FACTORS FACILITATING OR CONSTRAINING THE FIELDWORK PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE FOR CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENT TEACHERS IN QUEENSLAND SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Increasing numbers of Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) students, both from the international and domestic sectors are undertaking teacher education programs at Australian universities. While many have positive practicum experiences, there are a significant number who experience difficulties. Little work has been done on viewing this situation from a sociocultural perspective where learning is seen as a form of socialisation into the different beliefs, values and practices of the new community, the placement school. This study argues that all student teachers, particularly pre-service CALD teachers, require active learning communities to become successful. Using perspectives derived from situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and community of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) this study illustrates the processes of learning and identity development and the factors that facilitate or constrain the practicum experience for CALD pre-service teachers. This study adopts a methodology that is grounded in narrative inquiry, with in-depth interview techniques used to explore CALD teachers’ experiences of their fieldwork practicum and their attempts to participate and practice successfully. The data derived from fourteen in-depth narratives of pre-service CALD teachers is analysed from a sociocultural perspective. The practicum for these students is an experience of legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice (the practicum school), and the complex nature of the social experience as they engaged in building their professional identity as a teacher is discussed. This analysis is used to propose recommendations and strategies at the faculty and school levels to support positive learning and practicum experiences for this group of student teachers.
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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: ___________________________

Date: ___________________________
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study investigates the field experience practicum for student teachers from Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds enrolled at one Queensland university. It interprets their experiences from a situated and social learning perspective to gain an understanding of how the social culture of the practicum school impacts upon their opportunities to build a healthy professional identity.

Global changes to demography have increased the number of CALD student teachers in Australia, with the result that there is broadening participation of these students, both local and international, in higher education (Cruickshank, 2004). The need for this increased participation can be explained in part by the present under-representation of CALD teachers in mainstream schooling in Australia (Han & Singh, 2007). However, CALD student teachers may experience pedagogical disengagement in their teacher training programmes due, in part, to a mismatch between their expectations and the reality of mainstream schooling in Australia (Han, 2005; Han & Singh, 2007). This situation is similar to that in America, where an increasingly pluralist society employs a predominantly white teaching workforce and where “teachers of color”, as they are called, are under-represented and experience higher attrition rates in their first years of teaching compared to teachers from white backgrounds (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton & Freitas, 2010).
1.2 Context of this study

In Australia, at present, there are a range of initiatives being undertaken for CALD teachers that are centred around building linguistic, practical and cultural skills and learning about the Australian school system (Campbell, Tangen, & Spooner-Lane, 2006.; Cruikshank, Newell & Cole, 2003.; Muir, Ashman, Short, Jales & Myhill, 2010).

This work is now being extended through a consideration of pre- and post-practicum experiences and engaging the important perspectives and roles of supervisors and other key staff members (Campbell, O’Gorman, Tangen, Spooner-Lane & Alford, 2008). The central emphasis in current research is on building the linguistic, cultural and pedagogical skills of student teachers so that these can be applied in the context of the practicum school. There is no research at present in a Queensland context that considers the practicum as a professional learning experience for CALD student teachers centred on building professional identity through participation in the social practices of the practicum school.

One study from a large education faculty reports that when CALD student teachers undertake their fieldwork placements in schools in Queensland, a significant number have difficulties of some kind with, in some courses, over fifty per cent withdrawing from their practicum and failing to complete their studies (Campbell, Tangen & Spooner-Lane, 2006). The reasons these students face such difficulties are extremely complex and at present the explanations proposed for their performance have been located primarily in the areas of competencies and skills, particularly linguistic and cultural competencies and skills. Supervisory staff at practicum schools comment about student teachers’ language difficulties, ranging from accent to body language, their cultural knowledge relating to education in Australia and the
difficulty of assessing such teachers fairly without full knowledge of their or their university’s expectations (Campbell, O’Gorman, Tangen, Spooner-Lane & Alford, 2008).

Han and Singh (2007) identified that diverse student teachers need to gain knowledge of educational concepts in the context of their meanings in Australia’s educational culture. They found also that questions arose, in the practicum context, about the difficulties of distinguishing between problems arising from language difficulties and problems arising from poor classroom management, and the different implications that these raised for assessment and support.

One university coordinator in Campbell et al.’s study (2008) suggested that university staff supporting CALD student teachers should try to understand “... more about what it’s like from the student’s perspective” (p. 8). This reflection recognises the importance of seeking a deeper understanding of the experiences of the student-teachers involved and the fact that support is often based upon pre-conceived ideas of what particular knowledge or skill is needed. Han and Singh (2007) argue that further research in teacher training is needed that “addresses the issues of multicultural diversity, accommodation and awareness of (teacher) education as now being a global rather than parochial, nation-centred exercise” (p. 307), especially in the context of Australian universities having extremely diverse classrooms in teacher education courses (Miller, 2009).

While positive initiatives are being taken to support CALD student teachers, this work is still at an early stage practically and conceptually (Cruikshank, 2004). Spooner-Lane, Tangen and Campbell’s (2009) later work calls for teacher educators in Australia to “begin conversations about what their duty of care is in bridging this gap for international students” (p. 93). This duty of care is shared by the university,
the practicum schools and the support services that play a role in supporting these student teachers. In addition, there are implications at all levels of university service provision, including the direct support of CALD student teachers before and during their fieldwork practicum experiences (Cruikshank, Newell & Cole, 2003).

1.2.1 Theoretical Framework

Situated Learning allows a consideration of learning that goes beyond the notion of acquisition of skills or knowledge and instead “involves the construction of identities” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). The construction of an identity of practice in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) terms takes place through participation in social practices through gaining legitimate access to the boundaries of a community. “Legitimate peripheral participation” (p. 36) is a defining feature of learning as a process and has to do with social structures that convey legitimacy to practice through “relations of power” (p. 36). Put simply, for student teachers, the ways that they are granted access to participate in the core practices of the practicum school will have an important impact on their development of a professional identity as a teacher.

These social practices may take a whole range of different forms and comprise both professional and cultural elements. At the most basic level, teachers may find that the status of teachers in Queensland schools is either higher or lower than the position that they have been used to, and so this will require rethinking completely the language and interactions that they may be used to or that they may have anticipated. This sociocultural approach, which views learning within communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) through the building of an identity of practice, therefore offers new perspectives to understand CALD student teachers’ experiences in their practicum schools through their interactions with supervising teachers, students and
staff. This allows an exploration of the teachers’ experiences in their placement schools, an investigation of the social relationships that may exist to either facilitate or constrain their participation in their practicum, and a consideration of the different factors that may allow them access to the central practices of the community, the placement school. The placement school is considered not as a place where pre-learned skills and knowledge are simply applied but rather as a community that contributes to the identity formation of its members (Edwards & Tsui, 2009). The success or otherwise of the building of a successful and healthy professional identity in new members depends on the levels of participation to which they have access. These themes are discussed at length in Chapter 3.

1.2.2 Methodology and Research Questions

The methodology that is employed in this study is narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that is set in human stories of experience. It “provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 1). This framework allows a consideration of events and experiences set in their unique social contexts. Further, Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that “just as a story unfolds the complexities of characters, relationships and settings, so too can complex problems be explored in this way” (p. 4). For this study the researcher draws largely on thematic analysis of narratives and structural analysis of one narrative (Riessman, 2008). Fourteen student teachers, who were culturally and linguistically diverse and who had experience of practicum were interviewed about their practicum experiences (see 4.4.1 and 4.4.2. for more detail). Their narratives formed the data that was used to explore the contribution made by the local school communities to their experience of practicum.
The research was guided by the central research question below:

“What are the facilitating and constraining factors for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse student teachers undertaking their pre-service practicum in schools in Queensland?”

This central question was broken down into sub questions derived both from the literature review on teacher training and situated learning (Chapters 2 and 3) but also from the perspective of considering CALD student teachers’ individual journeys from a narrative perspective (see 4.4.2 for detailed questions). This allowed a consideration of how student teachers are legitimised in the practicum school context, the important relationships that influenced their experience, how they managed the cultural and linguistic challenges and how work at the boundaries between the university and the practicum school influenced their experiences.

1.3 Significance of this study

This study contributes to the growing literature on the most appropriate ways to support CALD students, both local and international, in their courses of study in Australia, particularly those that involve an aspect of professional training in the community. By adopting a methodology grounded in narrative inquiry and an interpretive frame based in situated learning, the findings provide an in-depth understanding of individual teacher’s journeys in the contexts of their practicum schools. This counters notions of cultural and linguistic deficiency and allows new insights into how diversity may uniquely contribute to the education profession. At the same time it raises implications for the development of pathways into teacher education and practicum experiences for CALD teachers that go beyond extra
language and cultural input and include a consideration of the crucial role played by different communities in practicum schools.

1.3.1 Contribution to professional practice

This research has two main goals. The first is to build a more comprehensive picture of CALD pre-service student teachers in Queensland schools that takes into account both personal and social perspectives, and the second is to build upon this knowledge so as to make suggestions about how to better support them directly on their pre-service practicum experiences. This is from the perspective of the researcher’s role as a Language and Learning Advisor working to support students and staff from CALD backgrounds. Typically, in the Australian context, language and learning support staff have a teaching background in “English as a Foreign or Second Language Teaching” and Applied Linguistics. Their role is sometimes regarded as “a form of crash repair shop where welding, panel beating and polishing can be carried out on students’ texts” (Chanock, 2007b, p. 273). In other words their role is sometimes seen to be to bring students’ writing, and speaking, up to the level required by academic staff, who are focused more on the content of their courses rather than the processes required to complete them. The acquisition of appropriate language skills can sometimes be seen therefore as outside the responsibility of the faculty and is referred instead to a specialist unit.

In the context of this study, in my work with student teachers who are at risk of difficulties in their practicum, I often experience a mismatch between the reason that students are referred for assistance and the less obvious reason causing their difficulties. The referral is often that they need “language work” or “accent reduction” while even a brief examination usually shows that in most cases their language skills are extremely highly developed. Clearly the difficult situation has
arisen, then, as a result of the complex interaction between the individual and the social group, in this case the pre-service teacher, their practicum school and the university supporting staff referring them for assistance.

Thus, better knowledge of student teachers’ experiences gained from a perspective of the school placement as a social practice as well as an educational one will allow new insights into the most appropriate support for them. This will take the form both of the important information that is already being utilised in preparation courses, based on providing practical teaching skills and relevant cultural knowledge, as well as some aspects of ‘meta-awareness’ of the practicum as a socially situated endeavour. Important decisions taken by key stakeholders about the most appropriate ways to assist CALD student teachers to undertake practicum and their preparation for practicum are discussed in Chapter 7, bringing together the findings of this study and insights gained from the relevant literature.

1.3.2 Contribution to scholarship

Part of the inspiration for this study lies in the work of Deters (2006) in Canada who examined the long-term experiences of CALD teachers in the Canadian system. Deters used the community of practice concept to examine the professional acculturation of these teachers and found that their acceptance of themselves as having a newcomer’s identity in terms of language helped them to deal with language issues. An understanding that they would need time to acquire greater fluency and the social acceptance of the community to help them is a key strategy to their development of a professional identity.

This resonates with the experiences of student teachers undertaking their practicum in Australian contexts as it broadens the field of analysis to include the importance of considering the social context of their journey. One interesting feature
of research in Sydney (Cruikshank, 2004) was that teachers from migrant backgrounds were seen to make strong positive contributions to schools where there were large numbers of migrants and a diverse population. Similarly, in America, Achinstein et al. (2010) found that teachers of colour in hard-to-staff schools with high levels of cultural and social diversity had lower rates of attrition than their white colleagues, an experience related to building “cultural bridges” (p. 72) between home and school for culturally diverse students. Evidence exists that a culturally diverse teaching workforce can have positive impacts on schools where there are culturally diverse students and there are positive benefits when the teaching population reflects the demographic make-up of their students (Achinstein et al., 2010). With increasing levels of diversity in Australian schools, it has been argued that “the question of how to teach around and across difference has become probably the single most pressing issue facing teacher education and preparation programmes” (Luke & Goldstein, 2006, p. 2). This study therefore explores the factors that will facilitate or constrain the practicum experience from a situated learning perspective and contributes to an understanding of how CALD student teachers’ experiences are shaped in part by the social structure of the community of the practicum schools in which they participate.

1.4 Organisation of the thesis

The following chapters of this thesis describe the background to the study, the literature review and theoretical framework, the research methodology, the results and the discussion.

Chapter 2 first considers the influence of the process of internationalisation on universities in Australia and the responses that they have undertaken to meet the needs of an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse student body. It is
argued that the responses to the needs of these students have evolved from a perspective where they were seen as primarily needing to acquire the language skills and competencies required to function in an Australian setting to a more inclusive and intercultural model that promotes diversity at all levels. After this, the experiences of CALD student teachers in Australia are discussed with a particular focus on the challenges that they face and the resources that they draw upon to overcome these.

Chapter 3 explores the notion of communities of practice in some depth by considering, in particular, the work of Wenger (1998) in terms of meaning, community, identity and learning, which, in his terms, are the four central aspects of social practice that combine and interact in the development of identities of practice. These ideas are explored in turn, following Wenger’s (1998) outline, to allow a consideration of their relevance to a discussion of CALD pre-service practicum teachers. Examples from the practicum experiences of CALD teachers and other teachers are interwoven through this consideration of the community of practice perspective. It is argued that this theory of social learning provides an appropriate theoretical framework for this study by considering CALD student teachers as participants in the complex social practices of Queensland schools. This Chapter concludes by considering the types of questions that adopting this social learning perspective allows.

Chapter 4 presents narrative inquiry as the chosen methodology for this study and demonstrates that listening to teachers’ stories allows researchers to gain access to the complex social worlds that teachers, and particularly teachers from diverse backgrounds, inhabit in their professional lives. In this study, narrative inquiry permitted a simultaneous consideration of the student teachers’ practicum narratives
with regard to the important relationships that they formed (sociality), the personal journey that they undertook and the place that it filled in their identity development (temporality), and the role the practicum schools played in their experiences (place) (Clandinin, 2007).

In Chapter 5, two vignettes from one participant’s narrative are drawn upon to illustrate the process of data analysis that took place. Then, the themes chosen for exploration, relating to all of the participants’ experiences, were interpreted from a situated learning perspective where the practicum is considered as an experience of legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of the analysis and their implications for all stakeholders in the practicum experience under the headings of “legitimacy”, “people and agency”; and “language and culture”.

Chapter 7 concludes the study by acknowledging its limitations and exploring the implications of its findings for: research, policy, theory and the researcher’s own professional practice. Some practical suggestions are made for further research and practical applications of social learning theory in the area of CALD student teachers.
Chapter 2: **Background to the study: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Student teachers**

1.1 **Introduction**

This chapter provides the background to the study by presenting and discussing the central issues facing increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) local and international students studying at universities in Queensland. It considers the pre-service teacher’s fieldwork experiences and briefly introduces the practicum experience as a context for the development of a personal and professional identity. The theme of situated learning is mentioned here and is taken up from a theoretical perspective again in Chapter 3. The chapter begins by setting the context of growing numbers of international students and the implications that this raises for universities as they have responded to the challenges of offering courses to an increasingly diverse student population.

2.1 **International Students in Australia**

International students have been participants in the Australian tertiary education sector since the 1950s but the major rise in numbers has occurred over the past 20 years as universities have become more de-regulated (Carroll & Ryan, 2005). In Queensland, this rise has been dramatic with one in five students in the tertiary sector now coming from an international background. In Education Faculties between April 2006 and April 2007, international student numbers in tertiary courses rose by 27.1% (Queensland and Educational Training International, 2007). In 2008, with the global credit crisis and the fall in the value of the Australian dollar, further
rises in the numbers of international students occurred. This situation has continued to 2010, where numbers have levelled out.

This rise in numbers continues to lead to changes and challenges both for academics and the students enrolled. Carol and Ryan (2005) recognise that these students face significant difficulties associated with different social, cultural and language challenges as they begin to study in their new context. At the same time, these students engage with unfamiliar modes of teaching and learning which may lead to different expectations of how to participate in courses and succeed. They may also experience the burden of high expectations from families at home and be denied their normal support systems. The principles of “quality education and teaching expertise” (Hellsten & Prescott, 2004, p. 344) underline university responsibilities to take care of these students as they are at the forefront of the process of internationalisation and international education.

University teacher education programmes in Australian universities are also facing rising numbers of International and local CALD students but they have been particularly slow in responding to this increased cultural and linguistic diversity (Cruikshank, 2004; Han, 2005; Han & Singh, 2007; Spooner-Lane et al., 2009). A lack of research on teacher education for a culturally diverse student population has been identified as a gap in the field. Research in this area will be explored further in this chapter but, first, the process of internationalisation in the Australian university context is considered as this provides the background and context to the experiences of local and international student teachers both at university and on fieldwork experiences.

Internationalisation is a process that affects the university at all levels (Harman, 2005). Leask (2004), writing from a south Australian perspective, summarises its
impact by stating that: “internationalisation is concerned with processes and activities which develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes of staff and students to relate, interact and function inter-culturally” (p. 18). Montgomery (2009) illustrates how internationalisation of higher education is represented in the literature and specifically explores how internationalisation is enacted in policy and in practice. She argues that internationalisation contains both diverse rationales and approaches within and across cultures, which are reflected in a range of ways of speaking about the process.

Internationalisation has implications at every level of the university system. These implications extend to the “research, teaching and service functions of the institution” (Leask, 2004, p. 11) and the resources that are developed to support students in accessing and participating in these functions, such as introductory services, language and learning support and pastoral care. This integration of services contrasts with what Webb (2005) identifies as the “first phase” (p. 113) of international students entering universities where any problems they faced were seen at an “individual or particular group level” (p. 113) and solutions were developed in response to these. The second phase of internationalisation at Australian universities is characterised by a greater integration of diversity, not only in response to the larger numbers of international students attending Australian universities but also to the broader demographic features of the university student body as a whole.

At the same time, due to global developments, patterns of living are becoming increasingly similar in all countries around the world (Teekens, 2003). Therefore, a revised education agenda is required that also responds to “both opportunities and threats of globalisation and its implications for national teaching and learning” (p. 29). Teekens (2003) believes that the interaction between students from different
cultural backgrounds that could result in intercultural learning has not yet happened because Australian universities are in a stage of development as they attempt to meet the needs of a growing culturally-diverse student population. This development stage means promoting international perspectives through curriculum work that focuses on content, to include international perspectives and, approaches to teaching and learning that recognise the value of cross-cultural and inter-cultural communication (Leask, 2001; Hellsten & Prescott, 2004).

In considering the process of internationalisation, and the necessary cultural accommodations on all sides, Heyward (2002) considers that “the understandings, competencies, attitudes, language proficiencies, participations and identities necessary for cross-cultural engagement comprise intercultural competence or intercultural literacy” (p. 10). In the same vein, Otten (2003) argues that the process of internationalisation “seeks to introduce some kind of intercultural learning as a key element into the academic world” (p. 13). The response to internationalisation then is seen to be one in which intercultural understanding informs the development of an increasingly internationalised university. Further, this process of intercultural development is central to the successful adoption of international perspectives and the internationalisation of the university as a whole. However, with each of the aspects of internationalisation as described further questions arise. How do we define, for example, the competencies required for intercultural competence without first understanding the outcomes that are implied by a drive towards intercultural competence? And how might intercultural competencies manifest themselves in contexts where the university does not have complete control over the process, such as in fieldwork experiences in schools and hospitals? The university is placed in a unique position to answer these questions as university classrooms are at “the
interface between the construction of social identities and the construction of the national, corporate and global social relations” (Hirst & Brown, 2009, p. 181).

Thus, as Australian universities seek to attract increasing numbers of international students at all levels – undergraduate to post-graduate – they must also consider the experiences (educational, cultural and social) that these students will have in the course of their studies in Australia. Educational goals need to be extended to include some aspects of intercultural learning and intercultural teaching so as to reflect the increasingly diverse nature of the student body. At the same time, as Snow-Andrade (2006) argues, it is essential to consider the adjustment issues that may face international students undertaking courses in a different cultural and linguistic environment and how these may be addressed by appropriate support services and on-going curriculum development.

In addition, “ability to assess students’ performance with due respect for different academic cultures and a flexible attitude to various styles of student behaviour” (Leask, 2004, p. 50) is acknowledged. All students face transition issues in their first year at university and CALD students are recognised as a group that has potential for particular difficulties in academic and social adjustment. Linguistic and cultural diversity can lead to difficulties in participating in courses with heavy lecture demands and general problems with academic writing in a second or additional language (see Snow-Andrade, 2006, p. 148). Academically, the main problem for CALD students is their English language proficiency (Trice, 2003). However, whether this issue is seen as primarily linguistic, cultural or behavioural varies and, as a result, so do the structures set up to support the students (Snow-Andrade, 2006) to meet their needs.
Universities are used to particular forms of interaction and communications but find any differences unsettling (Otten, 2003). Therefore, an influx of students, both local and international, who represent a broad spectrum of cultural and linguistic diversity, can be perceived as “disturbing to the institutional routines” (p. 16). “Productive diversity” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2001, p. 42) is one approach to operationalising, viewing and managing diversity. This approach views and treats cultural diversity and intercultural competence as a learning resource rather than as a problem to be overcome and requires that we address the question of different cultures of learning and teaching in such a way that we open up new and diverse paths of learning and “cross-fertilise different strategies for teaching and learning and acquiring new knowledge” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2001, p. 42). This approach requires that university teachers adapt their teaching to an international, culturally diverse teaching and learning environment. It also requires that they themselves become interculturally competent so that they can take on the roles of being intercultural communicators and often this needs to be accomplished in the face of particular contextual institutional constraints.

Achieving this intercultural competence to participate in university life in Australia however, is a complex and long-term undertaking and can be challenging at a variety of levels, emotional, cognitive and behavioural. Kamp and Mansouri (2010) draw attention to the tension underlying multicultural education in general as disturbing to the Anglo-Celtic majority in Australian society and Otten (2003) considers that it involves a “disruption of one’s own cultural worldview” (p. 15). As a result of this, there can be resistance to the idea of becoming more diverse or intercultural. This may be evident at all levels of the institution seeking to become more intercultural, extending from professional to academic staff, and out into the
community where courses may involve some element of participation outside the control of the university, such as in a fieldwork placement. Students in this position may have their status and legitimacy challenged and questioned by their supervising teachers and students in their classes because of their accent, their appearance and/or their linguistic and cultural diversity (Han, 2005). These challenges to their status and identity may demand difficult accommodations at both personal and professional levels.

This resistance to accommodating difference and diversity is represented in a variety of ways in a university context where one side (the university) has easy access to all the routines, rules and strategies that govern successful communication and the other side (the culturally and linguistically diverse students) are not using their native language and have to negotiate their way through complex institutional processes, a situation which can put the host lecturer in the position of having to explicitly explain the local culture that exists in the university (Otten, 2003). If there is no clear university policy determining how this might best be accomplished, this situation can result in a deficit approach where the underlying motivation in communication with the diverse group is to bring them in some way up to the standards of the target institution (McLean & Ransom, 2005). At a school level where student teachers are undergoing their fieldwork, this kind of attitude can result in their being marginalised due to the intercultural agenda of the school system differing to that of the university (Han & Singh, 2007).

Omeri, Malcolm, Ahern and Wellington (2003) also draw attention to the risks of seeing international students as a problem, as this can lead to teachers in tertiary environments being reluctant to examine their own practices and attitudes and instead attribute any issues that arise to the students themselves. Indeed,
misconceptions about international students contributing to declining standards or being dependent upon memorisation and rote learning do persist, despite evidence that firmly dismisses such stereotyped notions (Asmar, 2005) and the notion that culturally and linguistically diverse students begin their courses with some kind of deficit can influence attitudes toward them at all levels in the institution.

McLean and Ransom (2005) consider this “deficit approach” (p. 45) to local and international CALD students and draw attention to the dangers in the “culturally imperialistic way in which concerns about language and academic skills of international students are often considered” (p. 45). McLean and Ransom (2005) argue for an appropriate context for discussion to attend to the needs of international students in contemporary classrooms worldwide. They also broaden the notion of diversity to include cultural and linguistic diversity and other important features of the university cohort in Australia such as age, religion, disability, educational and socioeconomic background, and different learning styles. McLean and Ransom (2005) also raise the issue that the internationalisation of universities is also reflected in the increasing internationalisation of workplaces and so intercultural expertise can be seen as a pre-requisite both for a successful university experience and a successful transition into the workplace.

It is clear therefore that in the matter of increasing numbers of CALD students, it is not enough to respond to perceived problems as they arise, especially if this response is based upon a conservative and often idealised abstraction of what the western university is (Doherty & Singh, 2005). Doherty and Singh (2005) argue that in the changing times we are now experiencing, “enabling transnational learning communities could represent a renewal and rearticulation of the responsiveness and responsibility of education” (p. 19) which will further extend the idea of valuing
intercultural competence in classrooms. This enabling process needs to include a range of initiatives that are timely, appropriate and targeted to include the whole student body to make the most of the opportunities that a multicultural learning context can bring (Ninnes & Helsten, 2005) and treat the increasingly diverse student body as an asset.

