated with what to do to achieve academic success. This prompt is important in terms of agency-beliefs, as an element of student academic identity, and in particular can be used to promote thinking around time-management and the practicalities of balancing the demands of academic study with other personal roles and responsibilities. Knowing how learning will be managed also reflects the research finding from the current study that motivation to learn is not enough in itself, there also needs to be the capacity to know how to navigate the learning environment. As such, this prompt particularly emerges from concern regarding time-management and the competing demands placed on students, but also relates to wider agency-beliefs such as autonomy through knowing how and when to seek help in achieving goals. The prominence of help-seeking behaviours was aligned with the identification of those whom students approached for help, and such knowledge may be informative to the wider support structures built into programme design so that the most effective help-seeking behaviours can be encouraged. This in turn reflects the aforementioned need for adaptive and responsive mechanisms for facilitating student academic literacies that avoid the one fits all approach (Leach et al., 2010).

**How will I know how I am doing?**

This prompt relates to achievement indicators as an element of student academic identity, with the aim to help students become more familiar with messages about their academic performance. This prompt provides scope to explore the value of different forms of feedback and the likely impact of whether feedback is negative and positive feedback. This prompt relates to the current research findings that both positive and negative achievement indicators have the capacity to positively impact on willingness and commitment to academic study.

**How will I keep going?**

This prompt relates to motivation as an element of student academic identity. Sustaining motivation involves knowing what to do to keep going, particularly during
times of challenge and setback. Academic study is full of highs and lows with high degrees of motivation being required to reach academic goals (Singh, 2011). The practice of raising awareness of personal motivation enables students to acknowledge what and how they need to sustain their interest during the learning process (Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Pihl, & Shore, 2010), thus connecting students to their own personal investment and resources. This fourth prompt supports the raising of awareness regarding reasons behind actions, connecting students with their own personal resources to achieve goals, and to engage more deeply and critically with learning. In practice, this means providing opportunities within the programme and curriculum to reflect on and (re)connect with reasons for study, and analyse progress to date alongside short and longer term goals.

Overall these prompts reinforce the tenet of adult learning theory, which positions the adult learner as an active agent within the learning process (Merriam et al., 2007). Furthermore, in relation to academic identity, this concept of the adult learner as actor and not receiver of knowledge aligns with the intentionality of identity as involving knowing: “What to do, what to value, and how to behave” (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 73). The prompts not only have direct implications for practice at the student level, but can also be used to inform knowledge of how to best meet the academic literacies demands within a programme through knowing the demands, knowing the learners and knowing how to respond to the gaps between these (New Zealand & Tertiary Education Commission, 2008). In addition, the practice of developing learner profiles allows for the variation between student cohorts to be acknowledged, which may reflect wider changes in student demographics, and also generate adaptive responses to student needs associated with academic literacies. Such adaptive responses support the research findings that one approach to academic literacies did not meet all student needs, and hence, a more responsive and adaptable approach is required (Leach et al., 2010).
Recommendations for future research

This study highlights the potential for research in student academic identity. It supports the potential for cross-institutional research into early childhood FBITE in Aotearoa New Zealand. Further refinement of the model of student academic identity for students in early childhood FBITE may be advantageous for its potential to enhance the field of early childhood teacher credentialing.

As well as contributing knowledge to the fields of student academic identity and early childhood FBITE, this study identifies five areas for further research/review, including:

1. A review of the provision of early childhood FBITE in Aotearoa New Zealand given the current student demographic, concerns regarding provider consistency, and questions as to decisions regarding minimum hours required for regular weekly field-based learning.

2. Investigation into the help-seeking behaviours of students in early childhood FBITE so as to deepen understanding associated with current help-seeking behaviours and questions associated with this.

3. Research into the application of the five prompts developed in this study to increase student meta-awareness in relation to the development of an academic identity.

4. Deeper exploration into the temporary nature of student academic identity, with the transition into professional practice and post-credential professional education.

5. Research into how early childhood teachers critically engage with teaching practice and the impact of this on early childhood initial teacher education.

Review of early childhood FBITE in Aotearoa New Zealand

In response to the current research findings, a systematic review of the provision of early childhood FBITE in Aotearoa New Zealand is recommended. This recommendation comes from the evidence associated with a changing student
demographic, concerns regarding consistency and decisions regarding minimum hours required for regular weekly field-based learning.

The current research findings indicate a change in the student demographic. Early childhood FBITE was identified as a means to upskill early childhood teachers to align credentials with the compulsory sector, for the purposes of pay parity (Coombes & Downie, 2014; Kane, 2005; May, 2002). In addition, changes in credentials from diploma to bachelor degree level study aligned with discourse of quality in early childhood education, and was actioned by the introduction of the strategic plan Pathways to the future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki (Ministry of Education, 2002). However, since both of these events, fewer students entering early childhood FBITE have experience in the field and the regulations surrounding qualified teacher requirements have been reduced: bringing into question the value of early childhood teacher credentials in a dichotomous system that actively legitimates the non-credentialing of members of the early childhood ‘workforce’.

A systematic review of initial teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand was called for by Kane (2005, p. 236) in terms of the, “the benefits and challenges of different modes of delivery and to provide evidence of processes that ensure quality of student teacher experience”. Kane also identified the need to engage providers in

Critical examination of the conceptual coherence and curricular integration of each of their ITE qualifications to ensure that all qualifications are built upon a strong, shared vision of good teaching practice that is itself supported by sound theoretical informants and relevant research on curriculum development within teacher education, the design of teacher education programmes, quality teaching, how people learn and, equally important, how people learn to teach. (2005, p. 236)

And specifically, the “contributions and issues surrounding field-based teacher education programmes” (Kane, 2005, p. 237), including the “nature of and distinction between early childhood diploma and degree qualifications” (Kane, 2005, p. 237). This call for a review of providers of initial teacher education is also supported by the Early Childhood Task Force, who recommend a review to: “ensure the consistency of
programme delivery of qualifications” (2011, p. 150). However, this review is aligned more with a focus on content than consistency of delivery.

The findings from this study endorse a review given the reported significant inconsistency within early childhood FBITE, which potentially challenges the rigour and validity of this form of initial teacher education. This inconsistency was found to be experienced at both the student and teacher educator level, and is problematic for the sector and for providers. This research, therefore supports the need for future research into early childhood FBITE within Aotearoa New Zealand so that the reported claims concerning the value, benefit and place of field-based programmes (Brennan et al., 2010; Coombes & Downie, 2014), can be further supported by critical research-informed evidence.

Investigation into student help-seeking behaviours

The current study highlights the prevalence of student help-seeking behaviour and also the sources from which help is sought. The reported extent of help-seeking behaviour raises questions as to the strategic nature of such help-seeking and whether or not a form of “help abuse” (Ogan et al., 2015, p. 231) is prevalent for students in early childhood FBITE. Whilst help-seeking behaviour is positively associated with self-regulation and the personal capacity to actively engage and direct one’s participation and involvement. The findings raise concerns as to the tendency for students to seek help from peers, rather than academic staff (Williams & Takaku, 2011). By not seeking help from authority figures, such as TEs and ATs, adaptive/strategic help-seeking is not fully utilized and instead an aspect of avoidant behaviour becomes evident. Furthermore, avoidance of seeking help from authority figures may relate to mindsets and the fear that such an external show of facing an academic challenge may be perceived as personal failure, which would align with an entity or fixed view of intelligence (Dweck, 2000). Finally, the high prevalence of help-seeking behaviour was also associated with strong negative emotional states such as feelings of panic and stress, which is known to potentially impact negatively on academic success (Singh, 2011).
Peer assisted study support, or peer assisted learning (Longfellow, May, Burke, & Marks-Maran, 2008), is a system which is used internationally in which more knowledgeable peers act as study support for their own peers. Usually this consists of students from later year groups, acting as experts, supporting newer students as novices in the learning process. It has been found that such peer relationships facilitate the exchange, exploration and assimilation of new ideas (Falchikov, 2001), as expert peers scaffold the learning of more novice peers. None of the participating institutions reported using such a system. However, with the high incidence of teacher educator avoidant help-seeking behaviour, future research could examine the value of such a system across providers of early childhood FBITE and the impact on student academic identity; and in doing so, inform on-going programme design and development.

**Application of the five meta-awareness prompts**

This proposal opens up the field for further research into meta-awareness in relation to student academic identity. This area relates specifically to the proposed prompts that are associated with implications of the research for practice. At this stage, the value of these prompts is propositional, and hence evidence to support, refute or refine their value for supporting transition of students to tertiary study and engagement with academic Discourse. The outcome of future research holds the potential to inform curriculum and programme development through attending to learner profiles, which are just as much about teachers knowing their learners as they are about learners coming to know themselves in the learning context. There may also be scope to widen the focus of future research to extend into other discipline areas.