One area where explicit development programs have been implemented has been in intercultural training. Otten (2003) draws on the work of Brislin and Yoshida (1994) to summarise four main goals of intercultural training. They are: “(a) assisting people in overcoming obstacles that interfere with their sense of well-being; (b) developing positive and respectful relationships with others in the host culture, (c) assisting people with accomplishing tasks associated with their work and (d) helping people deal with the inevitable stress that accompanies the cross-cultural experience” (p. 20). Otten (2003) asserts that support programs to build intercultural competencies should include domestic students and teachers as well, as they “need intercultural support more desperately than the international students” (p. 20). A picture of the internationalised university is one therefore where the whole student and staff body are supported in their endeavours to become interculturally competent at institutional and community levels and there is a shared understanding that an element of intercultural competence is a positive outcome (Crichton, 2007).

This recognition of the increasing diversity in university classrooms and in the link between the internationalisation of the classroom and the internationalisation of the workplace (Leask, 2004) is central to the changes taking place in universities in Australia. In Queensland, increasing numbers of students from CALD, both local and international, are also entering university courses in all faculties. This means that increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) student
teachers are required to participate in fieldwork experiences. In the context of a fieldwork practicum further elements of challenge are introduced into the intercultural development process in the form of the participating school environment and the relationships with the supervising teacher, staff and students. In the teaching practicum context, where CALD student teachers are assessed by non-university staff and their interactions are primarily with people in the local community, an extra dimension of intercultural complexity is introduced.

These three elements, CALD teachers, teacher-training and the practicum experience are the primary focus of this study. The next section examines CALD student teachers’ experiences in the context of their teaching practicum in Australia. The focus is upon the factors that facilitate or constrain that experience for each teacher. First, though, the idea of the practicum in general is explored as a means of providing a context in which to consider the particular experiences of local and international CALD students.

### 2.2 Background: Practicum and Student teachers

The school-based practicum experience is a mandatory part of teacher education in Australia where both university courses and the school practicum experience form an important part of the professional development of student teachers (Keogh, Dole & Hudson, 2006; Townsend & Bates, 2007). Keogh et al. (2006) argue that the theoretical notion of the practicum is that of a “supportive journey of development and learning” (p.3) where, through immersion in the culture of the mainstream school and with an experienced teacher as a model, student teachers are able to use the theoretical frameworks that they have acquired during their university study to “interpret and analyse what they see and sense” (p. 3). Mouza (2007), considers that it is helpful to conceptualise the practicum in four
ways: “a) the laboratory component of a teacher education program; b) a long performance examination; c) a practicum in inquiry-oriented teaching and, d) a scaffolded apprenticeship in classroom teaching” (p, 167). She considers that all these elements contribute towards the student teacher becoming a member of the teaching culture. The notion of learning to teach as a kind of apprenticeship emphasises the importance of the different kinds of interactions that student teachers can undertake with supervising teachers and other teachers at the practicum schools, such as observation, mentoring and the opportunities to participate in different ways. In this study students and supervising teachers are guided by a handbook that explicitly lays out the university expectations about how the practicum should proceed. It is anticipated that a progression of learning activities should be undertaken beginning with observation of lessons and then building to the independent but supported planning and teaching of sequences of lessons. The student teacher is also expected to participate in the professional life of the school. Performance is rated by the supervising teacher at two points in the practicum, an interim report and a final report. They can be rated as “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”. A rating of unsatisfactory at the end of the practicum means that a further fieldwork experience will need to be completed before the student teacher is eligible for registration as a teacher in Queensland. In addition to these reports, if a student teacher is seen as having problems with any aspect of their practicum they can be placed in at “at risk” status, which requires the completion of an “at risk” form. Support is then provided by University Liaison Academics who work with the student teacher and supervising teacher to try to make the practicum a success.

In all accounts of the teaching practicum, however, it is generally accepted that it can be a stressful experience for all involved. The sources of this stress are to do
with expectations and reality and the difficulties of trying to apply abstract concepts into a dynamic environment. Campbell, Tangen and Spooner-Lane (2006) report that significant numbers of student teachers experience a range of physical health complaints leading up to their practicum, including insomnia, panic attacks and poor eating habits. For the student teacher, trying to fit into a new community while building a new set of professional and personal skills can be a very challenging process. However, as a necessary process of becoming part of a community, this process may be ultimately beneficial and allow the student teacher to become successful and confident in their professional role. For local and international CALD student teachers, on their teaching practicum, there may be extra layers of experience to process, including their own learning backgrounds, educational experiences and complex cultural and linguistic factors (Cruikshank, Newell and Cole, 2003).

There are three main models to describe the practicum experience: the “integrative”, the “partnership” and the “community of teachers’ model” (Atputhasamy, 2005). In the “integrative model” the university maintains almost total control and, in effect, uses the classroom as an extension of the university education course with very little involvement from local school teachers. The “partnership model” involves university and school working together with the teacher education courses, although, as Atputhasamy (2005) points out, there are very often difficulties in cultural expectations between the university culture and that of the school and so extensive work is required to reconcile the collaboration, to bring educational theory into practice. The “community of teachers’ model” involves student teachers being immersed in the school system and doing their course work and their practical teaching work at the same time. The idea here is to create a “community of learners” where university staff, students and supervising
teachers all work together in close collaboration. This model, in particular, recognises the need for student-teachers to be allowed to try out, and put into practice the theoretical learning in which they have been engaged for the duration of their courses.

In the Queensland context, there is a blend between the “partnership” and the “community of learners” models. Student teachers complete course work at the university with varying opportunities to observe and participate in real school contexts until they engage in their practicums, which may be of four or six weeks in duration. In the practicum context they become members of the school community, theoretically with access to the same resources as the teachers at the school. As Smith and Strahan (2004) point out however, many student teachers on school practicum may find themselves in the position of novice/expert with very little room to build collegial relationships. Ideals of reciprocal learning and building skills and knowledge are often lost in the day-to-day business of running successful classes. Indeed, the very notion of trying out new things for the student teacher and the idea that the experienced teacher might be able to gain something from the collaboration (Danaher, Danaher & Moriaty, 2006) can become sources of tension in themselves and add to the already highly charged nature of the teaching practicum. In this regard, the community of practice notion of “participation” (Wenger, 1998) is useful to explore the tensions inherent in the student teacher/supervising teacher relationship, particularly when there is a cross-cultural element involved as this social learning theory promotes an analysis of how the practicum context itself may contribute or hinder the development of learning. From this perspective, the supervising teacher is both performing his/her key role in mentoring and assessing the student teacher’s performance and, at the same time, he or she forms part of the
community that facilitates or constrains that performance through the process of providing legitimacy and opportunities to participate peripherally or centrally. Learning, in social learning theory, is seen as the development of identity rather than the enactment of particular knowledge or skill. Therefore, examination of the practicum as a socially-centred endeavour means considering the contribution of all the people involved as they all constitute part of the learning community.

2.3 Studies of CALD teachers’ experiences in schools

While there has been a great deal of research attention paid to culturally diverse students and their needs in classrooms (Grant & Zozakiewicz, 1995; Goldstein, 2007), there is much less research on the experiences of teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds teaching in mainstream schools in English speaking countries. In America, for example, where CALD teachers are referred to as “teachers of color”, Dilworth and Brown (2008) argue that “far too many students of color find schools and teachers unwelcoming [(Macedo & Bartolome, 1999)], it is apparent that we have not fully recognised and empowered of (sic) teachers of color in a manner that will help reconcile the issues that we face” (p. 440). Similarly, in Canada, Mawhinney and Xu (1997) consider the professional identity development of CALD teachers in the Canadian system and the importance of addressing language elements and skills in their preparation for entering the Canadian education system. Like Deters (2006) who also examined the Canadian context, Mawhinney and Xu (1997) found that the development of new professional identities and specific language skills can be a long slow process for these teachers. This emphasises that an intense three or four week practicum experience may not provide a long enough time for CALD student teachers to become comfortable in the linguistic and cultural demands of the target classroom.
In Australia, research has been carried out by a number of researchers. Han (2005), and Han and Singh, (2007), for example found that CALD teachers experienced “pedagogical disengagement” during their teacher training courses for a number of reasons, including challenges to their “status as student teachers, and also because of their different culture, language background and […] accent and colour” (Han, 2005, p. 3). Similarly Peeler and Jane (2005) argue strongly for closer mentoring relationships for this group of teachers to help them to bridge various gaps in understanding that are to do with their contrasting cultural background. Campbell, Tangen and Spooner-Lane (2006) also identify that Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) student teachers are highly represented in the groups who identify themselves as in trouble or requiring extra help in their teacher training courses. Indeed, in Campbell et al.’s (2006) research it was found that in some courses over 50% of CALD student teachers failed their practicum. Campbell et al. (2006) report that that this is because they confront additional difficulties and concerns. Language, communication and cultural differences were all cited as having an impact on their levels of stress, as well as isolation, financial worries and racism. In this Australian context Han and Singh (2007) argue that the need for diverse teachers is “troubling teacher education” as there is certainly an under-representation of culturally and linguistically diverse student teachers in teacher training courses and in schools.

The successful preparation and support for culturally diverse teachers in teacher training programs is therefore an area that is attracting attention around the world, as they are seen both as a valuable resource to address teacher shortages and a means to support diverse communities in mainstream schools (Dilworth & Brown, 2008; Han & Singh, 2007). In Sydney, Cruickshank (2004), in response to the lack
of research into teachers from migrant backgrounds strongly identified by Kamler, Santoro and Reid (1998), examined the needs of teacher education programmes for immigrant teachers. He first sought to identify the issues faced by these overseas-trained teachers, in upgrading their qualifications and also to understand the extent to which these issues were being addressed in the University of Sydney teacher education programmes. One of the significant observations by Cruickshank (2004) was that a simple non-English speaking background (NESB) or CALD distinction was too broad to capture his student teachers’ diverse nature. So, immediately there are implications for programs and support. Flexibility in support programs is seen as a key ingredient, not only with regard to cultural diversity but also to previous educational experiences, age, ethnicity and family situation.

These teachers in Cruikshank’s (2004) study specifically wanted knowledge of syllabuses, assessment and programming, the language and culture of Australian children and some practical teaching experience and strategies, before and during the program. These desires were constantly reiterated during the programme. Cruickshank (2004) observes that one unexpected positive outcome of the practicum experiences “was the number of teachers who were offered teaching at their practicum schools when they had finished their course” (p. 133). He suggests that one of the reasons for this was “the teachers’ language and intercultural skills in schools with diverse student populations” (p. 133). Thus, the teachers, despite their own expressed fears about their lack of cultural and procedural knowledge of the Australian education system, were seen as a positive force in areas where intercultural communication was important. In the context of a school with a proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse students it is clear that teachers who have similar backgrounds to the students can make a significant contribution.
and act as role models for diverse populations of students (Han & Singh, 2007, Dilworth & Brown, 2008).

Another outcome of Cruikshank’s (2004) study was an explicit recognition of the complexity of language issues and the time required to build language proficiency skills. It was recommended that for CALD teachers whose English language proficiency was an issue some degree of English language support would be beneficial with a major focus on meta-awareness of language issues and the building of autonomy in language learning. English proficiency was seen as a priority at all levels in the practicum, with teachers who had lower levels of English at a particular disadvantage in all areas. Even teachers whose proficiency levels were high reported needing particular language for their classroom subject or in classroom English. The classroom here can be seen as a specialised environment demanding very particular language and cultural skills. The best way to acquire those skills will be a combination of formal learning and practical experience. At the same time, there is room for help in the particular demands of each practicum experience and providing this support can be seen as a key responsibility of universities and participating schools involving all stakeholders (Spooner-Lane, Tangen & Campbell, 2009)

Cruickshank (2004) ends his study by identifying four principles that may be of value in addressing the issues of support programmes for this group of teachers. According to Cruickshank (2004) the programmes could be characterised by four features, which are: a) pathways into teacher education through preliminary programs and different strategies; b) delivery of assistance in response to needs; c) curriculum development that caters for specific needs, which includes inclusive
teaching methodologies; and, d) continuity of programs in the institution’s core profile that incorporate an equity focus.

The first feature, pathways, takes into account the importance of allowing time for intercultural competencies of all kinds to develop and recognises that knowledge is not necessarily quickly and successfully translated into behaviour. It also recognises that preliminary work before teacher-training programs begin could be helpful in allowing CALD teachers to clarify their own ideas about what becoming a teacher involves. The second feature, needs based assistance, acknowledges the diversity of this group and the fact that, due to different commitments, they would benefit greatly from a flexible approach to building their knowledge and skills both before their fieldwork experience begins and when it is underway. The third feature, inclusivity, reflects the reality that both the student teacher and the students that will be their subjects on their practicum experiences will be diverse groups, so inclusivity and intercultural practices must flow from the training course and into the classroom. Han and Singh (2007) reflect that it is important for these teachers to be able to take part in a system that recognises their own unique backgrounds and qualities as a part of it. What they can bring to the endeavour from their own experiences of life and schooling need to be acknowledged. And, the final feature, equity, concerns the anchoring of such programs at an institutional level so that they become part of an overall movement towards intercultural competence at the university.

The recommendations above argue for an integration of a culturally diverse focus in teacher education that go beyond the notions of simply addressing linguistic and cultural issues. These features are relevant to the anticipated long term outcomes of the present study, which aims, through examining practicum experiences, to examine this cohort of students’ needs, their anticipated outcomes, and appropriate
methodologies to address their needs and the university’s contribution to their practicum experience through a range of services provided. The “unexpected outcome” (Cruickshank, 2004, p. 133) identified above, as we have seen, confirms the value of diverse teachers in a diverse society and supports the conclusions drawn by Myles, Cheng and Wang (2006) that “foreign trained immigrant teachers can bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the school communities in which they teach”. It is argued that “these professionals would significantly enrich not only the lives of the children they teach but also the broader educational communities into which they became immersed” (p. 14). To allow this enrichment to take place, however, these teachers need to be accepted first as members of the practicum school community and not excluded because of their possible unfamiliarity with the cultural environment into which they are moving. On both sides therefore a process of adjustment needs to take place. However, the best way to achieve this, for student teachers and their lecturers, practice students and supervisors, is an area where research is ongoing.

In Queensland, in response to CALD students’ difficulties on practicum for example, Campbell et al. (2006) established a programme to support them. The major issues that these student teachers expressed anxiety over, as above, included cultural differences between Australian schools and schools in their own countries, student behaviour and management issues and language issues. These issues then informed the support programme which consisted of a series of workshops on aspects of teaching as “behaviour management”. An accompanying DVD was made which introduces, discusses and illustrates topics such as: managing field experience, building relationships, the culture of schooling and, using English on field experience. The study also stressed the importance of CALD students making
connections and contact with other CALD students in the same or similar situations, to build a sense of community.

Later work by these researchers (Spooner-lane, Tangen & Campbell, 2009) extends this research for a different cohort of Asian teachers (n=30) on their first practicum and reveals the complex interactions that these students face as they negotiate their experience between the university, their personal history and the practicum school. These teachers were from Korea, Japan or China and their experiences highlighted linguistic and cultural concerns and also drew attention to the importance of building a successful relationship with their supervising teacher. In this way, the social interaction that can be the key to a successful practicum experience was highlighted and the authors acknowledge the value of more time to observe and participate in the life of the school before commencing the practicum.

The studies reviewed above have primarily focused on building a better understanding of CALD student teachers’ experiences, particularly in the areas of language and cultural knowledge in order to provide appropriate support. Other aspects of these student teachers’ experiences have also attracted researchers; they are “identity” and “community”. Han’s (2005) study, for example, examined adjustment issues, and considered the contribution the practicum makes to the “metamorphosis” (p. 1) of CALD student teachers’ identities. Han (2005) examined identity in three modes in the process of metamorphosis, which are: “the authoritative challenge to who they are; the dynamism of who they are becoming, and their shifting shape of new teacher-student relations” (p. 2). Han (2005) argues that a metamorphosis may be necessary because of these students’ overseas education background. She argues that formal education is a nation-centred project, which is deeply rooted in local culture, ways of thinking and language. In looking at
the practicum experience in the context of identity-building rather than one dominated by skills, knowledge and competencies, Han (2005) presents a different perspective of the practicum as a central part of the participant’s personal and professional identity development. Han’s (2005) account graphically demonstrates how complex and emotional it can be to challenge an old identity in the search for a new and how important it is to establish successful relationships both with the practice students, supervising teacher and other teachers.

Like Han (2005), Deters, in Canada, (2006) looked beyond language and cultural issues and examined the factors that “facilitate or constrain the successful acquisition of occupation-specific language and culture of immigrant teachers in the province of Ontario.” (p. 1). Deters used social learning theory as her framework to examine the “the dialectic nature of the professional acculturation of immigrant teachers” (p. 1). In particular, she found that important factors to promote acculturation included community stance and acceptance, the newcomer’s journeys, and negotiation of identity. The teachers that Deters (2006) examined were not pre-service teachers and some of them had been teaching in the Canadian school system for periods up to 20 years. Her perspective however on their journeys illustrates the central place that community can occupy when newcomers to any field attempt to become full participants in that field. Some teachers in Deters’s (2006) study took many years to feel a sense of belonging in the Canadian school system.

It is now recognised that international and linguistically and culturally diverse students can benefit from some support in their university courses and on their practicum experiences (Spooner-Lane et al., 2009). However, the majority of such research has been centred on building up skills and competencies around cultural and practical issues to do with teaching in response to the expressed needs of the student
teachers themselves, often as they prepare to undertake the practicum for the first time. The research is also underpinned by the notion that learning to teach is primarily a cognitive endeavour where such issues as cultural and linguistic differences are impeding the development of particular teaching competencies. In brief, research has primarily focused on the cognitive, deficit model where the trainee is considered as having needs centred on language and knowledge of cultural matters that can be addressed through more observation and more knowledge transmission. The fieldwork practicum, from this perspective, is an opportunity for student teachers to put into practice the theory that they have explored in their university coursework and study. The reasons to explain why this experience may be so stressful, however, have focused primarily on the ‘lack’ in cultural and linguistic needs, as often identified by students themselves as they find themselves struggling with their practicum work (Campbell, Tangen & Spooner-Lane, 2006; Cruikshank, Newell & Cole, 2003; Han, 2005). Such research does not explicitly take into account the complexity of the pre-service practicum experience which includes the other participants - supervising teachers, students, school administration, university administration, and university teaching staff, in short a community. The sense of a community that participates in learning means that the social and cultural context of learning can be taken into account. From this perspective, “the cultural and linguistic diversity of both students and teachers is a fact of life, entailing the multiple dimensions of culture, ethnicity, language varieties and plurilingualism, and shifting identities in ever changing social conditions” (Miller, 2009, p. 52). It is, therefore, important to consider the social context in any discussion of the practicum for CALD students so as to acquire a broader understanding of the issues involved.
The work of Cruikshank (2004), Han (2005), Deters (2006), Campbell et al. (2009) and Goldstein (2007) is therefore highly relevant to this study as these different perspectives of the teaching practicum consider different issues, including the nature of the practicum itself, the preparation courses, the roles of the supervising teachers, host schools and students, and the relationship between the university and the school. These factors play their part in a CALD pre-service teacher’s practicum experiences and together they capture some of the complexities that CALD teachers face when negotiating a meaningful identity of teaching, often in the face of community resistance to change. Deters’ (2006) adoption of a sociocultural perspective reveals that social practice and identity formation are central to learning for this group of teachers. This perspective provides some tools for examining the complexity of the learning experience and is relevant to an examination of the experiences of CALD student teachers in Queensland. Further, this view resonates clearly with the practicum experiences of local and international CALD teachers in Australia. There are common themes that go beyond a consideration of language and cultural issues and look at access to practices, participation and identity. Deters (2006) adopted a situated learning approach where learning is characterised as social action rather than the acquisition of discrete skills and competencies. This provides a theoretical lens to consider the impact of the local social community on the development of the professional identity of these teachers as they undertake their practicum.

In conclusion, as this review has illustrated, the university sector in Australia has become part of the worldwide trend towards internationalisation. This has implications at all levels of the university as faculties seek to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations. Education faculties, as part of this trend are
finding larger numbers of local and international student teachers are participating in fieldwork practicum experiences. It is reported that they have a high rate of failure and are highly represented in the at-risk-of-failure groups. Various reasons have been suggested for why this may be so, including linguistic and cultural issues.

There is little research on considering the experiences of these student teachers from a social or situated learning perspective where the practicum experience may be seen as one of peripheral participation in the community of the practicum school. The next chapter explores the area of situated learning with a view to establishing its relevance as a theoretical framework to examine CALD teachers’ experiences of the pre-service practicum in Queensland schools.
Chapter Three: Theoretical Background:
Communities of Practice and Social Learning Theory

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the theoretical perspective based on sociocultural perspectives of learning (Dewey, 1929; 1933; Vygotsky, 1978), situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and the central elements of community of practice theory (Wenger, 1998), as they relate to the context of culturally and linguistically diverse teachers on practicum, is outlined. This chapter attempts to achieve the following: first, to sketch and map the significant aspects of situated learning theory; second, to discuss the central aspects of community of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) in relation to teaching, learning and training, and, in conclusion, to justify and emphasise the appropriateness of adopting a situated learning perspective to examine the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) student teachers in Queensland schools.

Sociocultural perspectives on learning have been underpinned by the work of Vygotsky who “examined development as a process of individual functioning as various forms of social practice become internalised by individuals” (Penuel and Wertsch, 1995, p. 83). Tsui, Lopez-Real and Edwards (2009) provide a useful brief summary of the Vygotskian perspective contrasting it with the Piagetian perspective (Piaget, 1952) that holds teaching and learning to be centred in the “transmission and acquisition of a body of knowledge” (p. 26). Tsui, Lopez-Real and Edwards (2009) argue that Vygotsky’s “conception of learning as sociocultural, in particular the role
of mediational tools in learning has been highly influential in educational research” (p. 28) and highlight the contribution that this sociocultural perspective has made to recent research. Rogoff (2008) argues that “The sociocultural approach [also] offers an integrated approach to human development … An integrated approach makes it easier to understand how thinking involves social relations and cultural experience, without an artificial separation into isolated parts” (p. 49).

Tsui, Lopez-Real and Edwards (2009) consider that Neo-Vygotskian perspectives like those offered by Rogoff (2008) have inspired researchers to look for ways of analysing the interaction between institutions, like schools and universities, individuals and the broader social structures that connect them. They argue that a “coherent framework” (p. 30) has been achieved by two strands of research drawing on sociocultural theory: Activity Theory, now primarily associated with Engestrom (1987), and situated learning and community of practice theory developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and extended by Wenger (1998). While Activity Theory focuses on activities as the unit of analysis which are “links between social practice and an individual’s learning” (Tsui, Lopez-Real and Edwards, 2009, p. 32), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) are more concerned in their theory of situated learning and communities of practice with ways of participating in a social system and, in particular, how newcomers to a system negotiate an identity of participation. The theory of situated learning has therefore been chosen to examine the experiences of student teachers in this study as they undertake their practicum experiences in the communities of practice of their practicum schools.

processes by which newcomers enter a community of practice and how they both
learn and, in the process of learning, develop their identity through participation in
the community. Their concept of communities of practice has been extended into a
wide range of fields including education, business and human resource management
and has acquired both descriptive and design components.

Wenger (1998) built on the earlier work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and
considers professional learning in the broad context of practice and identity, which
has had such a strong influence upon the thinking in the field of learning (Fuller,
Hodgkinson, Hodgkinson and Unwin, 2005). Three key concepts constitute the
community of practice. These are: participation, identity and practice and the
intersection between them. At the centre of situated learning is participation, which
might be inclusive or marginal. Participation in turn allows for appropriate identity
and practice to occur, where appropriateness is based on contextual requirements. As
noted by Handley, Sturdy, Fincham & Clark (2006), it is through participation that
identity and practice can occur: “participation enables or constrains opportunities to
develop identities and practice, including linguistic practices” (p. 645). Thus,
appropriate or legitimate participation is central. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept
of legitimate peripheral participation, as part of situated learning involves
particularly the experience of gaining entry to the communities of practice, which
Lave and Wenger (1991) define as “a set of relations among persons, activity and the
world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities
of practice” (p. 98).

From the perspective of communities of practice, learning is primarily a social
experience involving social practice, which, as defined by Wenger (1998), is what
“[participants] have developed in order to do their job and have a satisfying
experience at work” (p. 47). It is not primarily about knowledge and competencies but rather about participation in practice with other people. At the same time, Wenger (1998) goes on to argue that “the concept of practice connotes doing, but not just doing in and of itself, it is doing in a historical and social context that gives meaning to what we do” (p. 47). A noteworthy aspect of situated learning is its radical positioning to the traditional forms of knowledge theories where the emphasis is on cognition, and objectivist knowledge acquisition that is divorced from the social, cultural context of the learner. Such learning is distant to the background of the learner, and interrelations between the learner and the learnt are not perceived as important. In contrast, Lave and Wenger (1991) propose learning where knowledge occurs in action and where practice solidifies the learnt matter in a dualistic process of participation and reification.