**Temporary nature of student academic identity**

The focus of this research was to explore the nature and significance of academic identity for students in early childhood FBITE. In achieving this aim, the research has been pivotal to the understanding of academic identity as a holistic and contextualised experience. The model, which has emerged out of the research, emphasises the intertwined relationships between student academic identity and an emerging professional identity. Within this intertwined relationship, student academic identity
acts in a functional and strategic way to support engagement in the credentialing process, with praxis being the vehicle by which academic and professional practice and identities come together. With this being the first such study of this nature and focus, it would be beneficial for further research to be conducted to explore the model in more depth and detail.

**Critically engaged early childhood teachers**

Finally, it is recommended that future research be undertaken into how early childhood teachers critically engage with their own and others’ teaching practice and the impact of this on initial teacher education. Future research of benefit includes investigation into the challenges facing early childhood teacher critical engagement with their teaching practice, how ATs facilitate student ability to critique and evaluate their own and others’ practice as well as the impact of mentoring student teachers on AT cognitive engagement with their own teaching practice. The role of the At and TE, it is argued (Brownlee et al., 2005) is to provide student teachers with the opportunity to challenge and critique ways of knowing in their own and others’ practice. Such critical engagement is said to facilitate a shift in personal beliefs associated with knowledge and knowing. However, such opportunity for epistemic change is limited if the belief systems of those involved in teacher education are naïve, as it is unlikely that student teachers will be encouraged or facilitated into developing their own more sophisticated beliefs about teaching practice (Brownlee et al., 2005).

**Final words**

Ellsworth (2005, p. 18) talks about learning being, “a smudge between a self that knows to a self that knows more”. The nature of a smudge being that it is messy, blurry and smeared. As a learning process, research is akin to a smudge. Through the current research, more is now known about student academic identity, however just as some answers have been gained, yet more questions arise. The smudge may tail off and dim in places, but likewise can extend well past the point of origin.
My desire to undertake this research has been twofold. I have wanted to understand student academic identity in order to be responsive within my own teaching and curriculum development. I have also wanted to expand and deepen understandings of complexities for students in field-based programmes of study, which holds a prominent place in the credentialling of early childhood teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand (Brennan et al., 2010, 2011; Murphy & Butcher, 2009).

In this thesis it has been concluded that, for students in FBITE programmes, academic identity is intertwined with emerging professional identities, which hold precedence. Furthermore, it was found that agency-beliefs hold an important role in the development of student academic identity. Finally, it was identified that the development of a student academic identity is complex, temporary and unpredictable; being influenced by learning contexts and the conflicting roles and commitments held in addition to being a student.

In reaching these conclusions I have heeded the thoughts of Reveles and Brown (2008, p. 1021) who state that: “modern identity researchers have cast identity as a dynamic entity that ought to be examined: (a) within a local context, (b) over developmental time, and (c) through the influence of social and historical frameworks”. The local context being that of programmes of FBITE in Aotearoa New Zealand; developmental time reflected in the participation of first year and final year students; with social and historical frameworks represented through participation from and analysis of the early childhood community and its socio-political context in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is possible that these findings are transferable and will hold value to other fields or experience-based programmes of study given that no educational situation is completely unique (Pring, 2000).

Through the endeavor to “penetrate the surface and to strive critically and actively in order to approach truth ever more closely” (Fromm, 1978, p. 40), this research has demonstrated the value of investigating student academic identity as a holistic and contextualised experience through evidencing the connections, role and significance of the elements comprising student academic identity. Whilst all of the five elements
were identified as playing a contributory role, agency-beliefs were identified as most prominent in the development of an academic identity. Furthermore, each of the elements could be considered as distinct yet interrelated; adding a degree of unpredictability to the phenomenon. In addition praxis was, for students in FBITE their academic identity, bound to the development of an emerging professional identity, which was supported through opportunity for praxis. Without praxis and a sense of future self in a professional capacity there was less willingness and commitment to engage with academic ways of knowing, being and doing.
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### Appendices