Situated learning theory examines knowledge and the processes of knowledge as situated within a concrete social and cultural context. In contrast to cognitive perspectives that emphasise knowledge as independent of the social, situated learning promotes proactive learning within a real world context. The situated learning process emphasises the constructivist approach to learning, and perceives learning as building on and extending the existing repertoire of knowledge, and emphasises learning as produced through an emotionally connected, self-directed, metacognitive process (Pritchard, 2008; Wray & Lewis, 1997).

The historical and social context for the study here is the practicum experiences of teachers from a variety of backgrounds in Queensland schools at the beginning of the 21st century when Australian society is becoming increasingly diverse and facing the challenges of internationalisation. As noted in Chapter Two, the CALD student teacher context provides a unique situated learning space where participation,
identity and practice acquire meanings different to those of a monolingual, native student context. At least two main communities can be identified that are central to the practice of teacher training: the university training course and the school or schools in which teachers undertake their practicum experience. The individual contributions of each student teacher to the learning experience in these sites are a significant area of study.

Wenger’s later (1998) work, represents most fully an insightful and comprehensive account of communities of practice and this review will first explore this work in detail to establish its relevance to a consideration of the teaching practicum experiences of student teachers in Queensland schools.

As mentioned earlier, communities of practice consist of different elements including practice and identity. Into those main categories the theory explores what it means to be a member of a community of practice. Wenger (1998) defines practice as follows:

The concept of practice includes both the explicit and the tacit. It includes what is said and what is left unsaid; what is represented and what is assumed. It includes the language, tools, documents, images, symbols, well-defined roles, specified criteria, codified procedures, regulations, and contracts that various practices make explicit for a variety of purposes. (p. 47)

Practice, in Wenger’s terms, extends to the immediate social and educational context of the university and the school. This is because practice itself extends beyond the idea of knowledge and instead involves participation, interaction and constant renewal on a social and personal level. The social in practice of knowledge as in the case of student teachers in this study, is inclusive of collaboration between the school staff, the university staff and the teacher, all the resources that may be created in the course of the lesson planning and implementation and the opportunities...
that are created to demonstrate and develop teaching practices in the context of the host school.

Wenger’s (1998) description of the elements that are contained in practice allows us to consider both ways of thinking, ways of acting and the necessary tools and routines required for effective practice. Wenger (1998) goes on to say:

But it also includes all the implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognisable intuitions, specific perceptions, well-tuned sensitivities, embodied understandings, underlying assumptions, and shared world views. Most of these may never be articulated yet they are unmistakable signs of membership in communities of practice and are crucial to the success of their enterprises. (p. 47)

A lot of these implicit relations and tacit conventions will be culturally and contextually defined at a local level, in our case at the practice school and university level. Wenger (1998) extends the notion of tacit knowledge by claiming, “Communities of practice are the prime context in which we can work out common sense through mutual engagement” (p. 47). Therefore, the concept of practice highlights the social and negotiated character of both the explicit and the tacit in our lives. Mutual engagement will be further explored when considering the dimensions of a community of practice.

In the context of a teaching practicum, the aspects above that make up the concept of “practice” immediately allow consideration of a set of assumptions that can be explored with the student teachers. At the document level, for example, meeting and understanding a set of criteria for lesson planning or an outline for a portfolio may be unproblematic for most student teachers, even though they may be meeting these tasks for the first time. However, the more subtle underlying assumptions about their use or the expectations for their implementation may contrast broadly among teachers from a range of cultures. Thus the implicit may
need to be made more explicit, particularly when we consider that student teachers often draw upon their own experiences as students when they begin to work in classrooms. In the context of the new classroom, implicit understandings about the level of respect that is paid to a teacher, for example, may need to be discussed because CALD teachers may have expectations of the students that are very different in an Australian context which may then challenge their ideas of what it is to be a teacher.

Wenger (1998) emphasises that as “things have to be done, relationships worked out, processes invented, situations interpreted, artefacts produced and conflicts reduced” (p. 49) there will be different sorts of practice but the centrality of practice cannot be minimised:

The active nature of participation lies at the heart of the teaching practicum experience. It is a profoundly complex undertaking that must be continuously negotiated in response to anticipated and unanticipated challenges and demands. Participation in any community initially begins with the participant on the peripheries of the community. The authentic context allows students to experiment in real space through active participation and learning the “culture of practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 95). The notion of “legitimate peripheral participation” is central to this experience. Newcomers need to be legitimised by the community to gain access to peripheral participation in the community practices. How they achieve legitimacy or not is discussed later as Wenger (1998) has both extended and broadened the account in his later work.

At the same time there is the constant need to sustain participation, and not to burn out. The strong demands on personal and professional identity and “who you are” in the teaching role need to be carefully managed. At a practical level, the
number of teachers that run into difficulties on their practicum experiences (Campbell, Tangen & Spooner-Lane, 2006) demonstrates that, while the stressful nature of the experience of undertaking a practicum may be recognised, often there are not good support networks in place to support those who may be struggling. Also, the reasons why it may be so stressful are extremely complex, as will be discussed later, and often have little directly to do with knowledge or teaching skills. One explanation for the stress may lie in the constant reassessment of one’s position and identity as one faces new challenges, the idea of continuity and displacement.

Wenger (1998) considers participation in communities of practice under two major themes: practice and identity. These are described below and reviewed in turn referring to their relevance to student teachers on practicum. After this, there is a brief discussion focusing on social learning and justifying the adoption of a community of practice framework to examine the experiences of these student teachers.

3.2 Practice

Wenger (1998) first considers practice in terms of basic aspects. These are practice as meaning, community, learning, boundary and locality. These are then drawn together in a discussion of what it means to “know in practice”. Each of these will be considered below with relevant reference to the teaching fieldwork practicum.

3.2.1 Practice as meaning.

Drawing on Vygotsky’s (1978) constructivism, Lave and Wenger (1991) consider practice as belonging to the social rather than the cognitive realm, as it is the “historical and social” that provides the background to learning (Wenger, 1998). Practices in the teacher training field generally relate to use of appropriate
pedagogical language and behaviour, practices of resource management, of roles and duties, code of conduct as well as an understanding of the power structures and the work principles of the organisation.

In explaining meaning in practice, Wenger (1998) argues that the negotiation of meaning involves the interaction of two constituent processes, participation and reification and that participation and reification “form a duality that is fundamental to the human experience of meaning and thus to the nature of practice” (p. 52). To develop efficient practice, individuals need to observe carefully and be ready to adopt the practices they observe or that they have learnt to be formalised (reified) in the target context. Thus student teachers should expect their knowledge to be extended both through what they have learned in theory about the teaching situation and through their own participation in the classroom. Participation, in Wenger’s (1998) words is used to describe “the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises” (p. 55). It is an active process and learning takes place in the act of building an identity of participation.

Reification, in Wenger’s (1998) terms, refers to “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (p. 58). In broad terms, it refers to a shared understanding of meaning by participants in a community of practice. New members of a community, like CALD teachers who come from a different educational background, may have very different notions of the new teaching context and may find what they assumed to be shared through their previous experience to be very different in the new school. For example, in the field experience handbook at one Queensland University, standards for practice are grouped under the following criteria: planning and preparation; communication and
interaction; teaching for learning; managing the learning environment; student evaluation; and, professionalism. These represent reified guidelines by which a student teacher’s performance can be assessed as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Under the communication and interaction criteria, for example, a satisfactory performance would be considered as one where “appropriate use of oral and written language with students, supervising teacher, principal and other staff members is usually demonstrated.” Thus there is a tacit understanding of what ‘appropriate use’ of oral and written language entails. While effective whiteboard work might be considered under this criterion as a type of universal teaching skill, there is no explicit description of what written language might be inappropriate. Indeed, the ‘unsatisfactory’ level for this criterion is frequently demonstrating inappropriate use of written and oral language.

For student teachers from a CALD background, there may be a more explicit focus on their language that is used for pedagogical purposes. For example, Han (2005) provides an example of a student teacher named Khai whose “slightest mistake on the board” (p. 8) was seen in a very negative light, as many linguistically diverse students miss out the definite article. Indeed, language inaccuracy opens up CALD student teachers to all kinds of difficulties in the practice classroom. This extends also to accent; naturally, the English language is a key part of social positioning as a teacher in Queensland. Different accents can result in loss of control and power over a class as the students question their expectations of how a teacher should sound. In Deters’s (2006) study, one of the international teachers interviewed, Merrida, is up front about the language issue, sharing with her class the fact that she has an accent and inviting them to be open with her if they misunderstand anything she says. Merrida makes a strength of what in many cases in a practicum can be
treated as a lack of competence due to reified notions in the school community of how a teacher should sound and look.

Teachers exhibit different forms of participation and different levels of practice built on reified beliefs that have occurred through legitimate peripheral participation. Their accent, which may challenge the current reified notions of an acceptable way of speaking for a school teacher, as in Merrida’s case, rather than placing them in a marginal position, can become a central aspect of their teaching identity. Through being legitimised to participate, their participation becomes a context in which to explore aspects of how a teacher might sound and extends to teachers having a range of accents.

Participation and reification function as a duality. Each complements the other. Central to this notion is the idea that “participation is essential to repairing the potential misalignments inherent in reification” (Wenger, 1998, p. 64). As seen above in Merrida’s case, “when the stiffness of its form renders reification obsolete, when its ambiguity is misleading, or when its purpose is lost in the distance, then it is participation that comes to the rescue” (p. 64). Thus, the incorporation of a range of different ways of speaking and interacting in the classroom as CALD teachers undertake their practicum will lead to reified norms of discourse to be challenged. Viewed from this perspective, in a teaching practicum context there is great potential for tension between the reified principles of the supervising teacher and the student teacher. Thus a situation where some aspect of reified action is violated, according to the supervising teacher’s perspective, can easily arise and result in difficulties in the context of a school practicum experience. For example, as well as accent, difficulties for the practicum teacher with spelling or address fall into this category and can assume an importance that would seem to be more than outweighed by other
considerations in the practicum experience. Indeed they can even result in their withdrawal from the practicum altogether.

Wenger (1998) therefore believes that “meaning exists neither in us, nor in the world, but in the dynamic relation of living in the world” (p. 54). The idea that participation can result in different areas of reification is a relevant one when teachers from different backgrounds are under consideration. This goes beyond the notion of shared understandings about ways of teaching and common practices in classrooms. It also includes the whole understanding of how many subjects are studied, different areas of specialisation and so on. Bella (1999) provides a list of differences experienced by teachers who were trained outside Australia when they came to teach in Queensland. All of these areas present a potential point of difficulty and so stress the need for such information (Bella, 1999). Interestingly, it is not only speakers of English as an Additional Language (EAL) who raised the problems inherent in English communication. Canadian and other native English-speaking teachers commented on the particular nature of English in Queensland (Bella, 1999). Thus the culture of the teaching practice in Queensland schools with its particular routines of language and custom can be experienced as a set of social relations in a particular community. In the context of their legitimate peripheral participation, the new teachers in Bella’s (1999) study found themselves needing to reassess aspects of their professional identity that they had previously taken for granted. A South African teacher, for example, found that she was very careful in how she addressed students in Queensland schools as students were much more actively involved in Queensland than in South Africa (Bella, 1999).

Han’s (2005) study examines the temporary nature of the practicum from the perspective of the teachers and the students at the school. This in itself becomes
reified and so the expectations of the students are reduced when it comes to authoritative control. They see the practicum teachers as temporary and therefore do not afford them the same respect that they would their established teachers. At the same time Han (2005) likens the student teachers to “tadpoles” rather than “frogs” (p. 7) in the sense that they were not seen as full members of the teaching community but rather in the process of a metamorphosis of identity into real teachers (frogs). Han (2005) suggests that the students who saw them in this way were unlikely to consider that they had any power or authority and so potentially made their practicum experience very difficult.

3.2.2 Practice as community.

Practice as a property of community, according to Wenger (1998), has three dimensions. These are mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. These are briefly considered in Wenger’s terms before discussing their relevance to student teachers in Queensland.

Mutual engagement involves both “complementary contributions” and “overlapping forms of competence” (Wenger, 1998, p. 76). In reality, mutual engagement is an extremely complex form of participation in a community of practice, going far beyond the idea of a team or collective endeavour and, naturally, each community has its own way of engaging.

Joint enterprise, according to Wenger (1998) is the result of firstly “a collective process of negotiation that reflects the full complexity of mutual engagement” and secondly “it is defined by the participants in the very process of pursuing it. It is their negotiated response to their situation and thus belongs to them in a profound sense, in spite of all the forces and influences that are beyond their control” and
thirdly “it is not just a stated goal, but creates among participants relations of mutual accountability that become an integral part of the practice” (p. 78).

According to Wenger (1998), the shared repertoire of a practice combines two characteristics that allow it to become a resource for the negotiation of meaning: “It reflects a history of mutual engagement and it remains inherently ambiguous” (p. 83). Thus repertoire can be extended through mutual participation.

These three areas together with teacher education and the practicum are now considered in-depth. For the student teacher, it is in the relationship with the supervising teacher and the university supervisor that a sense of joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire will need to be demonstrated, and with it the mandatory requirements of personal and professional behaviour that will result in either passing or failing the fieldwork placement. The overseas teachers training in Australia, who were examined by Cruickshank (2004) emphasise the importance of becoming familiar with the whole environment of the school practicum. They constantly express the need for more practical experience to learn about the practical realities of Australian schools and the interaction between teachers and students.

Han (2005) notes that the World English Teachers examined in her study experienced constant challenges both due to their status as student teachers and because of their different culture and language backgrounds as well as their accents and colour. It appears that it is harder to demonstrate a sense of mutual engagement when you are from a different cultural background and that the idea of joint enterprise and shared repertoire are also compromised. A deep understanding of the social practices of the target school classrooms is required that goes beyond the notion of educational practice. Working out relationships and forms of address, as
seen above, can lead to greater legitimacy, and so more opportunity to develop mutuality of engagement with the practices of the classroom.

However, different social roles and responsibilities in the school context may not always be negative; Deters’s (2006) study, for example, cites a Venezuelan teacher who felt that the Canadian education system was superior to the system in Venezuela and so found her adjustment relatively easier than teachers from different circumstances and backgrounds. Thus, her positive orientation to the new system and positive alignment with its new set of practices allowed her to extend her repertoire of teaching practices and at the same time build a greater sense of mutual engagement and shared endeavour.

### 3.2.3 Practice as learning.

According to Wenger (1998) the temporal dimension of a community of practice is “not just a matter of a specific minimum amount of time rather it is a matter of sustaining enough engagement in pursuing an enterprise together to share some significant learning” (p. 86). Learning involves participation and reification, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire as well as continuities and discontinuities. These concepts, some already discussed above, are now considered in relation to time and learning and the role time can play in learning. Both participation and reification are open-ended. Each is open to “reinterpretation and to multiple interpretations” (Wenger, 1998, p. 88).

A community of practice, according to Wenger (1998), involves inter-related forms of participation and discontinuities propagate through it. As newcomers enter, discontinuities cascade down through different levels, “last year’s trainee helps this year’s trainee participants forge new identities from their new identities … the past, the present and the future live together” (p. 90). In the relatively brief period of the
fieldwork practicum there is little time however for identity formation. Newcomers, trainee teachers, only participate for a short time in the life of the school, yet at the same time they are often expected to demonstrate something similar to a full repertoire of classroom management and content dissemination skills.

The practical realities of “making a difference” or contributing to discontinuities that cascade down to many levels are tempered by the need both to operationalise skills in a new environment and satisfy the needs of the university. In Han’s (2005) study one participant considered that they had to be “more accurate in teaching than Anglo-phone teachers” because the students put them to the test the whole time before accepting them. Here the idea of “difference” is tied up with deficit in some way and the identity of the teacher is challenged as, regardless of how well they teach, they are denied full participation rights because of their different appearance or accent (Han and Singh, 2007; Miller, 2009). If the school culture is strongly organised to marginalise teachers on the basis of cultural, linguistic or ethnic background it is plain that the process of building a professional identity through participation will be a complex and challenging task.

Participation and reification, in Wenger’s terms, offer two kinds of lever “available for attempts to shape the future.” (Wenger, 1998, p. 91) The first involves seeking or avoiding relationships with specific people and the second, the production or promotion of specific artefacts to focus future negotiation of meaning in specific ways. Importantly, elements have to be reified in a community before they can shape practice. At the same time, participation “must include the power to wield reification” (Wenger, 1998, p. 93) for the reason that reification can create focus points around which people can negotiate issues that matter. Questions like: “Why do we do things this way?” can lead to positive new directions or a strengthening of
reified principles. There are a number of teachers in Deters’s (2006) study who shape their practice around their own unique backgrounds and skills. In this way, they reify the concept of inclusivity through their participation in school life, sometimes over periods of up to twenty years adopting different identities as they become full members of the community.

In the constantly evolving and emergent realities of a community of practice, learning is “the very process of being engaged in, and participating in developing, an on-going practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 95). Mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire are involved in constant developmental processes that are all related to the dynamic nature and emergent force within communities of practice. Learning generates this emergent force and is a source of “social structure” (Wenger, 1998, p. 96). Thus, while identifiable as a community, the relationships and participants are engaged in a constant process of renegotiation.

As Wenger (1998) writes, “close scrutiny will usually reveal good reasons – functional or dysfunctional – for a practice to be the way it is without having to resort to blanket assumptions of inherent stability or instability” (p. 98). An example of this in the fieldwork practicum context might be the attitude extended towards student teachers by the school community. All schools through their development and history acquire different ways of doing things. The newcomer entering this context is therefore required to learn the subtleties as they go, day by day, which is a difficult additional undertaking amid the more tangible demands of a fieldwork practicum. However, this process may go some way to explain why teacher trainees flourish in some environments and languish in others. Their efforts remain the same but somehow they are denied access to some of the resources that they need.
As Wenger (1998) observes, in communities, this learning “is not just the acquisition of memories, habits, and skills but the formation of an identity. Our experience and our membership inform each other, pull each other, transform each other” (p. 96). In the case of CALD student teachers, the act of being engaged in and participating becomes complicated due to the difference in mutuality, as a result of the social distance from the community of practice culture. Thus, the type of membership of the community is important. Peripheral participation will allow access to community resources and the possibility of active identity development through participation in practice.

As seen above, for CALD pre-service teachers, this process may involve intensive work on language issues and cultural knowledge. At the same time maintaining a legitimate position in cooperation with supervising teachers, students and staff at the practice school will be important. Han (2005) makes the point that the teachers involved in her study placed more importance on maintaining good behaviour in their students as they believed that good discipline was central to learning. Over time, however, they began to develop more tolerance of behaviour issues and focussed more on the small achievements that students make. This represents a change in their identity as teachers through engagement with the reality of the target school community and the local culture.

Practice is essentially a social process of shared learning, so, it can be shared across “generational discontinuities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 99). In any industry, the training of newcomers is a recognised necessity. In the industrial context, as illustrated in Wenger’s 1998 account, trainees belong to a marked category and though they may be “part of the scene” (p. 99) during their training encounters it is really not until they complete their classes and start working in the context proper
that their integration into the community of practice can really begin. This is the area where community of practice theory may contribute to gaining a better understanding of the practicum experience. CALD teachers face the same issues as all student teachers on the practicum. That is, to reconcile their own identity and expectations with the professional demands, they have to “fit in” (Maynard, 2001, p 45) with the class teachers’ and the supervisors’ expectations. The class teachers and supervisors are acting as brokers (Wenger, 2000) in facilitating the pre-service teacher’s experience as they cross the social boundary between the university course and the practicum school. Thus, intercultural sensitivities will be an important factor. One of the teachers in Han’s study (2005), for example, had her marginal position confirmed by her supervisor who told her that her non-English-speaking background would mean that she could not be qualified as a teacher in Australia. Some supervising teachers position themselves in the role of being powerful and the owners of formal teacher knowledge, which they use to reinforce the marginality of the pre-service teacher by undermining the pre-service teacher in front of the class (Han, 2005; Spooner-Lane et al., 2009).

As has been touched upon above, the term legitimate peripheral participation was coined to describe the process by which newcomers become included in a community of practice. In writing of that collaboration, Wenger (1998) states “we wanted to point out that the required learning takes place not so much through the reification of a curriculum as through modified forms of participation that are structured to open the practice to non-members” (p. 100).

Peripherality, “provides an approximation of full participation” (Wenger, 1998, p. 100) and must, in Wenger’s terms, provide access to all three dimensions of practice. At the same time, newcomers need to be granted enough legitimacy to be
treated as potential members. In the CALD pre-service teacher context, the means to grant legitimate peripherality may lie in the hands of teachers or supervisors who have had little experience of training in the area of intercultural teacher training. This can be extremely damaging to the student teacher’s self-esteem, leading them to question their identity as a teacher. As teaching is a socially interactive endeavour, being positioned in a positive way will be one of the keys to a successful practicum experience (Dobbins, 1996).

Wenger (1998) argues that the evolution of a community of practice, which can be harmonious or troubled, involves politics of both participation and reification. It is clear that generational differences add an edge to these politics by including the distinct perspectives that successive generations bring to bear on the history of a practice. The working out of these perspectives involves a dynamic of continuity and discontinuity that propels the practice forward. In considering inclusive education for a multi-cultural society that an evolution of inclusion of teachers from diverse backgrounds will contribute to generational change in the community of practice, as will the movement of new teachers from training courses into the real school experience. New teachers need to be granted the freedom not only to build their own identity as a teacher but also to contribute to the development of the community itself through generational change.

The context of a teaching practicum is one where peripheral legitimate access to the school is a defining feature. Indeed, in the group discussed by Han (2005), legitimacy to take part in the practicum could be denied by supervising teachers because of the non-English speaking background of the student teacher. Cruikshank (2004) discusses the range of programs that have been tried to prepare CALD student teachers for their practicum experience, in Wenger’s terms, to bring them closer to
legitimate access to participation in the teaching profession. He reports that the provision of both “front-end loading” in the form of preliminary courses and then on-going mentor support in “career development and academic work” (p. 135) are strengths of programs in America. He makes a strong case for the provision of similar support programs in Australia and indeed we can see their development at universities in Australia (Cruikshank, Newell & Cole, 2003). The idea of periphery or boundary that acts both to protect members who are on the inside and exclude those who are outside provides an important metaphor for both training experiences and the membership of a number of different communities. Myles, Cheng and Wang (2006) writing about Canada in regard to the practicum, make the point that only a very few of the schools that offered practicum experiences recognised the importance of a school environment that was inclusive of diversity.

3.2.4 Practice as boundary.

While the last section considered communities of practice in the context of their historical development and continuities and discontinuities, this section looks at the relations between communities of practice and the rest of the world. Of particular interest here are the intersections between different communities of practice. This is essential in any consideration of a fieldwork practicum as it involves clearly a university community and a school community that can be analysed. At the same time there are other interlocking communities representing different ethnicities and cultural experiences from which it will be necessary to cross social boundaries in the context of the pre-service practicum. Teachers, for example who have come from a background of teacher-directed learning will need some work to develop the facilitating sensibility required of a teacher in Australian schools.
From a situated learning perspective they will acquire this insight both from their training and from their participation in crossing over from one community to another.

Wenger (1998) considers boundary objects, which consist of “artefacts, documents, terms, concepts, and other forms of communication around which communities of practice can organise their interconnections” (p. 105) and brokering, a term Wenger applies to connections provided by people who can introduce elements of one practice into another. By their nature, they are also subject to change as communities change through their members’ participation and subsequent reification of different modes of managing boundaries. However, the crucial issue, according to Wenger (1998) is that “connecting the communities involved, understanding practices and managing boundaries become fundamental design tasks” (p. 108). The boundary, therefore, between the university community and the school community is marked by “ways of doing things” (Fleer and Robbins, 2003). As discussed above, the artefact that may present teaching as a teacher-directed, primarily cognitive endeavour contrasts with the social-constructivist theories presently adopted in Queensland schools. Accommodations will therefore need to be made by CALD teachers in building a professional identity that these may be different from the one that they possibly observed during their own educational experiences or learnt about in their previous courses of study.

The role of a broker lies at the intersection between boundaries of communities and practice and, according to Wenger (1998), “often entails ambivalent relations of multi-membership” (p. 109). Brokering requires an ability to manage carefully, the co-existence of membership and non-membership, yielding enough distance to bring a different perspective, but also enough legitimacy to be listened to. When the mediating role of the broker is applied to the context of a teacher undertaking
supervisory roles, particular contextual meanings apply. Myles, Cheng and Wang (2006) note that the power of the associate (supervising) teacher “can often undermine the goal of the practicum, which is to ideally provide a professionally supported mentorship” (p. 5) when the reified principles of what constitutes a teacher are defined by the institution with constraints over matters such as teaching styles and language and cultural issues.

Thus the key roles of the supervising teacher in the practicum need to be examined. As Mitchell, Clarke and Nuttall (2007) argue, classroom teachers “who work with beginning teachers in practicum settings play one of the most critical roles in pre-service teacher education” (p. 6). The teachers in Han’s (2005) study also draw attention to the influential role played by their supervising teachers. There is a close connection between positive and negative supervisory experiences, which is linked to the authority or power that student teachers were granted in their practicum experiences (Peeler & Jane, 2005). Encouragement, praise and positive support are closely linked with the confidence to experiment and to try new things in the class, participating fully in the planning and implementing process.

With the recognition that supervising teachers play such an important broker’s role in the practicum experience it is relevant to explore how they are prepared for their role as supervisors. Bullough (cited in Mitchell et al., 2007) argues that if the practicum is not to be, in some cases “a weak exercise in vocational socialisation” (p. 6) then explicit attention needs to be given to the training of supervising teachers. Sinclair, Dowson, and Thistleton-Martin (2006) examined 322 primary teachers in their study and found that professional commitment was one of the strongest motivators for teachers to take on a supervisor’s role. At the same time however, bad practicum experiences, poor university management and bad remuneration were also
raised as moderating factors (Sinclair et al., 2006). Mitchell et al. (2007) cite numerous examples of situations where supervising teachers have been unprepared for the incredible emotional demand that the supervisory role can bring.

For culturally and linguistically diverse teacher trainees or culturally the different beliefs of supervising teachers over different cultural borders will play a role in how they approach their practicum. For example, it was found that mentors (supervisors) in China were interested in the trainee’s content and subject knowledge, while those in the UK and the USA paid more attention to the trainee teacher’s ability to “build an understanding of pupils and their diversity” (Mitchell et al., 2007). These are two examples of where previous cultural experiences of tacit or direct attitudes can build expectations of the social situation of the teaching practicum that may later need to be worked out through participation. In Queensland, while content knowledge is of course important, there will be a subtle difference in the status that it is afforded by supervising teachers and working this out is a key identity issue.

Wenger (1998) also makes some comments about the role of participation and reification in creating connections across boundaries. In particular, our attention is drawn to the limitations of reification. He divides these limitations into three: the ability of reification to travel and break free of the physical limitations of mutual engagement before different interpretations take place; the ambiguity that allows reification to accommodate different viewpoints with the resulting possible misunderstandings; and the ability of reification “to make people take a stand by requiring interpretation and coordination” (p. 111).

Thus, as we have seen above, even the reification of expectations of supervising teachers can result in both positive and negative consequences. The
primacy and importance of good content knowledge in Chinese trained teachers may be lost in the context of an Australian high school practicum because they may be overwhelmed by other demands such as classroom management or discipline issues. Conversely, an Australian trained teacher may be viewed as too friendly and inclusive in a Chinese teaching context. With time, from a participation perspective, both would be able to meet the pedagogical demands of the different culture through mutual engagement and building a shared repertoire of appropriate teaching practices (Mitchell et al., 2007).

According to Wenger (1998) participation has its limits, in that no single member is fully representative of the practice as a whole. What people remember depends on their experience of the moment and in the absence of the practice and the rest of the community, isolated representatives cannot fully act or function as they do when engaged in actual practice (p. 111). Consequently, the complementary connection between reification and participation cannot be understated and indeed “the ambiguity of reification and the partiality of participation can compensate for each other by becoming productive, interactional resources” (p. 112). Student teachers need to take on social roles in which their values, beliefs and language move more closely to those that are suited or appropriate to the target group. Thereby they are enabled to negotiate meanings that are intrinsically tied to their experience of participation. At the same time, the reified structures of the practicum school may extend to include an extended repertoire of resources in response to the student teacher’s participation.

The three elements, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, provide the source of each community of practice’s boundary that both keeps insiders in and outsiders out. Wenger (1998. p. 114) describes three ways that
practice itself can become a connection. They are: boundary practices, overlaps and peripheries. This area is crucially important to the theory of situated learning involving shared social practice. The boundaries between shared communities are places where new members can gain experience in understanding how the community works. If their language, values or beliefs are very different from those of the community to which they are seeking entry, they may be denied access to the practices of the new community and so become marginalised.

When boundary encounters become established and “provide an ongoing forum for mutual engagement then a practice is likely to start emerging” (Wenger, 1998, p. 114). This can lead to effective bridge building between respective practices. However, there is a danger for boundary practices to “gain so much momentum of their own that they become insulated from the practices they are supposed to connect” (p. 115). For example, as Wenger (1998) writes, training classes are primarily boundary practices between some communities and the rest of the world. However, if teachers become isolated from other practitioners and immersed in classroom issues their practice may “cease to be representative of anything else; and artefacts gain local meanings that do not point anywhere” (p. 115). Fleer and Robbins (2003) raise the issue that community of practice theory does not necessarily provide any kind of working model to explain how newcomers may transform practices or how the tension between a university community of practice and a school community of practice can be resolved so as to allow student teachers to move forward in their practice at the theory/practice nexus.

Indeed, Fleer and Robbins (2003) found that the pedagogical framework being used at the university and that being implemented within their pre-service school practicum placements were different. It is clear here that there is potential for
considering continuity and discontinuity, generational change and the nexus of multi-
membership, particularly when CALD teachers are working within the two
communities – the university and the school. There is also a clear argument for the
importance of the supervising teacher or university supervisor working in the
boundary area between the university and the school to provide models of the
practices required in the practicum experience. On the other hand, the university
teaching preparation course can become itself a community of practice and so
introduce a further element of complexity to student teachers attempting to create
meaning through participation and reification of social practices across communities.
As Wenger (1998) writes, “in an institutional context it is difficult to act without
justifying your actions in the discourse of the institution” (pp. 10-11). Thus, student
teachers moving into the community of the practicum school may find that there may
be different understandings of key concepts. This may lead to the perception of a
mismatch between theory and practice where the student teacher may be using
practices that the supervising teacher is unfamiliar with or deems to be inappropriate
(Fleer and Robbins, 2003). Thus, this boundary crossing may be complicated by the
relationships between supervising teacher and pre-service practicum student.

The second type of encounter, “overlaps”, occurs when there is a direct and
sustained overlap between two practices. Wenger (1998) gives the example of
claims processors and claims technicians where the boundary becomes blurred and
considerable learning takes place, if allowed, to the benefit of both parties. In
schools, overlaps constantly occur between different subject areas and indeed can be
exploited by teachers so that natural history becomes a context for mathematical
exploration or music and dance can play a role in the learning of languages through
exploiting pedagogical practices that may seem at first to primarily belong to
different areas, like ‘total physical response’ as a means to build the first few vocabulary items in a language course. Thus, inter-curricular relationships may require more complex negotiations of roles and language to achieve successful practice outcomes. Perhaps the most prevalent overlap in current Queensland schools is the integration of information technology into subjects across the curriculum and the resulting knowledge and practices that are required, very often without any formal training in the area.

The third type of practice-based connection involves peripheries – where communities of practices offer peripheral experiences which allow “various forms of casual but legitimate access to a practice without subjecting them to the demands of full membership” (Wenger, 1998, p. 117). As Wenger (1998) explains, this peripheral form can include observations but also actual forms of engagement. Periphery is a very fertile area for change and gives the opportunity for the development of practice as the community constantly “renegotiates the relations between its core and its periphery” (p. 118). Legitimate Peripheral Participation was central to Lave and Wenger’s earlier work (1991) and, indeed, is still centrally relevant to any consideration of situated learning. Wenger in his 1998 work incorporated Legitimate Peripheral Participation more generally into the whole notion of participation and non-participation in communities of practice. In particular, Wenger (1998) explores participation and non-participation as aspects of an identity of practice that will be discussed later.

Wenger (1998) concludes that the texture of communities of practice is defined by practice not by any institutional affiliation and the landscape is defined “as a weaving of both boundaries and peripheries” (p. 118). Boundaries refer to discontinuities, “lines of distinction between inside and outside” (p. 120) and
peripheries, on the other hand, refer to continuities, overlap and connections. This is clearly pertinent to any endeavour that involves a practical component as part of the training. For student teachers to integrate into the school community they need to be allowed access to the periphery, so the school community approach to teacher training needs to be an open and accepting one that allows learning to occur through opportunities to engage in the practices of teaching, focusing on achieving increasing independence from the supporting staff.

Gore (2001) argues that pre-service teacher education has, as its primary purpose, the preparation of teachers “who can help their own students achieve high quality learning outcomes” (p.127). With this as a primary principle, Gore goes on to argue that everything we know about classroom practice should be linked to improved learning outcomes. For teacher education, four dimensions of classroom practice are crucial. These are intellectual quality, relevance, supporting classroom environment and recognition of difference. These four practices, also summarised as ‘productive pedagogy’, comprise, in Gore’s (2001) terms, the key practices that student teachers need to maintain in the classroom. There is, therefore, in describing these practices in linguistic, cultural and practical terms, a set of elements which define successful teaching and learning. In community of practice terms, therefore, it is the shared repertoire, mutual engagement and sense of joint enterprise in the pursuit of these practices that is the goal of a successful practicum experience.

3.2.5 Practice as location.

Drawing on the notion of practice as locality, a large school can be considered as a constellation of practices in some ways. Wenger’s argument (1998, pp. 122-128) that local level of practice is related to the global through practice is similar in a number of teaching communities of practice. The concept of constellations of
practice adds notions of “locality, proximity and distance to those of boundaries and peripheries” (p. 130). A teaching community of practice forms a constellation as they share a number of characteristics like artefacts, shared historical roots and members in common. Even within a community there is diversity that is internal to practice and defined through mutual engagement and diversity caused by boundaries and stemming from lack of engagement. Thus, within the constellation of practice that forms the teaching community there are different practices that develop in schools.

Indeed, one of the teachers in Deters’s (2006) study on the integration of CALD teachers in the Canadian context stressed the importance of the role of her department head and colleagues in her department as central to her integration into the community. Other teachers in this study found that a linguistically and culturally diverse school was accepting of cultural and linguistically diverse teacher trainees. This is not a surprising observation, but at the same time it raises a question about how to create positive experiences of participation for CALD teachers in schools that are not so pluralistic or diverse by genuinely allowing them access to the classroom.

The continuity of constellation in Wenger’s terms (1998) needs to be considered in terms of interactions between practices including boundary objects and brokering, boundary practices, overlaps and peripheries, elements of style, and elements of discourses. Wenger (1998) cautions, though, styles and discourses are not practices in themselves as “the landscape of practice is an emergent structure in which learning constantly creates localities that reconfigure the geography” (p. 131). Localities where the landscape of practice has become diverse are fertile ground for the positive legitimisation of new members. At the same time, however, local
systems and rules will impact upon terms that they can meaningfully share and practices that they will be able to adopt.

Bella (1999) provides a number of differences that have been noted by overseas trained teachers and the Queensland system that range from areas as broad as the approach taken (that is, child-centredness) to practical details, like the use of computers in class. Each one of these represents an area where accommodation might need to be made by the overseas-trained teacher or the CALD teacher trainee and also provides an opportunity for them to build their professional identity through participating in the new practices.

Having considered the elements of practice that allow an overview of the complexities that participants in a new community may face it is clear that the process of participating in a teaching practicum involves for all student teachers a challenge to their identity and the need to develop a new identity in the face of the new community of practice. The next section considers how this identity work is achieved.

3.3 Identity

Wenger (1998) examines identity under the following headings: identity in practice; identities of participation and non-participation; modes of belonging; identification and negotiability; and, learning communities. These terms are used here to describe the central elements of his theory before relating these ideas to the consideration of the area of teacher training in Queensland with particular reference to the relevance of the concepts for CALD teachers undertaking their practicum.
3.3.1 Identity in Practice.

As Wenger (1998) notes, “practice entails the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context” (p. 49). It therefore follows that the formation of a community of practice is also ‘the negotiation of identities.’ By applying the themes discussed under practice to identity, Wenger (1998) creates the following characterisations: identity as negotiated experience; identity as community membership; identity as learning trajectory; identity as nexus of multi-membership; identity as the relation between the global and the local.

According to Wenger (1998) identity in practice is socially defined as it is a “lived experience of participation in specific communities” (p. 150). Wenger notes that, as a means to interweave the participative and reificative aspects, identity helps to make meaning of the roles that we have as members of a community. The three dimensions of competence in practice, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire now become dimensions of identity. Through the first we learn about working together with other people. Having a joint enterprise and being accountable to that enterprise gives us a perspective on the world. As we engage in practice in a sustained way, we gain a “personal history of participation” (Wenger, 1998, p. 153) that helps us negotiate our position in relation to the repertoire of a practice. The development of an identity is constant through the complementary forces of participation and reification. Everybody is at a different stage in the development of their various identities in different communities of practice and so Wenger (1998) introduces the notion of trajectories that “connect the past, the present and future” (p. 154). The socially situated explanation of identity is important with regards to CALD teachers who may be at completely different stages to native
pre-service teachers in the development of various identities suitable to teaching in their target schools.

Han (2005) describes the contribution that the practicum experience makes to the metamorphosis of CALD teachers’ identities. The teachers all faced difficulties of some kind related to their cultural and/or linguistic diversity in the course of their practicum experiences in Australia. They adopted a range of strategies to minimise these effects. For example some of the teacher-trainees concentrated on being extremely well-prepared for their lessons; they learned to “re-situate and change themselves so to adjust to the new teaching environment” (p. 11) and to meet the challenges that were levelled at them from students who were, themselves, building a new identity as they incorporated the notion of teachers from different cultures into their school community experiences.

The strategies that these teacher-trainees adopted are all strategies that would be useful for anyone undertaking a teaching practicum or indeed any form of educational experience where one is called upon to operationalise a new set of professional competencies and knowledge. They included tolerance, the challenge of their old-self being challenged, compromise, adjustment and learning to change. This can be a very uncomfortable process but at the same time transformative in terms of professional and personal practices.

Wenger (1998) argues that “identities are defined with respect to the interaction of multiple, convergent and divergent trajectories” (p. 154) and states that identity is fundamentally temporal, ongoing, is constructed in social contexts, and its temporality is more complex than a linear notion of time. Thus, the building of a professional identity in one context may take longer than in another due to the complex interaction between the social identities of the community’s members.
Members of communities of practice are also engaged in various types of trajectories – peripheral, inbound, insider, boundary, and outbound. In the first, participants have legitimate access to real practices and an “inbound trajectory” implies becoming a full member of the community. As we have seen above, sustaining an identity whilst trying to maintain an inbound trajectory into the community of practice of the practicum school represents a complex challenge for student teachers and their practicum school and university supervisors. At times it is impossible. Lee (2007) gives an emotional account of the termination of one fieldwork placement experience where the supervising teacher simply had to terminate the practicum experience of a student teacher who could not demonstrate the required competencies. The supervisor examines her “intellectual and emotional turmoil” as she reflects upon the experience of making the decision and breaking the bad news. It is an important reminder that the development of identity extends to all of those involved in a social practice like the teaching practicum, and that the stakes are high in terms of emotional and identity investment. Not meeting standards, or failing to demonstrate competencies, can result in being denied participation, or in marginalisation, which can be destructive and stressful for participants as their trajectories into the community change or are challenged.

Lee’s (2007) account explains that people’s lives form a nexus of multi-membership in different communities of practice. In this nexus, multiple trajectories are the norm and this identity can also be viewed as a form of reconciliation, where different meanings and forms of participation (Wenger, 1998) meet. In the context of this study, teachers negotiate the nexus between university, school and their own background and norms engaging in multiple trajectories often in an uneasy
relationship. As an entry into multi-membership, it is, according to Wenger (1998) “the living experience of boundaries” (p. 161).

As learners engage in different practices, complex reconciliation of identity formation may be required because of the multiple boundaries that must be negotiated. In the context of a pre-service teaching practicum with all the complexities of language and culture that are contained within this experience, it is easy to see how some areas may be neglected in favour of others. For example, teachers concentrating on developing their linguistic teaching repertoire may lose sight of the bigger picture. They may be so busy concentrating on perfecting their pronunciation that they may miss opportunities for more spontaneous elements and learning opportunities that present themselves in the classroom.

Identity in practice is, according to Wenger (1998), “a way of being in the world” (p. 151). Importantly, then, definitions of community involve dimensions of practice, that is, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire that extend as dimensions of identity (Wenger, 1998) through mutuality of engagement, accountability to an enterprise and negotiability of a repertoire. Identity building is constant and as we go through successive forms of participation, our identities form different trajectories “both within and across communities of practice” (p. 154). Indeed, people “require some work to reconcile their different forms of membership, different practices can make competing demands that are difficult to combine into an experience that corresponds to a single identity ” as they negotiate the nexus of multi-membership (p. 159).

There are three key demands on people as they negotiate the nexus of multi-membership. They are different ways of engagement in practice that reflect different forms of individuality, where teachers may find one style of teaching more suitable
for their own personality; different forms and levels of accountability which may call for different responses to the same situation, and elements in one repertoire may be inappropriate or even offensive in another community. An example of issues arising here for student teachers from diverse backgrounds may relate to different forms of behaviour management that are acceptable in different schools and different cultures (Wenger, 1998).

It is in the reconciliation of different forms of membership that, according to Wenger (1998) the most significant challenge lies for learners who move from one community to another. In these situations “conflicting forms of individuality and competence as defined in different communities” (p. 160) must be dealt with. The maintenance of an identity across boundaries lies at the core of what it means to be a person. We define who we are by our past and our possible future, by “where we have been and where we are going” (Sachs, 2003, p. 125). When elements of power and control to accept or deny access to communities are taken into consideration more of the social complexity of the undertaking of gaining entry to any community, social or professional, is revealed. In the context of the pre-service practicum then where student teachers are seeking to be legitimised to participate in the life of the community the relationship between building an identity and engaging in the practices of the community are closely connected. If students or supervising teachers put up barriers to legitimate participation then both practice and identity development are denied. In the public forum of a practicum experience it is easy to see how difficult this might become. One teacher in Han’s (2005) study, for example, on his first practicum found himself marginalised and struggling with overly negative feedback. His reaction was to state “I nearly gave up the idea of being a teacher” (p. 5).
3.3.2 Participation and non-participation.

Wenger (1998) makes the important point that identities “are constituted not only by what we are but also what we are not” (p. 164) and involve both participation and non-participation. These concepts are much deeper than simply reflecting the relationships between insiders and outsiders. Non-participation includes two identifiable states – peripherality and marginality. These may be understood “in the context of trajectories that determine the significance of forms of participation” (p. 166). Newcomers, for example, may find non-participation “an opportunity for learning” (p. 166) as they proceed on an inbound trajectory with the notion of full participation at its end. On the other hand, “long standing members can be kept in a marginal position, and the very maintenance of that position may have become so integrated in the practice that it closes the future” (p. 167). Marginalisation implies a situation where a participant is denied the right to move more deeply into the community of practice and become a fully participating member. It can of course be voluntary, where a person is happy to remain on the margins of a community for reasons of their own. However, for someone to be placed in a marginal position like some of the teachers in Han’s (2005) study, where they were not allowed even to commence the practicum experience, it appears that being denied even the possibility of full participation can result in the abandoning of the goal of becoming a teacher in Australia.

The mix of participation and non-participation fundamentally affects our lives and goes far beyond any notion of personal choices. As Wenger (1998) observes “they involve processes of community involvement where the configuration of social relations is the work of the self” (p. 168). This takes place at three different levels: “trajectories with respect to specific communities of practice; boundary relations and
the demands of multi-membership; and our position and the position of our communities within broader constellations of practices and broader institutions” (Wenger, 1998, p. 69). Deters (2006), who used situated learning and community of practice theory to examine the participation of a group of teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the Canadian school context, found that this perspective was useful in bringing into relief “the dialectic nature of the professional acculturation of immigrant teachers” (p. 1). In particular, Deters (2006) found that important factors include community stance and acceptance, the newcomer’s journeys, “trajectories” and the subsequent negotiation of identity by the teachers as they spent longer in their schools.

In terms of training courses, it is important to consider how much can possibly be formalised as ‘knowledge for practice’ as teachers prepare to enter the new community of the school and how much will need to be worked out through participation. This is especially true for teachers from diverse backgrounds as their “different cultural concepts of teaching stemming from earlier experiences and understandings of the roles of students and teachers in native countries can affect how they approach the practicum” (Myles, Cheng & Wang, 2006. p.237). This is where, in identity terms, that they need to reconcile the different identities that they have through the nexus of multi-membership in different communities. However, from a social practice perspective, learning is a “situated activity in which issues of cognition, context and social interaction cannot be considered in isolation from each other” (p. 237). Thus, any kind of training course needs to take this into account and pay appropriate attention to the social context of the practicum experiences and their contribution to the development of an identity of participation. In their examination of the development of teacher’s identities in the first few years of teaching Flores and
Day (2006) found that teachers’ personal and professional histories and pre-service training play a key role in the development of their professional identity when considered with school culture and leadership. There is thus a strong sense of the individual, the training course, and the community of the school shaping and re-shaping teacher’s professional identities. For CALD student teachers the interplay between these various factors will be influenced by their own individual cultural and linguistic background and so they may face different kinds of conflicting beliefs and challenges from those experienced by teachers from backgrounds closer to those of the target schools.

### 3.3.3 Modes of belonging.

Wenger (1998) considers that it is necessary to consider other modes of belonging than simple engagement in practice. Wenger (1998) identifies three distinct modes of belonging:

- **Engagement** – active involvement in mutual processes of meaning

- **Imagination** – creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space through extrapolating from our own experience

- **Alignment** – coordinating our energy and our activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises. (p. 173-174)

Engagement includes processes we have examined above including on-going negotiation of meaning, trajectories and histories of practice. Mutual engagement forms one part of practice and so an important part of identity in practice.

The second mode of belonging, imagination, refers to a process of expanding ourselves by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves. Wenger (1998) believes it can make a difference for our experience of identity and potential for learning. Imagination is the mode through which new
developments and the lessons of history can be learned and goes beyond simple mutual engagement. At the same time, however, that imagination may set the spirit free, it will inevitably involve negotiation of practice and be tempered by the reality of mutuality and shared repertoire. For CALD teachers in the context of their practicum, imagination and the vision of a possible future will be important and would seem to certainly warrant explicit attention in training courses so as to achieve manageable goals and temper unrealistic expectations.

According to Wenger (1998), alignment “bridges time and space to form broader enterprises so that participants become connected through the coordination of their energies, actions and practices” (p. 179). It “expands the scope of our effects upon the world” and “we can manage levels of scale and complexity that give new dimensions to our belonging” (p. 180). However, alignment can have a dark and negative side where the practices and beliefs of one community can come into conflict, socially and politically with those of another, resulting in members being forced to choose where they are aligned.

Indeed, in their study on supervisor and student teacher relations in which they utilised the three dimensions of alignment, imagination and engagement to examine identity development, Kwan, Lopez-Real and Tsui (2009) found that “coercive alignment can lead to alienation” while “alignment achieved by persuasion negotiation and inspiration can lead to empowerment” (p. 88). They also emphasise the complex interaction between these modes of belonging that can lead to “different qualities of learning” (p. 88) being experienced for pre-service teachers. This work is informed by Wenger’s (2000) matrix of identity dimensions, where engagement, imagination and alignment are plotted together with three qualities that are seen as essential in building a healthy social identity: connectedness, effectiveness and
expansiveness. This conception of identity work is revisited in Chapter 7 for the participants in this present study.

Identity formation is a complex and dual process consisting of identification and negotiability. Identification “involves building identities through an investment of the self in relations of association and differentiation” (Wenger, 1998, p. 188). Negotiability determines the degree to which we have control over the meanings in which we are invested (Wenger, 1998). Wenger draws out the relationship between identification and the context of each mode of belonging. Thus, we can experience identification through engagement, imagination, and alignment and, as we have seen above there can be a complex interaction between them as people identify in different ways to community membership. Wenger’s later work (2010) favours the interpretation of these modes of belonging as modes of “identification” but for this study’s purposes we will retain the term “modes of belonging”.

Negotiability refers to the “ability, facility, and legitimacy to contribute to, take responsibility for and shape the meanings that matter within a social configuration” (Wenger, 1998, p. 197). It is to do with social configurations, and our positions in them. These are described as “economies of meaning” (p. 197) and negotiability among individuals and communities is “shaped by structural relations of ownership of meaning” (p. 197). In a school context there may be very different ways for schools to facilitate the training of student teachers due to the meanings ascribed to the training process by the school community. These may range from a highly supportive, structured and integrated program to an experience that places much of the responsibility for the practicum experience on the supervising teacher.

Economies of meaning are related to not only local meanings within communities but also part of a broader economy of meaning, in which different
meanings are produced in different locations. This economy of meaning has to do with the relationship between people and artefacts. It broadens the notion of meaning from a purely personal perspective to a social perspective. Thus, there are many ways of relating to artefacts within each community and different cultural norms that operate between communities that may superficially seem very similar. This is especially true of school cultures that are constantly evolving and changing in response to different demands. It is also relevant to education systems across different cultural boundaries, which means that teachers from different cultural contexts may face contrasting understandings of key educational notions such as assessment or homework.