#### Appendix 1: Construct Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder interview prompts</th>
<th>Research questions (RQ)</th>
<th>Construct /context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do academic practices relate to the professional practices of early childhood teachers?</td>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What tensions may exist between academic practices and professional practices of early childhood teachers?</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How is the academic identity of field-based students portrayed in the early childhood education context?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Disposition/ Agency/ Self-theory/ Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are the features of the professional identity of early childhood teachers?</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>Disposition/ Agency/ Self-theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How do the features of professional identity of early childhood teachers relate to those of academic identity?</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>Disposition/ Agency/ Self-theory/ Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focus group prompt**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ</th>
<th>Construct /context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Context/ Disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Disposition/ Agency/ Self-theory/ Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Disposition/ Agency/ Self-theory/ Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. What is the perceived worth of academic practices within the professional practices of early childhood teaching?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First year student questionnaire</th>
<th>RQ</th>
<th>Construct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe your experience within early childhood education prior to commencing this programme of study.</td>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Describe the centre you are in at the moment for the work experience component of the programme.</td>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How would you describe your role in the work experience centre?</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>Self-theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Describe how you see your-self as a learner.</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Self-theory / Disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What do find most rewarding in relation to your programme of study?</td>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td>Achievement / Disposition / Agency/motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Describe any challenges you have faced so far within your study.</td>
<td>RQ1 RQ2</td>
<td>Agency/ Self-theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Describe a meaningful experience that you have had whilst on the programme of study.</td>
<td>RQ1 RQ4</td>
<td>Context / Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What level of importance does attendance have for your successful study?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Agency/ Achievement/ Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How would you describe your organizational skills in relation to your study, including time keeping?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Disposition / Self-theory/ Agency/ Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Describe how you respond to information that you find hard to understand</td>
<td>RQ1 RQ2</td>
<td>Disposition / Agency/ Self-theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Describe your response when you have faced a set-back in terms of your academic work.</td>
<td>RQ1 RQ2</td>
<td>Self-theory/ Disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Describe the amount of effort you put into your study</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Disposition/ Agency/ Self-theory/ Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The diagram below represents your engagement with academic aspects of study. The innermost point represents a feeling of being fully immersed in academic aspects of study. The outer rim represents a more distant feeling towards academic aspects of study.</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>Agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mark on the diagram where you see yourself in relation to your engagement with academic aspects of study.

(Ring 1 in the centre leading to ring 4 at the outer rim)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>RQ</th>
<th>Theory/Goal Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. When you face a challenge in relation to your study how do you respond?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Disposition/ Self-theory / Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How much importance does the academic part of programme hold for you?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Disposition/ Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. What enables you to keep going with your academic study?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Disposition/ Agency/ Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Describe your feelings towards participating in related discussions or conversations (online or face-to-face), as part of your study.</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Agency/ Self-theory/ Disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Describe your feelings towards written academic tasks.</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Agency/ Self-theory/ Disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Describe your feelings towards academic reading tasks.</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Agency/ Self-theory/ Disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. What do you do when you come across academically challenging language or concepts?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Agency/ Self-theory/ Disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>Construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. What personal qualities do you think help students succeed at this level of academic study (Bachelor Degree level)?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Disposition / Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. In what ways are the <em>work experience</em> and <em>practicum</em> parts of programme important for you?</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>Disposition/ Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. In what ways do you think you will change as a result of studying for this qualification?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Self-theory/ Disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final year student questionnaire</strong></td>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>Construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How would you describe yourself as a student?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Self-theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What aspects of academic study have you found most rewarding?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Achievement / Disposition/ Self-theory / Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What challenges have you faced during your studies?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Self-theory/ Disposition / Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Describe a meaningful experience that you have had during your study.</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td>Self- theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The diagram below represents your engagement with academic aspects of study. The innermost point represents a feeling of being fully immersed in academic aspects of study. The outer rim represents a more distant feeling towards academic aspects of study. Mark on the diagram where you see yourself in relation to your engagement with academic aspects of study.</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Self – theory/ Disposition / Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Describe how you have responded to academic challenges.</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Describe the most rewarding academic practices you have undertaken.</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Which academic practices have prepared you most for your professional role as an early childhood teacher?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>What personal qualities do you think help students succeed at this level of academic study (Bachelor Degree level)?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>How do you feel about being so close to the completion of the programme of study?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>How likely are you to undertake more academic study?</td>
<td>RQ4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>How do academic practices fit with the professional practices of an early childhood teacher?</td>
<td>RQ4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>In what ways do you think you have changed as a result of studying for this qualification?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>How do academic practices relate to continual professional development as a teacher?</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Student Participant Information Sheet

Tena Koe

I am a student on the PhD (Education) programme with Unitec Institute of Technology and I would like to invite you to participate in my PhD research project investigating how academic identity is experienced and the significance it holds for students in field-based initial teacher education.