Ownership of meaning refers to “the degree to which we can make use of, affect, control, modify, or in general, assert as ours, the meanings that we negotiate” (p. 200). Again, the emphasis is upon socially negotiated meaning - not purely individual meaning and implies “a plurality of perspectives” (p. 201). However, the assertion of particular meanings in communities will involve aspects of status and notions of who is best able to define them. As Edwards and Tsui (2009) assert, whilst describing an experience one of their student teachers had in relation to developing curriculum documents, “being able to contribute to meanings that are considered important in a community, to participate in the negotiation of meanings and to claim ownership of meanings is another important process of identity formation” (p. 64) for student teachers.

Finally, power “has a dual structure that reflects the interplay between identification and negotiability “(Wenger, 1998, p. 207). At a personal level, identity is a “locus of social power”. It contains the power to identify with features of a community that at the same time require some consensus of the broader group of
members. Thus there is always a kind of tension between identification and negotiability particularly at times of change or when one is in the process of gaining access to a new community and building a new identity. Maynard (2001) describes this process for student teachers as the underlying tension between “fitting in” and “being themselves” (p. 50). For new teachers, the practicum and indeed their first few years of teaching will be a continual process of discovering or building a self that meets their personal needs whilst also “being subjected to the powerful socialising forces of the school culture” (Day, 1999, in Flores & Day, 2006). The work of building a personal and professional identity for teaching therefore takes place within a social and cultural context, initially of the practicum school and later through early teaching experiences. This aspect of identity building cannot be overestimated as it is the key to “becoming and being an effective teacher” (Flores & Day, 2006). This underlines the importance of the practicum experience to allow an identity of participation to develop rather than denying access to the practices of the school because of elements of linguistic or cultural repertoire that members may not have in common.

Identification may be with a broad community alignment yet find an intense economy of meaning at the level of engagement. This means that teachers, for example, may be passionately committed to inclusive education (alignment), yet the practical applications of inclusive education principles may require intense negotiation at the practical class level (engagement). As teachers’ nexus of multi-membership crosses these levels, the work of reconciliation must address issues of negotiability as well as identification (Wenger, 1998). In a teaching context there will always be a number of areas where a teacher comfortable in one system would be challenged in another. Negotiability is found in phrases like “opening access to
information, listening to other perspectives” (Wenger, 1998, p.210). It is a social process involving identity change and development in response to social pressures while at the same time maintaining the notion of the self, the ‘person in the world.’

At the same time, in the context of a practicum, which is a short duration of between four to eight weeks, there may be little time for negotiation of complex meanings. This may create further stress for the CALD pre-service teachers.

3.4 Discussion

There have been some recent relevant critiques and applications of community of practice theory in educational contexts (Maynard, 2001; Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson & Unwin, 2005; Edwards, 2005; Thorpe, 2003; Storberg-Walker, 2008; Tsui, Edwards & Lopez-Real, 2009). It is recognised that community of practice theory does offer a potential for examining and understanding the experiences of teachers and student teachers from different perspectives including the areas of participation, identity development and boundary crossing. Maynard (2001) raises a number of questions concerning communities of practice and initial teacher training, all of which are central to this study. They are as follows:

When considering initial teacher training, the question is who might be included in the community of practice? This immediately draws our attention to the multiple communities, school, university and home that each student teacher is involved in and the potential for interaction between the three. Importantly, it also raises the central question of how pre-service teachers could become part of the core of the pre-service experience. The central people involved in the practicum experience for CALD teachers will be their supervising teacher (who is responsible for their assessment), the classroom teacher who will play a support, supervisory and mentor role and of course the students in the school. Campbell, O’Gorman, Tangen,
Spooner-Lane and Alford (2008) conducted a pilot study where they interviewed a university liaison officer who acts as a bridge between the university and the school, a field studies unit co-ordinator and a supervising teacher at a school in Queensland. As well as the questions about language, issues such as the lack of information on how to support CALD teachers on practicum by the support staff and whether assessment criteria needed to be approached in different ways were also discussed. All of these illustrate that, in considering the CALD student teachers practicum experience, an approach that takes into account the whole situated learning context will lead to more useful insights than one that simply considers the teachers themselves.

The second question that Maynard (2001) raises is: What was the impact of the university on student’s sense of self as teacher? In other words, how far is it possible for a training course to assist in the creation and development of an identity, professional or otherwise, and what are the best ways of achieving this so as to allow student teachers to get the most out of their practicum experiences? This relates to the discussion above and the dilemmas that supervising staff find themselves in when their student teacher comes with a set of linguistic and cultural routines and attitudes that contrast to those of the placement school.

The third question is: What other aspects of school culture might have influenced students’ thinking and practise? This question opens up a consideration of all the members of the school community and the principles under which the school community engages in their practice. It is also here that we need to consider the notion of legitimising the practicum experience. Who holds the power to allow student teachers enough access to the target school that they can start to build a
personal and professional identity as a teacher and take their place in the teaching community of practice?

Maynard (2001) found as we have seem above that student teachers experience an underlying tension between “fitting in and being themselves” (p. 50). She found that “learning as participation” did provide a useful framework for highlighting the various pressures that affected students as they engaged in their practicum. Maynard notes that many of the difficulties that the student teachers experienced may have arisen from the students’ eagerness to behave as “full participants” in the school community in which they were participating. They did not allow for peripheral participation and neither, presumably, was the notion of peripheral participation raised with them implicitly or explicitly. This relates centrally to an understanding of the purpose of the practicum as an opportunity to experience the practices of the school and take part as a peripheral participant in those practices. It also raises questions about the value or otherwise that student teachers may place on the notion of peripherality and whether they understand that achieving legitimate peripheral participation rights to a community practice does imply a positive trajectory into full membership.

Maynard (2001) cautions that “learning as participation” (p. 51), while useful in some respects, does not adequately represent the complex relationships that exist between individual students, university partners and school communities of practise, nor the “pain, conflict and loss” (p. 51) that seems to be integral to the process of becoming a teacher. Similarly, Fuller et al. (2005) draw researchers’ attention to the contribution that newcomers can bring to a community, which appears to be under-emphasised by community of practice theory in general. This notion of newcomers’ contribution or potential contribution to the communities they enter is an important
one for this present study as the obvious strengths, both cultural and personal, of CALD teachers can be lost in their battle for legitimate peripheral participation as they encounter the reified practices and attitudes of the target school that may not include a clear sense of cultural inclusivity or diversity. This battle may also be experienced in the “power inequalities between native speakers and non-native speakers” (Kramsch, 2011, p.365) where language becomes a path to accessing the cultural resources of the greater society. The “symbolic power of language” (Kramsch, 2011, p. 357) is a significant aspect of a study on culturally and linguistically diverse student teachers, and according to Kramsch (2011) can reveal aspects of “social identities, individual and collective memories, emotions and aspirations” (p.357). However, as this study focuses upon the contribution that the community of the practicum school makes to identity development, the data analysis aims to primarily investigate the key aspects of a successful school community in terms of the types of participation in practice that it extends to its new student teachers.

In terms of organisational practices, Fuller et al. (2005) also find that examples of tacit learning are central to the organisational culture as well as those where opportunities for learning are more carefully controlled. In the context of a school pre-service practicum where teaching and learning form such a central part of the experience, and where student teachers aim to develop and share their knowledge in practise, it is clear that understanding of participation, barriers to participation and transformation of identities will be crucial elements that will increase opportunities for better practicum experiences and outcomes. Such understanding may help to extend the practice teaching experience from one that Fuller et al. (2005) describe as “survival in a marginal situation” (p. 127) to one where participation can lead to
successful and positive development, a “learning community” in Wenger’s terms. As Wenger (1998) writes:

Viewed as an experience of identity, learning entails both a process and a place. It entails a process of transforming knowledge as well as a context in which to define an identity of participation. … A learning community offers an ideal context for developing new understandings because the community sustains change as part of an identity of participation. (p. 215)

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed situated learning theory, and particularly the notion of communities of practice for the purpose of setting an appropriate framework for examining the social motivations that drive teachers who are linguistically and culturally diverse undertaking their teacher training in Queensland. Viewing the pre-service practicum school as a learning community allows an examination of the factors that may constrain or facilitate these pre-service teachers’ experiences as they endeavour to build their professional identity.

It is argued that a community of practice perspective can provide a critical lens through which to examine the experiences of this group of teachers as they tell their practicum stories and reflect upon the process of participation in the practices of their host schools. This theoretical perspective will allow an examination of how access to the school practicum is negotiated and the influences of the key players, the supervising teachers and university staff in the process. A consideration of how these students build their professional identity in the process of their practicum and the complex interactions that they undertake as they negotiate an identity for themselves between communities will be possible. The implications of the study are related to the practical problem of how to facilitate a positive experience of the
teaching practicum for CALD students, taking into account the complexity of the social task in which they are engaged by participating in their practicum schools.

Tsui, Lopez-Real and Edwards (2009), in terms of examining the school/university partnership for practicum, consider that:

How participants position themselves in the social space that is created as community boundaries are crossed, how they make sense of new activities that emerge from the interactions, how they appropriate the sociocultural tools that are brokered at the boundary crossing and how they negotiate the meanings of the joint enterprise are critical processes which constitute the learning experience and shape their identities as teachers. (p. 42)

This study analyses these “critical processes” in the experiences of student teachers undertaking their practicum in Queensland schools by adopting a narrative inquiry methodology. It examines how their experiences are influenced by the levels of access granted to them by their practicum schools, the important relationships that underpin their practicum experience and the particular influence that cultural and language issues might have on their experience as a whole. Chapter Four now discusses the methodology adopted for this study and the methods employed to select participants, and to gather and analyse data.
Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The chapter begins with a consideration of narrative inquiry to establish its suitability as a methodology for this research of CALD teachers in Queensland schools. The narrative inquiry framework, provided by Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007), is then presented and the “essential elements”, such as the justification for the study and the methods, contained in each narrative inquiry, as described by Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007), are used as headings to frame the research design of this study.

4.2 Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that is set in human stories of experience. It “provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 1). This framework allows a consideration of events and experiences set in their unique social contexts. Further, Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that “just as a story unfolds the complexities of characters, relationships and settings, so too can complex problems be explored in this way” (p. 4).

As this study involves the examination of pre-service teachers in the setting of their practicum schools, narrative inquiry was chosen to gain an understanding of their personal and social experiences in these particular contexts. Narrative research into multicultural teacher education “situates teacher education experiences in the life of a teacher educator, a teacher or a student. It enables teacher educators to
connect strategies or observations with examined life experiences and to communicate emotions” (Sleeter, 2001, p. 238). As well as these personal and emotional stories, narrative research on teaching, according to Elbaz-Lewisch (2007), holds particular power for understanding studies of diversity. In particular, she argues that “seeing how immigrant teachers tell their stories of becoming teachers in a new environment teaches us about schooling in the host culture and allows new questions to be asked about that culture and its arrangements for teaching and learning” (p. 372). Such new questions can then be used to develop different understandings of the pathways into teaching for this group and explore the particular social structures and interactions that they encounter in the process.

Using narrative inquiry, Cortazzi (1993), in a study of nearly one thousand primary teachers’ narratives, identified three important trends in teachers’ narratives: reflection, the nature of the teacher’s knowledge and voice. In the study, teachers were invited to reflect on their experiences and to consider the complex relationship between their knowledge and experience. At the same time, their individual voices were of central significance and, according to Cortazzi (1993), “the narrative account must … carry the teacher’s voice if researchers and other observers are to know what a teacher knows or feels. Indeed, how can anyone else know what is inside the teacher’s head or heart without the teacher’s commentary?” (p. 11). The implications of the use of narrative inquiry for this present study are that exploring CALD student teachers’ practicum experiences through their personal narratives allows unique insights into their learning. At the same time a narrative approach allows for a consideration of both individual voices and common themes. This approach enables the researcher to analyse and describe similar or contrasting issues that are experienced in the practicum.
There are a number of different narrative methods being used in educational research, which include: autobiography, the life history method, collaborative biography, narrative inquiry, curriculum stories and teacher’s anecdotes (Cortazzi, 1993, Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007). At the heart of all of them lies the “vital and on-going task of placing the lives and stories of teachers at the forefront of inquiry into teaching and schooling” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007, p. 362). For this present study, autobiographical narrative accounts of practicum experiences, were sought because “teacher’s autobiography centres round our knowing more about teacher’s professional and personal experiences and the links between these” (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 12).

The use of narrative accounts for teachers can play an important interpretive role with a consideration of how teachers understand their past work and their past selves. This points to the importance of “teacher’s self-understanding as a vehicle for personal emancipation and professional development” (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 12). In narratives, teachers are encouraged to become comfortable with the notion “of multiple voices”, to consider themselves in the present, utilizing insights from the past and imagining a possible future. This notion of ‘multiple voices’ over time is extended for the participants in this present study to include elements of diversity as they, culturally diverse narrators, find themselves considering their experiences in different cultural and linguistic dimensions (Phillion, He and Connelly, 2005).

In a broader context, from a multi-cultural perspective, Daiute and Lightfoot (2004, p viii) claim that “researchers that have adopted narrative methods have found them particularly useful for addressing the unmet challenge of integrating culture, person and change – a challenge that has become especially acute in the last quarter century.” They argue that “the texture of modern life is increasingly defined by
weaving together separate generations, life stages, cultures and social and political ideologies.” They consider that the understanding of these complex “life systems” reaches into all aspects of our lives, including health, education and policy development. It is timely therefore to explore the narratives of culturally and linguistically diverse student teachers (CALD) in the practicum context to bring to the forefront the multiple social, cultural and historical factors impacting on and interacting with their experiences. Narrative, in this study, is used as a “strategy to disclose educational experiences” (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 12) and the pre-service teachers’ narratives examined here constitute the research data.

The work of Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007) is drawn upon, as their thesis on narrative inquiry fits well within the education area with ‘narrative being taken up by teachers and teacher educators interested in studying and improving their own practices’ (p. 22). Clandinin and Connelly (in Clandinin, 2007) define narrative inquiry as follows:

Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which the person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (p. 477)

Clandinin et al. (2007) outline what they describe as three ‘commonplaces’ of narrative inquiry. By commonplaces they mean three elements that every narrative inquiry must have and that must be ‘simultaneously’ explored in every narrative inquiry (see also Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). They are: temporality, sociality
and place. Temporality in Clandinin et al’s (2007) terms includes the ideas that “events and people always have a past, present and future” (p.23) and that there is always an element of temporal transition in narrative. Sociality broadly includes both personal conditions and the “existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise, that form each individual’s context” (p. 23). Personal conditions are drawn out to represent a broad range of emotions, feelings, hope and desires that are generated in the temporal transition.

‘Place’ basically means the concrete context in which the events that constitute the narrative take place. For this present study, the temporal aspects focus particularly on the passage of student teachers into their practicum, the past that they bring to bear on their experiences and the future that they imagine and that they are creating in their practicum experiences. The sociality aspects include all the key stakeholders, including both school and university staff, the university pre-service preparation course, the practicum and all the elements that are interacting and acting on the pre-service teachers’ individual contexts. ‘Place’ in this inquiry can be various schools or university environments. In particular, it is the schools in Queensland where student teachers undertake their fieldwork practicum, which may be private or public. Together, these dimensions form an interpretive space where the complex human interactions can be examined.

4.3 Essential elements in narrative inquiry

In the following section, the eight elements that Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007) consider essential in a narrative inquiry are now discussed in relation to their significance for this research. They are: 1) justification for the narrative inquiry 2) the phenomenon that is under investigation, 3) the methods used to study the phenomenon, 4) analysis and interpretation processes, 5) positioning of the narrative
inquirers, 6) the uniqueness of each study design, 7) ethical considerations and 8) the process of representation and the research texts. These comprise a set of elements that Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007) consider that narrative inquirers can think about as they “undertake, live through, and write about” (p. 24) their narrative inquiries. They also serve to provide a constant set of questions that help to structure the inquiry.

4.3.1 Justification for the narrative inquiry.

According to Clandinin et al. (2007), three kinds of justification need attention. They are: the personal, the practical and the social. I chose to use narrative inquiry as my research methodology so as to broaden the research perspective on CALD student teachers’ experiences by situating their narratives within a sociocultural framework. This allowed a complex picture to emerge for these student teachers that brought their individual voices and lived experiences to the fore in the social contexts of their practicum schools. While Clandinin and Connelly (2000) acknowledge that it can be difficult to “establish a personal sense of justification” (p. 122) they also argue that, “for narrative inquirers, it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one’s personal interests and sense of significance of larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others” (p. 122).

4.3.2 Phenomenon under investigation.

CALD teachers bring their own personal and cultural narratives to their practicum experiences. As revealed in Chapter 2, CALD student teachers may be restricted from developing a full identity of practice because of cultural and linguistic elements in the placement schools that position them in a marginal space. In community of practice terms, they may find themselves unable to cross boundaries between the university and the school (Wenger, 1998). Alternatively they may find
ways that open up opportunities to engage with the community of the target school by using their diversity as a positive factor in their professional identity development. The phenomena under inquiry here are those factors that facilitate or constrain their learning experience in the course of their fieldwork practicum. These may be personal resources or other people. The narrative view of these learning experiences and identity development allows the phenomena of constraining and facilitating factors to emerge in the context of the participants’ life stories, or “life space” (Clandinin et al., 2007, p. 481).

4.3 The methods used to study the phenomenon.

As analysing narrative is one method of exploring the phenomenon of the practicum experience that may reveal insights into the relevance of legitimate participation, and identity formation, the method adopted for data collection was to undertake in-depth interviews. Initially, it was envisaged that focus group discussions might constitute the first phase of this research so as to provide a structured and comfortable environment where CALD teachers could discuss their experiences together (Barbour, 2007, p. 21). However in the initial phase of contacting participants several indicated that they would be more comfortable taking part in an in-depth interview (Kvale, 2007), thus in-depth interviews were chosen as the data collection method for this study (see 4.4.1 for more details on participant selection).

In-depth interviews allowed a deeper exploration of those factors that participants considered or identified as facilitating or constraining their practicum experiences. Kvale (2007) considers that “the personal interrelationship with the unfolding of stories and new insights can be rewarding for both parties of the interview interaction” (p. 8). Further, interviewing can produce substantial new
knowledge in a field. At the same time it is crucial to attend carefully to the ethical
issues that are central to interview research. As Kvale recognises (2007) there is a
“delicate balance between the interviewer’s concern of pursuing interesting
knowledge and ethical respect for the integrity of the interview subject” (p. 8). This
was duly noted in conducting the interviews which were marked by a conscious
“sensitivity to and respect for [the participants’] values, norms and worldviews”

As a common and popular method of data gathering in qualitative research and
narrative inquiry, the interview enables a participant perspective and a conversation
that is semi-structured through the questions posed by the interviewer (King, 2004;
Kvale, 2007). Though defined as narrative inquiry, it is a research inquiry, and thus
followed steps as outlined by qualitative research: defining the question, creating the
interview questions, recruiting participants and conducting the interviews (King,
2004). Each of these steps is crucial: defining the research question is significant to
gain insights from the narratives provided and to help analyse how participants make
sense of experiences in their lives (King, 2004).

In creating interview questions, Patton’s (2002) identification of interview
questions was considered. Following Patton (2002), the study used a general
interview guide where a set of questions is used for each participant to guide the
narratives, through a conversational mode. The guide helps to avoid excess data
(Miles & Huberman, 1994), while the conversational mode assisted in keeping the
interview open to investigate topics that might be introduced by the interviewee. In
carrying out the interviews, the three phases of questioning outlined by King (2004)
were observed. These are appropriate opening, asking questions and ending the
interview. In opening the interview, easy questions were first asked to allow the
interviewee to settle into the process. In asking questions, single simple questions (see 4.4.2) that were phrased clearly were included that related directly to participants’ practicum experiences (Elliot, 2005; King, 2004). The interviews were concluded by the researcher thanking the participant and giving them the opportunity again to ask questions about any aspect of the research.

### 4.3.4 Analysis and interpretation processes.

According to Clandinin et al. (2007), “all forms of narrative inquiry emphasise that considering the contextual and the relational are important” (p. 28). They emphasise the importance of examining, describing and specifying, “the commonplace features built into the study” (p 28). The importance of qualitative research for this study lies in providing a means to address the research question on factors affecting CALD teachers. As Newman, Ridenour and DeMarco (2003) observe, qualitative study enables a deeper investigation in the social and cultural realities surrounding the group studied and addresses issues of interpretation. This approach provides “rich descriptions…in identifiable social contexts” and enables the researcher to “see precisely which events led to which consequences” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1).

At the same time, it is important to bear in mind Andrews’s assertion (2007) that “the language of boundaries invites questions of who is allowed in and who must remain outside, questions that are of concern to individuals and states” (p. 507). She also argues that, “in some sense these boundaries can be seen as defining features of identity – for who am I if there is no not-I?” (p. 507). It will be important to consider the boundaries between the sense of self and the sense of others in the difficult negotiation of a professional teaching identity. Maynard (2001) describes this as
learning how to reconcile one’s “own, often deep-rooted expectations and aspirations with the immediate professional demands made upon them” (p. 44).

In this study, there was inevitable exploration of cross-cultural boundaries while preserving the integrity of the subjects’ identity. Andrews (2007) considers that in western research “we orient ourselves toward that which is unique about each individual while often ignoring the social fabric that forms the framework of a person’s life. Life history methodology enhances the salience of the distinctive boundaries between this self, the interviewee and all others” (p. 489). Thus, interview techniques with a narrative perspective are considered appropriate here to examine the experiences of CALD student teachers in the Queensland context as communicating across cultural boundaries will be central to this study. As Andrews (2007) argues, “our sense of self (both individual and social) is built on the premise of the existence of an “other” and it is this critical construction of boundary that lies between them” (p. 507). Participants’ practicum experiences involve intensive work at the boundaries between their university courses, their practicum experiences and their personal life histories.

4.3.5 Positioning of the narrative inquirers.

The narrative inquirers in this study recognise that boundary crossing, in the sense described by Andrews above, both between cultures and communities, can be “a deeply risky venture” (Andrews 2007, p 507). It is recognised by the researcher that the insights that may be uncovered about the pre-service teachers’ experiences “as mediated through our own interpretive lens, will always and can only be a partial knowledge” (p. 509). It is also recognised that communicating across cross cultural boundaries leads us potentially to new and different realities. It is important, as Andrews (2007) asserts, that we “resist the temptation to over-interpret those empty
spaces that lie within our conversations” (p. 509) and recognise that our own “life experiences” will have a bearing on our ability to draw different kinds of insights.

It is recognised that validity needs to be achieved in research, yet as Webster and Mertova (2007) argue, narrative research is “not about conclusions of certainty” (p. 90), and validity is about “research being well grounded and supportable by data” (p. 90). Reissman (1993) suggests four criteria for approaching validity in narrative inquiry. They are:

- persuasiveness: is it reasonable and convincing?
- correspondence: can it be taken back to the researched?
- coherency: does it provide a coherent picture of the situation described?
- pragmatic: to what extent can we act upon it? (p. 70)

The final two criteria are important for this study in that the research sought both to understand the pre-service teachers’ experience and the factors that constrained or facilitated those experiences. At the same time, the findings from this study can be drawn upon to consider the practicum experience from a social learning perspective, with a view to discussing possible practical changes that the university or practicum school could implement to minimise constraints and promote consistently rich experiences for CALD students on practicum.

### 4.4 Research Design.

Through the use of narrative inquiry, this study examines the experiences of CALD teachers during their pre-service practicum which is interpreted from the view of learning as social practice. By considering elements of participation and identity formation of the participants, their experiences and stories provide insights into the complex world of their practicum experiences. This has implications for all the stakeholders at the level of the university, the student teachers and the schools.
This study used qualitative data collection procedures. The importance of qualitative research for this study lies in providing a means to address the research question on factors affecting CALD teachers. As Newman et al. (2003) observe, qualitative study enables a deeper investigation in the social and cultural realities surrounding the group studied and addresses issues of interpretation. As Miles and Huberman (1994) note, an interpretive approach enables participants to interpret meanings in the sharing of the narrative and the researcher becomes a member through bringing his/her own interpretations to the narrative being shared. Data therefore consisted of 160 pages of transcripts of in-depth interviews.

4.4.1 Sample

The researcher approached the Field Experience Office of the university Education Faculty to enlist their help in identifying possible participants for this study. It was recommended by the Field Experience Office that the best way to accomplish this would be to contact the students through their course codes. In this way, it was easy to identify all the students who had completed more than two practicums. In the Bachelor of Education course student teachers are required to complete four field experience practicums followed by a four week internship. The earlier practicums involve more observation while the later ones feature more teaching practice. In the Graduate Diploma course students complete a four-week practicum in their first semester and a six week practicum in their second semester. Prior to beginning their fieldwork they experience two days in their first semester and six days in their second semester of observations, where they visit the school and meet the supervising teacher and the students. For both the Bachelor of Education students and the Graduate Diploma students there is an expectation that they will gradually take on more responsibility for teaching over the course of their practicum.
It was decided, therefore, that only third and fourth year students from the Bachelor of Education Course would be approached and those who had completed their first practicum in the Graduate Diploma course. It was anticipated that the students selected to participate would have had appropriate experience of both the observational and the participatory aspects of practicum to be able to contribute to the in-depth interviews.

**Inclusion Criteria**

Student teachers who self-identified as culturally and linguistically diverse, which in this study was defined as having English as a second or additional language and coming from a diverse cultural background, and who were in their third or fourth year of their program (B.Ed) or the second semester of their Grad Dip.Ed, were invited to take part. A summary of the participants is provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Residency</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Australian migrant</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma (Secondary Maths and Physics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Australian migrant</td>
<td>South American</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma (Secondary, Drama)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Australian Migrant</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education: Secondary: Social Science, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Australian Migrant</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Graduate diploma (Early Years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education. Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education: Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Australian Migrant</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma in Languages Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>International Permanent Resident</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Master of Tesol : Graduate Diploma in Languages Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education Early Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>Local Australian</td>
<td>German Australian</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma Senior years: business and legal studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Masters of Teaching English as a Second language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelve</td>
<td>Local Australian</td>
<td>Hungarian/Phillipines</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education (Secondary: legal studies and computer studies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirteen</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education. Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourteen</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education Primary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1. Summary of Participants by residency, background and course.**
4.4.2 Data collection and analysis

The procedures that were followed for the collecting and analysis of the data are now presented below starting with the data collected via in-depth interviews followed by the procedures and processes adopted for data analysis.

In depth interviews

On recruitment to the study, participants (n=14) were presented with a participant information sheet informing them of their rights and assuring confidentiality. A consent form to be completed was also given. Participants were assured that all data collected would remain confidential and no identifying features would appear at any time in the study. They were also told of their right to withdraw from the study without any comment or penalty at any time. The interviews were carried out at university meeting rooms during normal business hours. They were recorded to allow for transcription. A sample of the kinds of questions that were used to guide the interviews is presented below:

Community

How welcome did you feel in your practicum school?
Please describe your relationship with your supervising teacher?
Please describe your relationship with the children in your classes?

Personal Experience

Please describe your experience of observing other teachers?
Please describe the levels of responsibility that were given to you at your practicum schools?
What were the high and low points of your practicum experience?
What helped you in your practicum?
What did not help you in your practicum?

Culture and Language

Did your cultural background influence your practicum experiences?
Please describe any issues or problems you had with using English in your practicums?
Please comment on any of the aspects of the university preparation for your practicums that you consider were helpful to you in undertaking your practicum experiences.

### 4.4.3 Data Analysis

The transcripts from the interviews constituted 160 pages of text. Following the principles of Boyatsis (1998, p. 53), the texts were then read and re-read taking into account the structural elements that revealed critical incidents but also the complications, the resolutions and the evaluations that participants presented. The broad goal in this process was to identify the factors that facilitated or constrained the participants’ practicum experiences.

The three dimensions of sociality, temporality and place interacted in complex ways for each participant (Clandinin et al., 2007).

The temporal aspect of this inquiry involves the participants’ participation in practicum experiences as part of their study to become a teacher in Queensland. Looking at the temporal aspects of the practicum experience allows consideration of questions like:

- How does the broader course prepare students for the practicum?
- Where does the practicum sit in relation to other areas of the participants’ lives?
- Does the structure of the practicum allow the students to experience a sense of development as student teachers?

The social aspect of this enquiry involves the interaction between the participants and their practicum supervisors, university academics and other important people in the context of the practicum school or schools. This promotes questions like:

- How was the participant’s practicum experience influenced by the social relationships in their practicum school?
- Did these relationships change over the period of the practicum?
- Who were other important people that influenced the participants’ experience of their practicum?
The third dimension of narrative involves the concrete places that provide the context for the narratives. In this case they are the practicum schools. Consideration of place here generates questions like:

- How is practicum for the student teachers managed in the local environment of the practicum schools?
- What place do student teachers occupy in the practicum schools?
- What are the influences that the broader school community has on the student teachers?

Drawing on the structural elements described by Reissman (2008, p.87) relevant passages from the participants accounts were then considered in narrative form. By analysing the transcripts in this way, it was possible to connect events and consequences (Chase, 2008: p 64), but also, in describing what happened, it was possible to capture participants’ expressions, “emotions, thoughts and interpretations” (p 65) which highlight the “uniqueness of each human action and event” (p 65). Initial coding yielded excerpts that were found representative of the participants’ practicum experiences, particularly excerpts where they reflected on the relative importance of the practicum school community as a whole; their own experiences, the influence of particularly important relationships; and, the possible influence of language and cultural issues. The researcher then drew upon representative quotes to discuss the theoretical aspects of the experience of learning to teach, by undertaking the practicum. The emphasis in this analysis was on each participant’s “voice” and noting the aspects of “self, reality and experience” (Chase, 2008, p. 64) that characterise the individual accounts. The narrative accounts that are presented thematically (Reissman, 2008, p. 62) in Chapter 5 have been chosen for their rich data to illustrate that using a narrative lens and representing participants’ narratives in large chunks can assist in understanding not only the events but also the
“emotions, thoughts and interpretations” (Chase, 2008, p. 64) that the participant chooses to relate.

A brief summary of each participant’s experiences of practicum is given below. The summaries are presented to give the reader a brief overview of each participant’s cultural and linguistic background and the central themes that were highlighted in their accounts of practicum. Each participant had a different cultural and linguistic background to that of the schools where they were working.

Participant One came from an Indian sub-continent background and talked about two practicums, one highly successful and positive and another, which became extremely difficult. The central themes in his narrative include facing “mental torture” as he sought to meet the requirements of his second practicum, a questioning of the whole process of the practicum and how supervising teachers made judgements about him; and, some practical measures that he followed to meet the requirements that were set for him. There is throughout this account a focus on language and accent and a sense of challenge. This comprises a challenge to the teacher as a person and to his skill as a teacher. Cultural and linguistic matters do seem to underpin his whole practicum experience.

Participant Two was from a South American background. He talked about two practicums. One was in a private school and the other in a public school. The central themes in his narrative include the contrast between the supervising styles of his two supervising teachers and the effect that that had on him as a student teacher. He also talks about the relevance of multi-culturalism both for students and student teachers and how that affected his practicum. In particular, he relates one story about a student who approached him directly because of her affinity to him as a fellow “culturally diverse person”. Relationships with students and his own identity as a
culturally and linguistically diverse student teacher were central to his feeling of belonging.

Participant Three was from a European background. Like Participant Two she found a great contrast between her private school experience and her public school experience. The central themes in her narrative include the struggle in finding the balance between authority and fun that will get the students working. She found that her diverse background allowed her to build a good rapport with the diverse students at her school and also helped her appreciate the diversity of others. She derived strong positive motivation from the comments that students made to her about her teaching. One feature of both her practicums was the busyness of the supervising teachers. This made it difficult for her to establish positive relationships with them and she feels that some learning opportunities where she would have liked to ask questions were lost.

Participant Four was from a South East Asian background. Her first practicum experience was one of “shock”. She found it helpful to compare her early schooling experiences with those that she was observing. As well as different routines and different approaches to teaching and learning she talked particularly about groupwork and her need to build the ability to give feedback, which had both cultural and linguistic implications for her.

The themes in her second narrative include the enormous stress of the practicum for her; the pressure she felt as a mother and as a practicum student. She discusses the contrast between the university preparation and the school experience, the micro-teaching practice and the real teaching. She also compares the effects that different levels of responsibility have on the practicum student and how they influence the development of a teaching identity.
Participant Five was from a South East Asian background. Her narrative contains themes about the respect (or lack of it) that students show to teachers, which show her reflecting upon her own values that she gained in her own school experiences, and the central importance of classroom language to achieve her goals as a student teacher in Australia. She had language concerns all through her practicum and made particular mention about the importance of the informal and formal use of language to establish a rapport with the practicum class. She admired one of her supervising teacher’s abilities to engage in informal banter that seemed to be a central part of his ability to build a strong sense of community in the classroom. She also talked about the difficult process of translating content knowledge from one language to another, particularly in the context of needing to break it down for teaching.

Participant Six was from a South East Asian background. Her narrative was dominated by questions about the purpose of the practicum, the role of the student teacher and the role of the supervising teacher. She raised issues about the tension between being a “real teacher” and being a “student teacher”. She also highlighted the contrast between theoretical knowledge and the application of that knowledge in the school. Like Participant Four, she sought real examples of language from the teachers that she observed and worked with that she could use to achieve her teaching goals (“tips and tricks”).

Participant Seven was from a South East Asian background. Her practicum narrative included the themes of social exclusion, centring on the staffroom; and, communication difficulties that she considered were based in culture, language, age and personality. The practicum experiences that she chose to recount were dominated by misunderstandings about routines and responsibilities. These started
early in the practicum and then continued and grew as the practicum continued. This resulted in her developing a very poor relationship with her supervising teacher. She made some comments about the contrast that she found between theory and practice.

Participant Eight was from a South East Asian background. Her narrative contains themes about the contrast between Australian students and the students from her native country; and her struggle to break free of her cultural confines, which she found influenced her behaviour strongly on her practicum. Behaviour management was one of the key issues of her practicum for this participant. This theme was taken up again in her second practicum.

The participant’s second practicum experience was dominated by the fact that the plans for her practicum changed at the last minute and she was required to teach a combined high level class without any time to prepare. A great deal of responsibility was given to her for the first ten days of the practicum and then her principal supervisor returned from leave. Her account contains strong elements of cultural and linguistic challenge as she tries to balance the idea of taking responsibility with that of being guided as a student teacher. There were also tensions between the supervising teacher and her stemming from their working relationship that remained unresolved to the end of the practicum.

Participant Nine was from a Melanesian background. Her narrative was dominated by the tension that she felt at being a student teacher in Australia compared with her experiences as a qualified teacher back in her home country. She also suffered from a poor relationship from the very beginning with her supervising teacher who, she felt, was very controlling. There were many constraints that resulted in this practicum being abandoned. Some of these could be described as based in culture, primarily the local culture of the supervising teacher’s classroom,
which was very different to other classrooms that she had experienced. Others were
more directly social and still others concerned a mismatch in expectations between
the student and her supervising team concerning the practical tasks that needed to be
completed to finish the practicum.

Participant Ten was from an Australian/European background. She talked
about two contrasting practicum experiences. Both were positive but one featured a
much clearer set of steps that the school employed to orient their student teachers to
their roles and responsibilities in the school. This participant used her cultural and
linguistic background as a positive tool to “break the ice” with students. Her
narrative includes an account of how she seemed to gain the respect of the students
for whom she was responsible for. She also experienced strong tension between the
role of student teacher and the role of teacher. Like other participants she cites
behaviour management as one of her key challenges and she presents some
interesting examples of how she managed to achieve this in her classes.

Participant Eleven was from a South East Asian background. She discussed
two contrasting practicum experiences and her narrative account is full of the
influences that her two supervising teachers had over her. She moved from trying to
teach in the style that she had grown up with (in South East Asia) to taking a much
more active role in materials development and behaviour management. She
experienced some tension between her role as a student teacher and her role as a real
teacher when her supervising teacher was away and she took responsibility for the
class herself. She talked about the growing confidence that she experienced as her
behaviour management improved and she succeeded in relating to the class better,
resulting in a feeling of being more in control.
Participant Twelve came from a mixed Australian/European and Asian background. Her narrative included the account of her four practicum experiences during her bachelor of education course. Themes include the welcome of her first practicum which she felt was a positive start to her teaching career; the abandonment of her second practicum where she taught full time; and, the challenging environment of her third and fourth practicums which took place at the same school. She talks about the importance of the liaison officer who was an integral part of her finishing her final practicum. Cultural and linguistic issues were central in all her experiences. However, this was related more to her youth and local school culture than any international dimension. Like many of the other participants she felt that the busyness of the school environment constrained her experience of her practicum.

Participant Thirteen came from a South East Asian background. Her narrative includes accounts of a number of practicum experiences, including a rural practicum undertaken with a friend. She also includes an account of the factors that influenced her to choose teaching in the first place and how the reality of the practicum experiences had made her call these influences into account. The importance of being valued as a student teacher and the central relationship between student teachers and their supervisors are also important themes in her narrative. Although English is her first language and she completed her education through English, she told a story of how a little girl in her prep class spoke to her in an American accent, solely because of her Asian appearance. This raised questions for her about how she was perceived by the students.

Participant Fourteen came from a south East Asian background. Her narrative includes an account of her supervising teacher and the importance of their relationship. She also talked about the difficulties that she had with the language that
she needed to give instructions. Some of the materials that she designed in her university preparation course were difficult to use in the real school environment, which was frustrating for her. She spoke about the contrast between styles of teaching in Australia and back in her home country and how she found the ways of teaching in Australia more interesting.

4.5 Ethical considerations.

As well as the formal process of ethical clearance, it is essential in narrative inquiry to continually consider the well-being of the participants in relation to the stories they choose to tell and the experiences that they choose to narrate. It was anticipated that some of the experiences described by the student teachers would be uncomfortable ones. Indeed, both the hard stories and the more positive ones played an important role in gaining an understanding of how different individuals experience their pre-service practicum. In accordance with the ethics clearance policy: a Level One risk clearance was applied. This meant that the application ensured anonymity of all participants, through use of pseudonyms; participants were invited to participate and ensured that their participation was voluntary; consent forms were signed by participants for the in-depth interviews; participants knew that they could withdraw at any time; and, on request, transcribed data would be given to participants for member checking.

4.7 Conclusion

Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that narrative can present a way of viewing a learning environment and that the stories “generated in narrative reflect the complex, human-centred and dynamic nature of learning” (p. 116). Excerpts from the participants’ stories are presented and discussed thematically using the headings
above in the next chapter, Chapter 5. These excerpts allow the reader to become immersed in the experiences and the themes that are presented in the “life space” (Clandinin et al., 2007, p. 481) of the participants and are “rich descriptions” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1) of their experiences examined from the perspective of the practicum as an experience of legitimate peripheral participation in the communities of practice of the practicum schools. They also illustrate the potential that looking at a small number of cases can have for illuminating “wider issues” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007, p.371), like the unique ways of interacting that the student teachers experience as they undertake the practicum process.
Chapter 5 Narrative Themes

5.1 Introduction

This chapter undertakes analysis of data through narrative inquiry. The chapter explains how the data is interpreted narratively to reveal the critical incidents and sequences of events that are significant or that contribute to the participant’s experience of practicum. This chapter is divided into two parts. First, a brief summary is given of one participant’s experiences to illustrate the process of data analysis centred in narrative. This summary draws attention to the parts of the participant’s narrative that reveal the factors that facilitated or constrained his experiences. The analysis of the high and low points, the complications, resolutions and evaluations provided by the narrative illustrate the participant’s individual engagement with the social world of the practicum school.

This chapter then draws on data from all the narratives and interrogates all the participants’ experiences using a theoretical framework derived from Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998, 2000, 2008).

The two vignettes chosen illustrate how the narrative elements depict the crucial aspect of a community of practice for Participant One. Participant One has been purposively selected as an illustrative example to demonstrate first how the analysis of the different elements of a community of practice operate to influence practicum. The second aim is to set out the themes for the thematic analysis to follow with the remaining thirteen participants. The excerpts selected explore the practicum experience for Participant One and highlight the supports and constraints of his teaching experiences. The events and the “emotions, thoughts and
interpretations” (Chase, 2008, p. 64) that the participant chooses to relate are included. The major themes that he touches on are situated in the three commonplaces that characterise inquiry in narrative: temporality, sociality and place (Clandinin et al., 2007) and these are identified and discussed here in structural terms. As discussed in Chapter 4, as Reissman (2008) explains, a fully formed narrative comprises six elements: an abstract, an orientation, a complicating action, an evaluation, a resolution and a coda which brings the story back to the present. In its simplest terms a narrative usually consists of an orienting statement, a complication of some sort and a resolution. In this context of practicum experiences they may be described as critical events. Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that “critical events occur in a community” (p.83) emphasising the sociality component of the inquiry space. In this context, “criticality relates not so much to the content (which might be extraordinary) as to the profound effects it has on the people involved” (p.83).

5.2 Data analysis process for Participant One

Two selections are presented below from the transcript of Participant One. The first concerns Participant One’s first practicum and the following one his second practicum. There follows a discussion to illustrate how the data analysis process was undertaken.

Vignette One .Practicum One.

1. Even though my supervising teacher had told me that there could be an accent problem...
2. but initially ... in the beginning stage itself, he motivated me and told me that you could
3. survive ; after some weeks and in the interim report he wrote that I had a `thick accent’ but
4. still he was ready to continue with my prac in that school and the end of the four weeks the
5. supervising teacher distributed the student feedback form to all students and they
6. commented well so he was able to put a good comment that my accent has improved or `he
7. is good in his accent’ ... and so, especially with the support of the student feedback form
so that is the end of the first prac.

9. But I don’t know what happened how it happened, what is the reason I was sure I could
win over the students. So, anyway by, after going there to continue the prac. Towards
the end of the four weeks they wrote the comment that my accent has improved ... so I
was able to complete that way. So that means he waited, he waited, now see that has
foreseen the whole thing about what would happen after weeks, he has foreseen, so he
was not under high pressure that the problem might be ... that his, the confidence that he
could do because of my knowledge and my teaching experience, so that can overcome the
accent problem. Yes, of course, all the teachers were very cooperative with me, even
actually I had two supervising teachers there ... at the first prac. ... both of them were
very cooperative and they supported me in all ways and the whole school as a whole
supported me so I was very happy in that school ... that is the thing there...

In this vignette the orientation to the event occurs when Participant One raises
the issue that his supervising teacher mentioned that there might be a problem with
his accent. This is a complication for Participant One’s first practicum experience
(Lines 1-3), but this complication also has a resolution with his supervising teacher
telling him that despite his accent he could “survive” (Line 4). The issue of his
accent is formalised in Participant 1’s interim report (Line 4) but he emphasises that
his supervising teacher is “still” (despite this thick accent) ready to support him. The
sequence of events in the above vignette is: the identification of the problem through
an interim report being provided to the trainee teacher, the continuation of the
practicum, the distribution of the student feedback form, the good report. This
sequence of events can be analysed by a structure of orientation, complication and
resolution. From Line 9 Participant 1 evaluates his experience. He emphasises the
central role that the supervisor played and he considers that the supervisor “has
foreseen the whole thing about what would happen” that “my knowledge and
teaching experience … can overcome the accent problem” (Lines 12 – 15), he
stresses the importance of the cooperation that he experienced, and the support. He reflects (Line 19) finally that this was a happy experience.

From a community of practice perspective the first practicum experience of Participant One illustrates the importance he found in being legitimised to participate in a peripheral way. The reified notion of “accent” that was appropriate to the repertoire of a teacher was first called into question but then resolved through extended participation. Participant 1 was confident in his teaching identity (Line 9), he was sure that he could “win over the students” but he also recognised the importance of the support that was granted him in his position as a student teacher. The excerpt also demonstrates the core concept of a community of practice, which is active involvement in a community through participation enhancing identity as a teacher.

Vignette 2 however, tells another story. The orientation and complication show the failure of legitimacy to be established for Participant One and the consequences of this for his identity construction as a student teacher. The resolution in the narrative illustrates the importance of a community of practice to provide scaffolded experiences for newcomers that allow genuine access to the practices of the community.

Vignette 2: Practicum 2.

1. After that I went to the second prac but there I got some bitter experiences. The thing is
2. that after 2 days the supervising teacher reported the matter to the site coordinator that
3. my accent is not good but the thing is that I didn’t get the time to get into the students’
4. mind so (......) it whatever we do it will take some time to settle down so before that he
5. decided that I was not able to do ahead ... so ... and in that thing the supervising teacher
6. and the site-coordinator they decided that I had to take a break for some time and come
7. back in that some school.
8. But he wrote the comment ‘students find it difficult to understand the accent at times’.
9. How can he judge the students, how he can... that is the thing that is quite annoying me, 
10. another thing is when I speak to the students they are responding to my questions and he 
12. wrote in the comments `students are responding to the questions`. So that comment is 
13. contradictory to the statement what he wrote `at times students are not following`. 
14. So these are the things that make me annoyed to think that something is there in the 
15. background actually which was, actually it was like a mental torture for one week 
16. because they are not giving me a chance to prove myself. That is the thing that made me 
17. worry too much. 
18. So that these are the questions that made me to think `why did he put that comment after 
19. two days` so even though they asked me to leave the school after 2 weeks but I was quite 
20. sure that he put the comment to the site coordinator after two days (yes) so even though 
21. they asked me to leave the school after two weeks but I was quite sure that he put the 
22. comment to the site coordinator after 2 days. Because I started teaching around the 
23. third day of the first week and then for the following week, one day was a teacher’s 
24. strike day and one day he did not come to the school, so, and the following Thursday 
25. the supervising teacher came and Friday I stopped my teaching so it means overall 
26 teaching, when I analysed I was sure that he made the comment to the site coordinator on 
27. the second Friday – so Friday means I started teaching on Thursday and he made the 
28. comment, report in Friday, so in that time I got only two days, 2 days and in that 2 days 
29. only two classes. So that is the thing why did he take such a strategy, why did he take 
30. such a strategy to ... in that way? So, instead of motivating me he de-motivated me at the 
31. first instant. So that is a ... but where I went for my first prac, Instead of de-motivating 
32. me they motivated and they got a result. So that is the way a teacher should do 
33. After that I got some advice .. some help from the learning advisors ........and I tried to 
34. improve by myself and then I went back and at that time they had completely changed 
35. and they started accepting me and everything went well but I was quite confident before 
36. this, before they sent me from the school I was sure that I could win over the students 
37. even without a break. 

   Participant 1’s second practicum experience was much more complex. He 
orients us (Line 1) by highlighting that he had some “bitter” experiences. The 
complication again arises because of his accent but it escalates very quickly with “the 
supervising teacher reported the matter to the site coordinator” (Line 2). This 
indicates a loss of participation within this community and a subsequent impact on 
identity development. He is withdrawn from the practicum (Line 6-7) to work on his
accent. He reflects that he had no time to win over the students or even time to settle down before he was removed. The major section of this account (Lines 34-48) after recounting some details of inconsistencies in the formal reporting process involves Participant 1 evaluating both the perceived haste of the decision made to withdraw him and the emotional impact on him. He describes it as “mental torture”. He details the process to illustrate how he was not given a chance as he had been in the first practicum to work with the students. Further in Line 49 he describes that the supervising teacher “demotivated me at the first instant”. Ultimately, this account has a positive resolution with a successful practicum being completed (Line 53-56) but Participant 1 spends the majority of his account on the injustice that he perceived and the loss of confidence that he experienced at not being given the chance to prove himself.

This second practicum experience contrasts with the first from a community of practice perspective as Participant 1 finds that he is marginalised and excluded by the decisions made by the supervising teacher and the site coordinator (Line 34). There is a sense in his evaluative remarks that he was not invited to contribute to trying to resolve the perceived accent problem. In fact, this situation illustrates not only that the supervising teacher perceives an accent as a discreet skill that that can be isolated and resolved but also that there is little understanding of the possible impact on such a course of action on Participant 1’s sense of identity and confidence.

The analysis of the structure of these vignettes helps to generate an explanation of why Participant One considers these sequences of events as significant in his development of an identity as a teacher and his participation in this community of practice.
In the following sections, a thematic analysis is undertaken, where each participant’s narrative account is considered in terms of the orientation, the complications faced, the resolutions achieved and the evaluation of the participants’ experiences.

The rich experiences that were identified by considering the experiences narratively for all the participants are then analysed again in the next phase using the lens of community of practice theory to further interrogate them. For this phase the researcher drew upon the work of Tsui, Lopez-Real and Edwards (2009, p. 42) particularly in their focus upon university school partnerships in the context of practicum. The questions that are used to guide this phase of analysis are:

- How is legitimacy to participate in the practicum schools enacted?
- How are peripheral practices facilitated to generate learning through participation?
- How do shared repertoire and mutual engagement interact, particularly in relation to cultural and linguistic diversity?
- How does work at the boundaries between the school and the university community contribute to the student teacher’s experience of practicum?
- What are the processes of identity development that are related to the student teacher’s experiences?
- How do relationships between supervisors and student teachers contribute to the experience of the practicum as a whole?

After reading and rereading the narratives, stories and experiences were selected to illustrate how participants negotiated their participation in their different communities of practice. Representative quotes were categorised under analytical constructs drawn from the sociocultural theoretical questions above. The data were analysed using the following constructs: Legitimacy and Participation, Peripheral Participation, Language as Mutual Engagement and Shared Repertoire, Identity Work, and, Relationships and Power and Agency.
5.3 Legitimacy and Participation

The first section of this chapter discusses the legitimacy that was granted to the participants in this study in their practicum experiences and the effect that the various forms of legitimisation had on them in relation to these experiences. This theme will be extended in the later sections where different forms of engagement are discussed and clearly some aspects of “violations” of the school’s expectations are seen as grounds for the withdrawal of legitimacy. Edwards and Tsui (2009) argue that legitimacy of access is both participative and reificative and that, where students are physically located in a practice community such as a school it “shapes their perceptions of themselves” (p. 61) as participants in that community. The practicum here is examined as a formalised process by which newcomer teachers gain access to the community of practice of teaching though interaction with those who are already in the school community through their practicum experiences. “Learning” in this context is characterised by the formation of identity as one participates in the practices of the community.