I would value your participation in my research in the following ways:

**Anonymous self-completion questionnaire:**

- The questionnaire is anonymous and consists of a number of open-ended questions about your experiences as a student in both the academic study and work experience parts of the programme.
- The questionnaire will be handed out at the end of class and will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.
- Return of a completed questionnaire will show your agreement to participate in the research.

If you agree to participate in the research any confidential information will only be disclosed on the understanding that I will as the researcher ensure that all data is collected, used and stored confidentially. Participation in the research is voluntary and would not affect any existing or potential relationship between the institution, the Unitec Institute of Technology or myself. A summary of the research findings will be made available to the institution.

If you have any questions regarding participation in the research please feel free to contact me by phone or email, details listed above.

I hope this information will assist you in making your decision.

Yours sincerely

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2011:1160

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 27/4/11 to 26/4/14. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 3: Focus Group Information Sheet For Teacher Educators

To: Lecturers of the Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education)

I am a student on the PhD (Education) programme with Unitec Institute of Technology. I have obtained agreement from the CEO of your organisation to approach you to participate in my PhD research project investigating how academic identity is experienced and the significance it holds for students in field-based initial teacher education. I hope this information will assist your decision.

Academic identity refers to the willingness to take on board and participate in academic discourses and includes: self-theories, dispositions, agency and achievement prediction. Research into other discipline areas and within single educational settings suggests that a positive academic identity is supportive of student engagement and success. However academic identity is as yet an unexplored phenomenon in relation to field-based early childhood teacher education where the multiple learning contexts have the potential to facilitate the development of a positive academic identity. I am particularly interested in exploring the academic identity of such students given the current socio-political climate in New Zealand where the academic level of teacher credentials is prominent within early childhood education discourses.

The focus group will take approximately 1-1.5 hours. The focus group will be transcribed and a summary sent back to you as participant for your approval. Confidential information will only be disclosed to the researcher for this project (The nature and significance of academic identity for students in field-based early childhood initial teacher education) on the understanding that the researcher will ensure that all data is collected, used and stored confidentially. Participants will be able to withdraw their information before the data is converted to an anonymous format. Agreement would also be sought for content to be incorporated in the reporting of the research findings in an anonymous format. Neither you nor your institution will be identified in the thesis or associated reports in the dissemination of the research. A summary of the findings will be sent to the institution. Participation in the research would be voluntary and would not affect any existing or potential relationship between the researcher and the institution or Unitec Institute of Technology.

The arrangements for the focus group will be forwarded to you when details have been finalised. If you have any questions regarding participation in the research please feel free to contact me by phone or email, on the details above.

Yours sincerely

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2011:1160)

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (27/4/11) to (26/4/14). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 4: Transcriber Confidentiality Protocol

I ___________________________________________________ (Full Name - printed) agree to keep confidential all information concerning the above named research project. The confidential information will only be disclosed to the researchers for this project.

On completion of the transcripts I will not retain or copy any information involving the project.

Signature: ................................................................. Date: ..................................................

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2011: 1160

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 27/4/11 to 26/4/14. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 5: Individual Interview Information Sheet For Associate Teachers

Kia ora

I am a PhD (Education) Candidate at Unitec Institute of Technology. My research is investigating the academic identity of students with field-based early childhood initial teacher education.

Academic identity refers to the willingness to take on board and participate in academic discourses, and includes: self-theories, dispositions, agency and achievement prediction. Research into other discipline areas and within single educational settings suggests that a positive academic identity is supportive of student engagement and success. However academic identity is as yet an unexplored phenomenon in relation to field-based early childhood teacher education where the multiple learning contexts have the potential to facilitate the development of a positive academic identity. I am particularly interested in exploring the academic identity of such students given the current socio-political climate in New Zealand where the academic level of teacher credentials is prominent within early childhood education discourses.

If you agree, participation in the research would take the form of an interview. The interview would take approximately 45 minutes, and take place either in person or via telephone, as you prefer. The interview would be transcribed, and a summary sent back to you as participant for your approval. All information provided will be treated in a confidential and anonymous manner, and will be stored in a secure location.