Participants discussed legitimacy, both tacit and explicitly understood, in three main areas: formal legitimacy to participate as a member of staff which was mediated through the formal arrangements that schools had made to facilitate their pre-service teachers’ practicum experiences; the relationships with students that resulted depending on the form of legitimacy experienced and the relationship with the supervising teacher. These three elements interact in student teachers’ experiences but first they are considered in turn.

The practicum here is examined as a formalised process by which newcomer teachers gain access to the community of practice of teaching through interaction with those who are already in the school community through their practicum
experiences. The school practicum can be viewed therefore as a context for legitimate peripheral participation as student teachers enter their practicum schools with legitimacy granted by the formal agreements between the university and the schools. They are also expected to participate peripherally with a lessened teaching load and they are given opportunities for observation and access to the general community of the school. In the context of this study and drawing on Edwards and Tsui’s (2009, p. 42) work it is clear that

How participants position themselves in the social space that is created as community boundaries are crossed, how they make sense of new forms of activities that emerge from the interactions, how they appropriate the sociocultural tools that are brokered in the boundary crossing and how they negotiate the meanings of the joint enterprise are critical processes which constitute the learning experience and shape their identities as teachers. (p. 42)

The social learning themes are now used to analyse the data from the remaining 13 participants’ narratives. The central themes that recurred and were identified by a constant comparative analysis in the participants’ narratives are now considered beginning with the question: How is legitimacy to participate in the practicum schools enacted?

So, it’s like I stood out and it was like I’m there and this is what Australia is, and this is what this is. (Participant Two)

As Participant Two captured above, despite the fact that legitimacy is formalised in many ways in the practicum context, the individual may find difficulties at first locating themselves in the new social space. The participants in this study experienced a range of welcomes from their practicum schools which contributed to their understanding of themselves as participants in the school community. Participant Two, for example, illustrated the importance of being granted tacit legitimacy, as without that there may be the tendency for school students to engage in their own process of marginalising their student teacher, in this
case, as Participant Two noted, to focus on cultural difference as a distinguishing feature. As a result, from the very beginning Participant Two felt that he could not participate fully in the classroom as he was identified neither as a teacher nor a student teacher.

*I don’t know if it was because I wasn’t explained to be a teacher, but I was a bit like a novelty, because my surname gives me away straight away, and my appearance* (Participant Two)

Participant Twelve, in contrast, noted that the welcome she received and the acknowledgement of her position, despite her tongue-in-cheek labelling, as “some random prac.student” formed a key component of her feeling of legitimacy. Indeed, out of the four practicums that she described her first was the only one in which active preparations were made. It is easy to overlook the importance of this, particularly when the practicum is such a commonplace and routine part of school life. Having a folder ready with her name on it and the planning that that implies was a key experience for her in being welcomed:

*...I think it was just the teacher introducing me to all the staff and they said, “ok”, they had everything organised so I didn’t feel they just forgot about me. It was like, “oh yes, you’re some random prac. student here”. So that actually made me feel more welcome than all my other pracs because they knew who I was before I got there and they had a folder ready for me with my name on it. Then I had the information and so I was prepared before I actually started my prac.* (Participant Twelve)

However, this welcome contrasted starkly with her second experience:

*I did not feel welcome at all in that staffroom. No one talked to me I was just in the corner ... I had to move the shelves and everything so I could create the desk myself.* (Participant Twelve)

For Participant Twelve the isolation experienced through the obvious lack of preparation for her arrival, her seclusion both physically and symbolically from participation accentuates her marginality.
As discussion of identity later illustrates, this experience led to her peripheral participation becoming very tenuous. This experience of marginalisation in the staffroom resulted from an entrenched long-term cultural group based around one particular staffroom. Their practices were reified to the extent that the members of this staffroom neither valued nor saw it as their role to play any part in the induction of new teachers. This experience extended into the practicum experience as a whole and required a considerable amount of reconciliation on the part of the school and the university to manage her experience. As Participant Twelve reflected:

I would walk in and there is silence and I am like obviously someone has walked into the, you know, staff room and there’s silence and they are looking at you and you are trying to be nice. You are still saying, “Hi, How are you?” and all that and they won’t involve you in any conversations and you say something like to be involved and they kind of go, ”oh yeah”, it’s like there is no acknowledgement. You are just better off being quiet but then they take that as you not taking initiative or not being involved in the staffroom. That kind of hurt me the most, because it is like how can I be more involved in the staffroom when they have not given me opportunities to do so?  
(Participant Twelve)

Thus, despite the formal legitimacy conferred by the school university partnership, simple matters such as a welcome into the staffroom or a small formal induction affirms the legitimacy conferred on the student teacher. On this matter there was a huge difference in the experience of legitimacy for the student teachers in this study. Often they contrasted experiences for themselves between different schools. For example, Participant Three said that:

In my first one, I went to a private school, which is the first time I have ever been to a private school so not as welcome. But my other two where I went, I felt incredibly welcome there, and there was more diversity at those second two schools as well than the first.  
(Participant Three)

When she considered how it was that the second two practicums were more welcoming she felt that they achieved this:
Participant Three here contrasted both the overall orientation of schools in her practicums (private vs. public) and the general school “culture” that can have an influence for the experience of student teachers, here contrasting a more casual approach, which in her view was tied up with greater cultural and linguistic diversity amongst the staff and students, and a more formal regime at the private school which involved a strict dress code amongst other formalities to describe her process of legitimisation.

In her practicum in a public school she found that, though she felt quite confident in talking to other teachers and that such opportunities were purposeful and interesting, it took time to build a relationship where different forms of peripheral participation were possible. Once she had been established as a legitimate member of the community with something to contribute, her colleagues contributed to her learning journey by providing contexts for her to extend and practice her teaching:

*Like a number of the teachers, as they’ve gotten to know me and know my background, have said come, you know, come in with me. Come in and do my class. So they’ll give me the rundown of what they’re doing and I’ll basically share a class with them.* (Participant Three)

Participant Ten also discussed the reified titles and terms of address that become important to student teachers when they need to take control of classes. She believed that:

*Or, they’ll say Miss B. is going to take you through this bit. So, it’s really good. It’s the way you’re presented that makes the kids have that respect. There’s got to – that’s where I’m thinking there’s got to be some sort of middle line so that you’re not presented to the students as a student teacher. Even though you don’t say those words, there’s obviously something unspoken in the non-verbals that students pick up on and they go, this one doesn’t know what she is doing. Whether that’s true or not is totally irrelevant. Well, they seem to target you and there’s that element of we’re going to make you prove yourself, you know.* (Participant Ten)
For Participant Ten not being presented as a “student teacher” implied lesser legitimacy was conferred and resulted in students not seeking the student teacher to justify their legitimate role as a classroom practitioner. School students, as in the example above, played a key role in allowing or disallowing the student teachers a sense of legitimacy. For example, Participant Three noted that:

*My Year 10 English class pretty much threw a tantrum when I told them I won’t be teaching them anymore. And I had heaps of kids telling me that I was a good teacher and one of the really naughty girls told me that I was a good teacher.* (Participant Three)

Again, it was the term of address that was important. The “naughty girl” referred to her as a “good teacher” not a good “student teacher” thereby implying that to all learning purposes the student teacher was only perceived as a teacher and not as a trainee. Participant Three, in a similar vein, found that:

*...it was a brilliant reflection of me being effective as a teacher, and building that rapport, and knowing that if I’ve got one naughty girl, who none of the teachers have a good rapport with coming up to me and touching my arm and saying that I am a good teacher, that somehow I’ve made some sort of difference hopefully in her life, or at least made the last four weeks in my lessons painless.* (Participant Three)

Participant Three here drew upon the impact that she had had on one student to reflect on the importance of building rapport from an individual perspective.

Besides legitimacy as an important consideration of being an active participant in the teaching learning nexus, other participants struggled with their role as “student teacher” due to perceived cultural contrasts between their own educational culture and that of Queensland. Participant Five commented that she required assistance from her supervising teacher in legitimising herself in the classroom:

*I just found that the students of Australia need to give respect to their teacher. That’s so different. When I did my prac. maybe I didn’t take is a core image active of thinking myself as a teacher, I’m not thinking like that. So my supervising teacher reminded me of that, you are the*
teacher in the classroom because sometimes I can’t focus through it. (Participant Five)

Participant Five felt that she needed more time than that allowed in a one year course to help her make some serious cultural adjustments.

Because I think I was born and grew up in another country, so the education system is totally different so that’s why something that I couldn’t - no I don’t know- maybe because I have no similar experience. So some things doesn’t naturally come to me and need to ask more questions. (Participant Five)

Like some of the other participants, she experienced tension between the content knowledge that she had from her educational background and first language and the translation of this knowledge into a different context, through a different language (English) for pedagogical purposes. This illustrates how complex it can be potentially to develop a professional teaching repertoire working in two diverse educational systems marked by cultural and linguistic diversity. She made the point that:

I think I need not only learn how I teach them, the basic knowledge of that I need to learn like because I taught one science lesson. I know the energy thing in Chinese, I don’t know in English. For me at that night I just learnt the whole thing again for myself it is so hard. It is really hard for me and that’s why I say one year is not enough because we need to learn the basic knowledge and terminology like eight areas I think and also the strategy how to teach children. (Participant Five)

Participant Two described a contrast between a private and a public school. He also noted how, in the more formal school, reified notions of particular language use influenced his participation and his feeling of legitimacy. The multicultural environment in the public school and the fact that there were other second language speakers meant that there was an immediate connection for Participant Two with other Spanish speakers and his feeling of being “different” translated into positive
responses from students as they sought to find out more about him. In the public school he said:

*People have come up to me and started speaking in Spanish, you know, and as soon as they know I am different, there’s like Oh, who are you? Where do you come from? You know whereas at the other school, it was – it felt almost – I don’t know, forbidden to speak in – because you know, the teacher wouldn’t know what you were speaking about.* (Participant Two)

He also noted that because he immigrated to Australia at a key time for his language development he did sometimes become aware of anomalies in his language performance:

*I think those things sometimes slip out. And then it wasn’t as I said: “Oh, you did this wrong”, but I knew, and then there was this kind of weird “Oh what was that word?” But in this other school, you could go in and say (laughs) all these different things, and no one would ...* (Participant Two)

School culture and language and the attitude to different accents and levels of fluency in English were central to the experience of legitimacy to participate in the school. The diversity of the school population also played a part here. As Participant Two contrasted his two practicum experiences:

*Yeah, it’s really weird having a lot of different cultures around you, where this one – the private school- was very Anglo, Anglican, very white as well.*

Cultural identity played a central part in building a sense of belonging. The greater the diversity of the school population, the greater the comfort level for the trainee teachers as they could relate to the diversity around them. For example, when considering the impact of her own cultural background on her experience Participant Four said:

*It’s had me appreciate the kids and where they are coming from more, especially the school where I’m at now, it’s an inner city school and it’s just – there’s so much diversity. So I think that it lets me relate to the kids more on a different level because I get where they are coming from.* (Participant Four).
This experience of identifying with the cultural diversity of the school population and so being legitimised through a sense of belonging with this population is important to a number of the participants in this study. For example, Participant Three included her cultural diversity as part of her lessons:

   And we’ve even had, during form class, guessing games of what country do I come from, and all this sort of stuff, so they’ve been really lovely and including me, and the relationship is really strong with them. (Participant Three)

Participant Four narrated an incident in which she felt that her own cultural background enabled her to engage with one of the students in a unique way. She felt that a diverse cultural background allowed her to form special relationships with her students, particularly those students who also came from a diverse background which she felt was an important part of her identity as a teacher.

   Whereas I think if I didn’t have the sort of cultural background then it would have been a different situation. He would have known straight off the bat that I had no clue what I was talking about. Because kids are really good at that. Yeah, it’s made me appreciate the cultural diversity of others and of students. (Participant Four)

Participant Eleven, like Participant Three, used her own sense of culture to empathise with students from different backgrounds.

   I’ve found myself doing is that I connect, for want of a better word with certain students who show sort of a displacement because of their cultural thing.

Here, in these examples, the participants were using their cultural identity as a means to legitimise their participation in the school community. At the same time, they built bridges between themselves and the students. Participant Ten took this further and introduced expressions from different cultures into her teaching to provoke discussion. She commented that speaking little comments in French or German enabled her to make a unique connection between herself and two of her students.
you know so it creates a scenario and it bridged some sort of gap between those two girls and me. Since then, where they’d actually been quite badly behaved, they’ve actually taken me under their wing. Which I find is really, really interesting you know just because maybe I wasn’t afraid to show my differences. I don’t know. (Participant Ten)

Thus, as well as student teachers being conferred with legitimacy to practise from the more formal arrangements of the school, they were also using their own identities to legitimise their own participation. However, as will be discussed later, different forms of engagement based on student teachers’ cultural and social backgrounds can result in either legitimisation or marginalisation depending upon the orientation of the school community. In the two extracts below, Participant Three summed up the importance of being formally legitimised and how it can affect all the student teacher’s later experiences:

The relationship with students in the first prac was – I think it was as good as it was allowed to be, because I wasn’t – I guess I you’re given more scope to explore the relationship with your students, it developments more in-depthly. But it wasn’t a bad relationship and they saw me – my teacher wouldn’t say I was a pre-service teacher. So, it was kind of kept secret from them as to what I actually was doing in the classes and that kind of caused a lot of uncertainty within them, and they didn’t know how to relate to me.

Whereas in the new school there’s you know “He’s a pre-service teacher” and then there’s a history of that as well, so the students already know how to relate to – you know, you’re still a teacher. Like in the other school, you just didn’t where to stand, because you didn’t know what you were to the students, or yeah (Participant Three).

Thus, the personal experiences of legitimacy, quite apart from any formal structures arranged between school and university varied greatly for the participants in this study. What their accounts emphasised is the central importance of different kinds of legitimacy as a key dimension in facilitating their learning through participation in the real practices of the school. It also emphasises that legitimacy is a key aspect of identity. Being formally introduced, given a place to sit, being addressed in a certain way; all contribute to the practicum experience and allow the
student teacher to identify themselves as a part of the community. When this is not achieved it can lead to feelings of marginalisation and isolation, thereby jeopardising the goals of the practicum.

The data in this section highlighted the importance of legitimacy to the participation and engagement of the student teachers in this study. The next section explores how crucial being allowed to play a peripheral role can be for newcomers in a community.

5.4 Peripheral participation

How are peripheral practices provided to generate learning through participation?

This section discusses how participation in the practices of the school for the student teachers is affected by the process and nature of their participation. As Edwards and Tsui (2009) argue,

> in order for newcomers to become a full member of a community, they need to be mutually engaged in practice with other members so that they can gain access and contribute to the joint enterprise and the repertoire in use. This means not only just being able to contribute to teaching but also to participate in the negotiation of meanings that matter in the community, including being able to contribute to the discourse, the ways of doing things, the routines, the concepts that the community has developed and that have become part of its practice. (p. 62)

For the participants the experience of practicum varied greatly in the dimensions of shared repertoire and mutuality. As noted in the previous section, the legitimacy to take part in the practices of the community was bestowed in a number of ways: through the school/university partnership, thorough relationships with the supervising teachers, through the feedback from school students. Each participant in this study derived their own feeling of personal legitimacy to participate as a peripheral member of the school community through a combination of these elements.
This section first examines how the practical aspects of participation in the practicum were realised for these student teachers with a focus on how the peripheral practices of observation and limited participation contributed to their growing sense of themselves as a teacher. At the same time the impact of a contrasting repertoire particularly a contrasting linguistic repertoire is illustrated as two participants in particular faced difficulties in classroom participation through conflict with reified notions of language use for teachers, which were centred around accent and literacy.

The section is organised into four thematic categories: formal requirements, administration and guidelines; observation and feedback; and language and cultural work.

5.4.1 Formal requirements, administration and guidelines

For participants in this study, the overall school, staffroom and classroom culture played an important role in their learning. For example, Participant Two commented about his first practicum that:

*I wouldn’t say that I didn’t feel welcome, but it was kind of regimented in the way they did things, and very disciplined in the teaching style and then that kind of went through to the students. Contrasting the second school: there’s a lot of different cultures there and coming from ... you know, it’s very – I don’t know, there’s more community sense. Maybe also because it’s a smaller school because the other, the private school was larger as well. I think a lot of pressure is put on teachers from those type of schools. So there wasn’t a lot of time for me.* (Participant Two)

The overall feeling of “pressure” meant that he felt that interaction with teachers was very limited. However, he did claim that:

*it was still very interesting observing how the other teachers worked and learning how teachers never have time, because there’s no time in those types of schools (private schools).* (Participant Two)

The theme of “busyness” was discussed by a number of other participants as a barrier to access to opportunities to interact with their supervising teachers.
Participant Three said that while his supervising teacher was an excellent teacher to observe and gain ideas from he was too busy to provide the support that was needed:

*The first one, the teacher was absolutely incredible, and he had the best rapport with students. But he didn't seem to have much time. So, because of that and because of not having much confidence because you are just first out on your first prac, that made it seem it wasn't as – it might have been supportive, but it didn't feel as friendly or inviting or supportive because there was no time for me. And I can understand that because he was incredibly busy but ....*(Participant Three)

In the context of the practicum as a peripheral teaching experience, an aspect of peripherality of not gaining enough access to formally make sense of teaching practice through discussion and feedback was evident for Participant Three. Participation therefore was limited simply by the fact that there was not enough time for the supervising teacher and the student teacher to get together. In addition, the stressful nature of the practicum was exaggerated by the overall hectic nature of the school practices. For some participants this was made even more complex by the fact that expectations were sometimes unclear. As Participant Six said:

*So sometimes I think maybe, if the university can give supervising teachers more explicit instructions on what is expected of the students, I think it would probably assist us in the job, in the practicum experience a little more.*

Participant Four also mentioned that despite the formal expectations that were generated for the practicum experiences, sometimes at the local level of the school there were alternative expectations and there was little evidence that the school or the supervising teacher had modified their practices so as to mentor or support the student teacher.

*Also what she had the criteria is different from what we had from the website ... so I was wondering what is the standard or what requirement for us because we had two different things. (Participant Four)*
On the other hand, other participants were given little peripheral experience and thrown straight in at the deep end. At the school level Participant Eight was treated as if she already “belonged” and was capable of taking on a full load. As Participant Eight said:

*My first ten days of my second prac ... one of the supervising teachers was away so I had to have his classes, extra classes and it was I don’t remember exactly but probably I has to have 21 classes per week, like 18 hours working. It’s far too much for prac teacher, so ... he said I can do something with this class and that class but actually it’s not in detail so I had to have lesson plans and one of the classes was combined class. Now looking back it was great for me to have the experience because usually in LOTE class with year 11 and 12 teachers they have a combined class.* (Participant Eight)

This experience for Participant Eight was “far too much”. While she commented positively on reflection, at the time her account showed that it became simply a matter of “survival” with very little opportunity for learning.

For Participant Twelve, her practicum experience, in her words, was:

*One of those unique situations because the supervising teacher took long service leave and forgot to notify the uni about it, so they passed me onto another teacher who then did not have enough time for me because she was head of department. Then I was treated as a relief teacher and had actual relief teachers supervising me by not necessarily assessing me, which made it difficult for my relief supervising teacher to mark me because she only observed two lessons out of the whole four week block. I just started teaching the first day full lessons and I had to wing it on the first day because I thought OK my supervising teacher is going to be there, you know it’s going to be OK. I’ll have that slow transition as my first prac. ... well, I walked in, the first day at school, and everyone is like, who are you? I was like; I’m the prac student. It’s like oh we have a prac student sort of thing and I was like OK did not anyone inform you inform you I was turning up sort of thing. Then I rocked up to the lessons and they are like “do you have the lesson organised?’ I was there going, Lesson? What lesson? No one told me anything. My original supervising teacher apparently told the head of department that I was to organise the lessons and I wasn’t informed of that, so that communication line was kind of broken.* (Participant Twelve)
Expectations regarding the roles of the supervising teacher and the student teacher are at odds in this situation. Participant Twelve persisted with her practicum experience and reflected:

"But I managed, I don’t know, that whole prac. made me realise the amount of work teachers have to do. I survived it and also only until the final week my site coordinator actually notice that I was doing the entire teacher’s load and only then was like Oh are you OK? When I really needed help on the second week, when I was having that mental breakdown going, oh what am I doing here, why am I even teaching? (Participant Twelve)"

Thus, peripherality, like legitimacy, is understood in very different ways in different schools. The experiences of Participants Twelve and Eight above, who were used as replacement teachers for extended periods did not allow them the limited access that they needed to gain access to the community’s practices and so build their own identities of practice. It also demonstrated the power relationships that are present in every community. In these examples, the imperative need for classes to have a teacher in front of them took precedence over any notion that these teachers may have needed extra support. Moreover, as an experience of peripheral participation these experiences moved the pre-service teachers into a full teaching load before they had had the opportunity to experience that load with extra support or in a limited way. As Participant Twelve’s words illustrate, these kinds of experiences can lead to student teacher’s questioning their professional identities and even, if the load is too heavy, withdrawing from the practicum altogether.

Investment therefore for schools in peripheral practices for their student teachers must be seen in terms of formally sheltering them until they are ready to take a full teaching load.
5.4.2 Observation and feedback

Participants in this study experienced different amounts of feedback, delivered in different styles. Feedback varied from comments upon general teaching proficiency to aspects of language use, accent and relationships with students, parents and other staff members. Participant Three said of her two supervising teachers in her third practicum that:

*It’s 50:50 per teacher so they’ve both been really welcoming and friendly. They’ve given me massive amounts of feedback, which I never received in my either two pracs beforehand. So it’s just the information that I’ve been given and the support I’ve been given, is just absolutely incredible, and just, yeah, feels like it’s a really good learning environment for the kids, and then for teachers as well. (Participant Three)*

This contrasted with her previous experiences where time constraints and her own lack of confidence meant that feedback was limited to comments about whether a lesson was good or not rather than actual details of her performance. For Participant Three the “massive amounts of feedback” in her third practicum, constituted a central element of her practicum experience and constructed that school for her as a “really good learning environment”. For her, feedback constituted a reified part of her practicum experience about which she was disappointed in her other practicum school experiences. This demonstrates the dimension of practice in a community of practice that Wenger (2000) describes as alignment. In alignment the participants in a community “become connected through their coordination of their energies, actions and practices” (p. 179). In the community described above, commitment to the training of new community members was clearly something about which all the members are in agreement. They recognised that their efforts in providing a meaningful legitimate experience for new teachers placed them as part of a broader educational enterprise. In this case, the practicum experience, as a peripheral experience, the supervisor’s contribution to the student, and the
orientation of the school to the practicum student were aligned together to give a shared purpose for the practicum, which was one that respected the student teacher’s right to receive effective advice and support. This then allowed opportunities for further engagement and participation.

Effective feedback on practice extended, for some participants, to formal and reified notions of classroom language and even to particular word choice in how to manage aspects of lessons. For Participant Four this was the case and she felt that it was very helpful for her to experience feedback that was so focused:

Also, she tried to teach me – she did think that my instructions or explanations or sometimes expectations for students can be more simplified and more explicit. So I asked her and then she is kind of modelling that for me. So I can just model the language that she used instead of using mine. It’s easier for me to just adapt her way and also for students it is good. So I find that is very helpful. (Participant Four)

As well as particular language, the cultural context of the Australian school system also provided elements of contrast where focused feedback from supervising teachers and insights from student teachers could help student teachers to build mutual engagement. At a broad level this included the whole area of how teachers and students interact in the classroom at all stages of lessons. For example, Participant Four described the teacher student relationship in Australia as different to that of her own cultural background. Focusing specifically on the whole area of giving feedback, she talked about the orientation in Australian education of being positive:

In here I learn they do praise a lot, really a lot for me. So, I thought this is the couch we are on, so I need to do that. Especially young kids they need that. ... actually they are really doing very good. (Participant Four)
She found that she needed to give more praise in an Australian classroom context. As she said, in an Asian context, often achieving the set goal is seen as praise enough and, in fact, simply means that it is time to set the next goal:

_I tried to be positive because for Asian, maybe not Asian, just for myself, it is really easy to be critical because you’re always being asked to achieve something and when you achieve that means you are good enough and they you need more, do more work. You are not really rewarded or praised for what you have achieved._

(Participant Four)

In observing her supervising teacher’s language, she said:

_For me it’s like an alien language, a really alien language. I really want to learn that kind of language even in my life conversation. That would be pleasant to hear for other people, instead of my critical, you should be doing that, you should be doing that. So that for me I really learn a lot._

(Participant Four)

There was an extension here for Participant Four from her school practicum experience into her life in Australia. She is showing here an imaginary future in which her practicum experiences, especially at the level of language, are relevant and important to her relationships in the greater community. This relates to Wenger’s (1998) concept of using imagination as a “process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and of ourselves” (p. 176). Thus, while she was building a teaching identity she was also using this to build a cultural identity in Australia based upon more positive communication routines.