If you agree to participate you will be able to withdraw your information before the data is converted to an anonymous format. Agreement would also be sought for content to be incorporated in an anonymous format, in the reporting of the research finding. A summary of the research findings will be made available on request.

Participation in the research is voluntary and in no way will impact on any existing, or potential relationship with the researcher and the institution or Unitec Institute of Technology.

If you have any questions regarding participation in the research please feel free to contact me by phone or email, on the details above.

Yours sincerely

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2011:1160)

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from (27/4/11) to (26/4/14). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 6: Institutional access

Dear

I am a student on the PhD (Education) programme with Unitec Institute of Technology. I am writing to you in relation to seeking your permission to seek participants for a research project entitled: The nature and significance of academic identity for students in field-based early childhood initial teacher education.

The research project will explore how academic identity is experienced and the significance it holds for students in field-based initial teacher education. Academic identity refers to the willingness to take on board and participate in academic discourses and includes: self-theories, dispositions, agency and achievement prediction. Research into other discipline areas and within single educational settings suggests that a positive academic identity is supportive of student engagement and success. However academic identity is as yet an unexplored phenomenon in relation to field-based early childhood teacher education where the multiple learning contexts have the potential to facilitate the development of a positive academic identity. I am particularly interested in exploring the academic identity of such students given the current socio-political climate in New Zealand where the academic level of teacher credentials is prominent within early childhood education discourses.

This study is distinctive in the utilisation of a multiple case study approach in the hope of providing rich and detailed data on the academic identity of students in field-based early childhood initial teacher education within a number of tertiary institutions within New Zealand.

Participation in this study would be invited from:

- Students from a first year cohort and a final year cohort on the field-based Early Childhood Initial Teacher Education programme. Participation would be via a questionnaire with an option to also participate in a digital journal with an approximate sample size of 48 students per year group.
- Lecturers who participate in the delivery of the level 7 Undergraduate degree in field-based Early Childhood Initial Teacher Education. Participation would be via a focus group with a sample size of 8 participants.

Participation in the research would be voluntary and would not affect any existing or potential relationship between the researcher and the institution or Unitec Institute of Technology. If permission is granted for the involvement of your institution in the research I would value the recommendation of a contact person with whom I could engage in further communication regarding the practicalities of data collection.

A proforma is attached to record your participation agreement and the name of my contact person for use in finalising an ethical approval for the research. Please return this proforma in the envelope provided.

I would be more than happy to report on the research findings in person and via a written research report.

Yours sincerely
Appendix 7: Informed Consent For Students

Contact details:

Tena Koe

I welcome your participation in this research through completion of the attached questionnaire. The questionnaire is anonymous and will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Return of the questionnaire will signal informed consent meaning that you have had an opportunity to read and understand information about the research via a separate information sheet and had an opportunity to ask any questions regarding the research.

Confidential information will only be disclosed to the researcher for this project (The nature and significance of academic identity for students in field-based early childhood initial teacher education), on the understanding that the researcher will ensure that all data is collected, used and stored confidentially. You understand that your name or any other identifying information will not be used in any public reports. Participation in the research is voluntary and will not affect any existing or potential relationship between myself as researcher, your institution of study or Unitec Institute of Technology. A summary of the research findings will be made available to the institution.

If you wish to also participate in a digital journal as outlined in the information sheet please complete the slip to be found at the end of the questionnaire.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding the research.

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2011: 1160

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) from 27/4/11 to 26/4/14. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Title: The nature and significance of academic identity for students in field-based early childhood initial teacher education

I have been given an information sheet for the above named research project. I have had an opportunity to read it and ask questions and have had them answered. Confidential information will only be disclosed to the researcher for this project (The nature and significance of academic identity for students in field-based early childhood initial teacher education) on the understanding that the researcher will ensure that all data is collected, used and stored confidentially.

I understand that my name will not be used in any public reports, and that I may withdraw my material and any other information I have submitted for this project without penalty of any sort prior to the data being analysed. I understand that a decision to participate in the research is voluntary and will not affect any existing or potential relationship between myself and the researcher or Unitec Institute of Technology and the institution.

Where necessary my organization has agreed to my participation in the project.

I agree to take part in this project.
Signed: ......................................................................................................................................

Name: ......................................................................................................................................

Date: ......................................................................................................................................

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2011-1160)
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from (27/4/11) to (26/4/14). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.