Participant Eleven contrasted her two supervising teachers’ supervision styles and discussed the importance of resources:

_I think I was really happy with my – both of my prac. teachers, like supervision teachers, because from one side I learned the behaviour management and from the other side I learned that – I got lots of resources. And I learned – I saw how they doing ESL teaching really, because before I didn’t really have – at uni we don’t – I mean we do_
the assignment but we don’t really have lots of resources and it’s not practical, that kind of thing, yeah. (Participant Eleven)

She also noted that her cultural background and her experiences of learning mathematics in China, which she hoped with a little adaptation to be applicable in Australia, did not work in Australian classrooms because of the different expectations of teachers and students in the two cultures. Her peripheral access in the classroom allowed her to simultaneously work on different cultural routines of teaching and build a different linguistic repertoire for teaching.

Participant Ten found that the presence of the supervising teacher in the classroom meant that the students did not take the student teacher seriously as a teacher. This was also a recurrent theme for other participants as they grappled with their transition from student teacher to teacher with all the attendant responsibilities and identities that that involved. Participant Ten made the suggestion that:

I think my personal opinion would be, is that once you’ve got, you know, you do a couple of days of observation. Maybe a week of having the student teacher with the teacher thing and share a class, not just OK you do the class now. It’s like you share the class and integrate them so that they get to know that you’re there to share the load with the teacher. Then the teacher can back off and you can take over. I think that would work a lot better than, you know, just saying that’s it. Because the kids are all wobbly, they don’t know where they are. I think that’s part of the problem. (Participant Ten)

Through this, Participant Ten felt that it was easier to build a sense of mutuality with the children, which would allow a deeper relationship to develop. In the context of her practicum however this proved impossible to negotiate as the notion of peripherality adopted by her supervising teacher involved them both being in the classroom at this stage.

Some participants had difficulties with their supervisors. This was often centred on communication, expectations and specific aspects of teaching and classroom management. Participant Twelve observed that she and her supervisor
found it difficult to relate to one another and the “tough” time of Participant Twelve’s experience of practicum was made more complex by the fact that she found it hard to decide whether her experience was one that was faced by all the student teachers with this supervisor or that she fell short in some specific way, perhaps related to skill or social class or culture:

I noticed with her (supervisor) she was comparing all my experiences to her prac. experiences and saying how tough she had it and how lucky I should be. I felt I don’t know whether that was her personal, you know kind of vengeance on the world, going OK, well I’ve had a tough time so I’m going to make every other prac student have a tough time or whether that was just directed towards me because I wasn’t good enough for her, sort of thing. (Participant Twelve)

Participant Thirteen felt a cultural reticence throughout her practicum experiences that influenced her peripheral role. She demonstrated insights into her own learning style and felt that her lack of confidence or initiative meant that her position remained marginal:

I think throughout my pracs I don’t really feel that because I have a different background that I should be seen differently or anything but in this one in particular it kind of showed through where I think in general people from Asia are less out-there or a bit more reserved. I know that I tend to like to sit back and watch before I jump in and I think in the final prac I really didn’t have time to do that. Maybe I just wasn’t geared enough quickly – fast enough to jump in and I needed to be that needed to be that, especially in the last one. I think that’s what set back as well. (Participant Thirteen)

This meant she felt that she was constantly trying to catch up and remained at the periphery of the practice of the school. Another student teacher had similar feelings of being left behind and explained that the practicum, as an experience of teaching, was extremely limited and to a large degree determined by the student teacher’s relationship with her supervising teacher:

There’s this Irish teacher that’s at the centre as well and she was saying that “Oh I remember feeling the same way you did, going “Oh my goodness. But when you get your own class it’s so much different and you embrace it a bit more, because whenever you’re on prac
you’re mirroring what the teacher does whether you like it or not and whether you agree with it or not. (Participant Three)

This illustrates again, that individual practices on the part of the supervising teacher can play a strongly facilitating or constraining role on how student teachers approach their opportunities for peripheral work. It also illustrates perhaps, as the views of the commiserating teacher demonstrated, that the asymmetrical power relationship between some supervisors and student teachers can restrict their opportunities to practice. Participant Three here draws upon her own experience as an example and argues that some of this power inequity may reside in cultural diversity with teachers from some cultures being reluctant to question the authority of their supervising teacher.

Participant Eight spent the first ten days of her second practicum without receiving any feedback because the Head of Department, who was coordinating the practicum, was away. After the principal supervisor returned, the practicum became much more positive but two weeks had been largely wasted as the student teacher became increasingly marginalised due to the lack of any clear direction.

So, peripheral access varies greatly across the participants in this study ranging from participants who found themselves acting almost as supply teachers with little support to others who would have liked to move into taking more responsibility but felt unable to do so because of limitations or routines imposed by their supervising teachers. Both forms of peripheral access could be constraining or facilitating depending upon the individual perspective and identity of the student teacher involved. Thus, community membership is an active dialogic process. With misalignment of expectations on either side, or the failure to establish mutual goals, there are risks of marginalisation of newcomers resulting in feelings of failure and loss.
5.4.3 Language and cultural work

How do shared repertoire and mutual engagement interact, particularly in relation to cultural and linguistic diversity?

This section explores the experiences of student teachers in this study that relate directly to linguistic or cultural diversity as part of their professional teaching repertoire. As Wenger (1998) argues, “sustained engagement in practice yields an ability to interpret and make use of the repertoire of that practice” (p. 153). It is this engagement that the student teachers are seeking through their participation in the practices of their practicum school. However, some of them found that aspects of their cultural and linguistic repertoire resulted in their legitimate peripheral participation being questioned or even withdrawn.

Participant One, as we have seen, was told at the beginning of his practicum that there could be an accent problem because of his “thick Indian accent”. This potential problem was raised from the outset. Participant One was confident that he could resolve this issue through practice. He said:

... because as you know I come from India might be so my accent might be different though the way of speaking to make the students understand in the class I’m trying my level best to speak slowly so that means to develop my own strategy to overcome that situation and so because I am here only for one year.(Participant One)

At the end of his first practicum he received very positive feedback and the accent situation had ceased to be a problem.

Participant Twelve faced a similar issue in her fourth practicum where her legitimacy was questioned on cultural and linguistic grounds. As an issue, literacy standards are raised that was not evident in her previous three practicums. It resulted in Participant Twelve contemplating withdrawing from her practicum.
They passed me on my third prac and then on my fourth prac it came, I think, Day 5 and they gave me the “at risk of failure” and they just told me that “No sorry you’ve got poor literacy, you can’t teach, we don’t even know why you are going to be a teacher because you are not suited to it.” It wasn’t so much of, I don’t know, constructive criticism. It was that negative:” you’re crap, that’s it, why are you here?” (Participant Twelve)

From a perspective of legitimate peripheral participation, the experiences of Participant One and Participant Twelve illustrate tensions in a number of different dimensions. As noted in the vignette at the start of the chapter, Participant One, by his withdrawal from the practicum, was denied the opportunity for mutual engagement with the teaching team. In his first practicum, Participant One engaged in a process of negotiation through which he reduced the impact of his accent by using PowerPoint and structuring his lessons to avoid extended periods of student exposure to his unsupported exposition. Through these means, through participation in practice, a sense of mutuality was built and his practicum experience was judged by his school students and his two supervisors to be a positive one. Moreover, his primary supervisor presented him with a vision for his future by assuring him that his accent would not be a problem in the long term. Thus he was able to extend his teaching repertoire by participating in the practicum through direct engagement with the life of the school. This contrasts with his second practicum experience where accent was seen as a kind of discrete competence or skill that could be improved and so reduced in impact. The result, in fact, as we have seen, had a far more negative impact on his sense of identity and meant that he considered withdrawing from the process of becoming a teacher.

For Participant Twelve, the situation is more complex but similarly confronting to her sense of self as a teacher. After a second practicum in which she worked as if she were a relief teacher, with little supervision (only two lessons in the whole four
week block were observed), in her fourth practicum she was challenged about her literacy and her confidence was undermined by being placed at risk of failure. This situation subsequently required the intervention of the University Liaison Officer to mediate between the student and the practicum school. Clearly, at an individual level, there were personality, power and professional issues at stake in this student’s experience. As a context for legitimate peripheral participation, however, a moment was reached in a similar way to that of Participant One, where participation ceased to be legitimate and so access to engagement in the practices of the school was denied. Again, similar to Participant One’s experiences, the consequences are felt socially and personally and extend beyond any notion of a discrete set of professional competencies that are being sought. This can result in the opportunity to participate being constrained not only through direct intervention but also by the fact that participants face crisis points in their experience of building a professional identity that can extend into their personal lives resulting in a loss of confidence.

Both these examples also illustrate the contrasting forms of formal feedback and expectations that face students and supervisors in different schools or even in different sections of the same school. The University Liaison Officer for Participant Twelve played an important role at the boundary between the university and the school and reconfigured the practicum as a context for peripheral participation where the identity of “student teacher” implies some space to develop through the practicum experience and not be denied through reified notions of aspects of the teaching repertoire which need to be satisfied. In this case, the student, who was left-handed, had serious issues with her whiteboard work that she sought to minimise by using other means such as OHTs and PowerPoint. Where this was not possible, the experience of being observed led to nervousness and spelling and literacy problems:
Like the kids would tell me Oh Miss we can’t read your writing ... well I will try and write clearer for them and do print writing, but then I’ll make spelling errors and I’ll forget how to spell words because I’ll be freaking out so much because I am there trying to get all the words at the right levels and not go wonky. Then because of that – just because I made two or three errors I was accused of poor literacy. Since my pronunciation for some of the words are quite strange – I copped a lot of flak for that as well (Participant Twelve).

For this student the practicum experience was dominated by her literacy issues. She gave examples of how she sought to minimise these through preparation and planning using visual aids but it took a great deal of discussion for her to complete her practicum. Indeed, the Head of Department and the University Liaison Academic needed to restore her protected position of peripheral participation. The supervising teacher, on the other hand was judging her performance on the standards expected for an experienced teacher and not allowing her room to negotiate her repertoire through engagement and practice, as mentioned by the student teacher. While there are expected standards of literacy for practicum students and Participant Twelve fell short in some ways, particularly when she was under stress, different language issues also impact on other participants’ experiences of practicum. These are explored in the section below.

5.5 Language as mutual engagement and joint repertoire.

This section discusses language issues that are explicit as part of the repertoire of the teacher and that are expected to be demonstrated as part of the practicum, particularly in relation to behaviour and classroom management. It also explores the role of the general language and cultural routines that are used to establish a successful social role within the community of the school and with which culturally and linguistically diverse student teachers may have difficulty. These may include the various stages of presenting a lesson or interacting with other teachers in the staffroom.
For example, Participant Four showed that she was constantly monitoring her language use as she explicitly asked her supervisor about her language use after each of her observed teaching opportunities. She said:

Also, I would ask her every time after my sessions, I would ask her, is my English OK? The first thing I’m asking is my English OK? Is my English understandable? She said, “Yes, yes. Just need to louder your voice, that’s all she’s asking. It’s not being critical for personal or any cultural diversity things, no not at all. So I’m pleased with that. But that is another main issue I was always worried about. (Participant Four)

Here Participant Four demonstrated her own awareness of the central role that language played in the classroom and her own lack of confidence in her ability to use classroom language effectively. In some ways Participant Four was identifying classroom language as a reified form of language, bounded in particular contexts, which is completely distinct from the everyday language of interaction. It is interesting that her supervising teacher moved her from thinking about language “form” to language “function” that is the necessity to speak more loudly in order to undertake successful classroom management. Participant Four appeared to be heartened by this as she seemed to have had very low expectations of her ability to be understood in English.

Participant Five’s comments provide an extension of this theme. Participant Five contrasted the “beautiful words” that she had access to in her first language with the problem of finding the “proper” words in English to achieve her teaching goals. She illustrated how carefully she had been attending to language in her experiences of observing other teachers by contrasting the cultural routines employed in Australia to motivate students with those that she is more familiar with in her native culture. For example, it appears that in her native culture, language used in the classroom is generally more directive (“you’re supposed to do that, you shouldn’t do that’”)
whereas in the classrooms that she has observed in Australia students are guided more into making choices between alternatives:

So I thought that was very good and in some way I just couldn’t find the right – I just couldn’t find the right words in English to express myself in many situations. That makes me very frustrated and that’s why I just really get afraid of standing in front just to speak. I always think my words are not enough because this is my – if you want me to speak in Mandarin I will tell exactly tell you what the words are I want to use and I know a lot of beautiful words, but in English sometimes I couldn’t find the proper words. So, that’s kind of frustrating. I do try to give positive – and I do learn because I heard the teachers speak a lot of different language for me, because they said you’ll make a wrong choice and how can you make a right choice and they’re not telling you, oh you’re supposed to do that, you shouldn’t do that. And instead of that they said, I think you’ve made the wrong choice, do this again and make the right choice. (Participant Five)

She drew upon her observations and demonstrated that she was seeking to extend her linguistic repertoire in the classroom to be more like that of the teachers that she had observed. At the same time she noted that this was frustrating because she lacked the spontaneous ability to use the language that she needed. This reflected her efforts to build the repertoire, both formal and informal, of practical classroom language.

Student teachers in this study used a variety of means to extend their linguistic repertoire in order to meet their personal goals. For example, some participants in this study went so far as to script the language that they intended to use in the classroom so as to align their language with examples that they had valued. Classroom language was clearly central in their minds as a resource that they needed to be able to access. Participant Five, for example, said that:

Well, like I do one of my English lesson where I write down something on the blackboard and some students will correct my grammar mistakes, so I pretend, ah I just want to test you. But I do, I do know that I feel frustrated sometimes when I do my lesson plan, when I write
the report because I don’t want to have grammar mistakes to show parents. That’s the hardest thing for me.
“For the lesson plan ... I guess I need to read through and think about it more. I wrote more sentences that I might say in the classroom instead of just walking into the classroom and just saying what I want to say. So I just prepare a little more for myself.”
(I scripted) more for the language, yeah, I think I do more preparation and hours and when I finish my lesson I ask my supervising teacher, is there any, very obviously, sometimes they say something wrong or ...(Participant Five)

Participant Fourteen made a similar comment and showed how precisely she planned for the language that she was going to use in detail, demonstrating her awareness of the importance of extending her linguistic repertoire and the effect that this would have on her engagement with her students in the classroom:

(on giving instructions) I am trying to write out, before the class. I know this way I am going to do these activities, I am trying to think how do I like – firstly you have to do blah, blah, blah, secondly you have to do blah, blah, blah, but for senior school and junior school, they are a little bit different.(Participant Fourteen)

Participant Eleven talked about the importance of trying to understand what the students were thinking about and sought to gain some understanding of their cultural issues. She also demonstrated how she sought to build a linguistic repertoire in English in the classroom through copying down examples of language that she had seen her supervising teacher use successfully. Language here was felt as a central and essential aspect of the teacher’s repertoire of skills. Participant Eleven found that she was scripting her instructions in different ways for the senior and junior schools. However, she strongly felt that to really be able to use the classroom language efficiently she needed to understand the whole culture of the school and the students and spend more time with them:

Because sometimes I don’t really know what’s going on for the students, like what they are thinking about. Yea, so like – when I was thinking about it I was maybe – I was just think maybe because I need spend more time with the students to see what is going on, like what they’re really thinking about or stuff like that. And also because I
don’t have the cultural – like I haven’t really experienced my like high school here so I won’t know what’s – like what they are thinking as well.

I did a lot of observation, even write – like what exactly is a prac – like a supervising teacher said in the class. Because I know them, I understand them, I can say them, but usually I don’t say in that way, you know, very more powerful, and straight away that kind of – I don’t really use it in that kind of situation, so I have to copy down exactly what he said and then go home and practice aloud, “books out” and like “be quiet”, must shout and stuff like that ....(Participant Eleven)

Participant Eleven commented about the importance of paying attention to how language was used and how important it was to convey power at the right time through immediate and facilitative responses to questions or situations. Participant Five also highlighted this importance of fluency and spontaneity:

Because students, because sometimes if they’re naughty, if I want to say something straight away. Because I feel if I can say, you can’t do this, which you should be doing “blah, blah, blah” if I can say that fluently and just “boom boom boom”, it would feel more powerful to the students. But for me I need to think about it and say it slowly and I just can’t say it slowly and ( her focus group partner interjects: you sort of lose the authority and power with your tone) mmm too – they will say oh, this teacher or this prac. teacher is easy. (Participant Five)

For Participant Five therefore the speed and timing of the language used is just as important as the actual content. Participant Six conveyed the negative impact that may arise from being thought too “easy”. Sometimes cultural roles had to be overcome as well. Participant Eight described how she regained control of her class through ‘shouting’. There is a sense not only that she felt her identity as a teacher grew but also that she had to overcome enormous cultural resistance in herself about the appropriate way for a teacher to act:

My students were very noisy and I wasn’t able to make them quiet. Then I had to shout. That was the first breakthrough. Cause I am a person who doesn’t want to shout and doesn’t want to raise my voice. I feel really uncomfortable doing that but I really had to do that yeah. I think some of my students were shocked because they know I’m a quiet person and they probably didn’t expect me shouting that loud ...
so it was a great breakthrough and I thank my supervising teacher being away. (Participant Eight)

This “breakthrough” contrasted with the experience of Participant Nine where she drew upon all the formal resources, both physical and practical, that she had gained from her course of study to find that her identity as student teacher meant that they did not achieve the goal that she was hoping for:

*It was like when you are talking they are just running and trashing everything and it’s really hard to keep the focus of the lesson when you have to control, try to control everybody, and I kind of exhausted all the reward systems. ... the children need to follow the example of ring the bell, stop the children, tell them, give them an instruction, one two three, tell them to repeat my instruction and I tried my best to do that but as I rang the bell, nobody, I said “ding, ding ding”, I said, “put your hands on your heads!” Nobody’s putting their hands on their heads.* (Participant Nine)

In a similar way to Participant Eight who found that her cultural expectations needed to be adjusted, Participant Nine here illustrated that she is in full understanding of the language and instructions required and of the meta-knowledge governing the notion of a rewards system in the classroom. However, nothing was working, which led to an impasse where the supervising teacher needed to use her authority. This situation facing Participant Nine raised the contrast between theory and practice and the application of theory in practice. Like Participant Eleven above, who thought that she required more time to understand the students’ cultural backgrounds before she would feel comfortable using the language in the classroom, Participant Nine felt that the short time-frame of the practicum led to her being unable to build up enough authority with the students.

In brief, a combination of speed, fluency and accurate language use, coupled with knowledge of what the students are thinking from a cultural perspective were seen as centrally important to the participants in this study. From a cultural
perspective it seems that the aim is for student teachers to achieve the same ease as
that noted by Participant Eleven of her supervising teacher:

And also the language, because how do you say, it’s like the language
to the students – like my supervision teacher, he also was have fun
with the students as well, like they can talk back and stuff, really quick
talk. But I can’t really – sometimes I have to catch up with what’s
going on, yeah. (Participant Eleven)

Here, fluent language use both inside and outside the classroom was seen as a
means to develop an effective working relationship with students. Lack of fluency or
accuracy or confidence in language use, the need to “catch up with what is going on”
could lead to student teachers being unable to participate fully in the practices of the
school. On the other hand, the positive experiences of observation and mentoring
showed that many participants in this study could imagine themselves using such
fluent language as they moved into their career as professional teachers. Here the
practicum experience allowed them to extend or adapt their linguistic repertoire
through engagement with their classes even though they might start from a position
of shyness and lack of confidence like Participant Eight below:

I didn’t understand what the students were saying, sometimes I had to
ignore. Yeah I know what, I knew they were taking about different
things not the main things that they are learning, so ignored or I ask
them to say it again but even though I asked them, they are like, ah it’s
OK, they try not to say repeat it so that was the harder, hardest thing.
Yes, ah, I was very shy and not I didn’t have confidence I wasn’t
certain to speak in English in front of all the students. (Participant
Eight)

On the other hand, while fluency in English and the ability to confidently and
fluently talk to students were causing issues for some student teachers, they were
often recognised as being able to contribute to the school community through using
their first language. For example, Participant Six experienced the following situation:

I was teaching next door that day and then the teacher next-door came
and said well I’d better go and assist her in dealing with this child. So
I actually grabbed him outside and spoke to him in Chinese. He
actually told me a lot of things about his family, what is going on. So 
maybe in this regard because of that linguistic connection I think I am 
probably more approachable by Chinese-speaking children who do 
have English linguistic skills but probably not sufficient enough to 
communicate in such detail.

Her reflection on this situation demonstrated that she believed her identity as a 
culturally diverse teacher meant that culturally diverse school students were happier 
to engage with her. For several of the other participants in this study the more 
diverse the range of students in the school the more comfortable they felt. Thus the 
more diverse the community, the easier it was for them to experience a sense of 
legitimacy.

5.6 Building a shared repertoire of practice

Edwards and Tsui (2009) argue that, in viewing the practicum as an experience 
of legitimate peripheral participation in the community of the school

as such the school is conceptualised not as a site where STs apply 
prelearned knowledge but rather as a site of learning and hence 
professional identity formation, in its own right. This requires a 
subsequent shift in the focus of learning theory from the acquisition of 
skills and knowledge to changing relationships of participation in the 
world (p. 68).

At the same time, the university plays an important role in preparing student 
teachers for their practicum experiences. This section presents the participants’ 
views on how the formal subjects they studied helped them in their transition to their 
practicum experiences and also considers the relationships that they experienced with 
their supervising teachers and other professionals whose role it is to help bridge the 
gap between study and work. As Wenger (2000) observes, “The learning and 
novation of a social learning system lies in its configuration of strong core 
practices and active boundary practices” (p.233). With this in mind this section 
considers how the practicum experience contributes to facilitating the legitimate
peripheral participation of these student teachers in Queensland schools (Tsui, Edwards & Lopez-Real 2009, p. 42).

5.6.1 University support and tension:

How does work at the boundaries between the school and the university community contribute to the student teacher’s experience of practicum?

The participants in this study found that their university preparation work ranged from being highly theoretical to practical and thus some of it could be applied directly in their practicum. University Liaison Academics also featured as playing an important bridging role between the university and the school delicately negotiating the access that the student teachers needed. From a community of practice perspective they are acting as boundary brokers (Wenger, 1998, p. 109) by facilitating connections across and between communities of practice. Wenger (1998) argues that the process of boundary brokering is complex “involving processes of translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives” (p.109) and “enough legitimacy to influence the development of a practice, mobilise attention and address conflicting interests” (p. 109).

Participant Three, in response to how preparation for the practicum had assisted her in her practicum experiences, said that:

*Subjects of Indigenous culture that we’ve learnt about have helped me immensely. Other than that I don’t know if we’ve really touched on it at all*

Participant Four gave an example of a connection between the “learning how to teach” aspect of her diploma course and her experience when actually called upon to teach:

*I could say the tutorial from mathematics that we get really in touch with the material that actually happened in the classroom. We kind of knowing, Oh they’re using this and using that and using all the paper*
strips and things that we normally won’t have contact with - because for me this is a kid’s toy. If I don’t have kids I don’t play with it. But in the tutorial for mathematics we do have time and we spend time to play with it and then to kind of get, OK. But, while we were in the tutorial we don’t really understand why, you know. You just think, oh this is so fun, an easy time to get past. But when you come to the school environment you realise, oh, this is actually the object or things or material that the kids were using and teacher was using this to educate them or teach them or for their teaching, playing being for the teaching. I think that is useful in a way. Maybe one of the microteaching is kind of can relate it. You’re kind of getting the idea of that teaching is kind of like this way. Sit on the carpet and do an activity, then clapping and then go back to group. It’s kind of routine would happen in every class. You kind of OK you associate that microteaching to actual classroom. OK, that’s why they want us to do that. (Participant Four)

She reflected that while the tutorial was actually taking place the activities were a kind of easy way to pass the time, contrasting with the responsibilities of taking notes in lectures or contributing in tutorials. She considered them to be equivalent to a “kid’s toy”, fun, but serving no useful purpose for her. Her alignment was with her earlier educational experiences where ‘playing games” did not form part of the serious curriculum. As a result, she argued that she did not really understand the purpose of the exercise until she was in the classroom and her reflection illustrated that she wished that her attention had been directed more to why it was seen as a useful part of her study.

Participant Four here was revealing her preferred learning style. As she said later she came from an education system where teachers were authoritarian and students were passive and so was more comfortable in the transmission mode of teaching and learning. Activities like the one she described above, that did not conform to the picture she had of serious teaching and learning. After she enacted parts of the micro-teaching in her real teaching she understood their relevance and the resulting new insights legitimised both the university experiences and their application in the real world for her. Here the boundary between the communities of
practice of the university and the school respectively provided her with opportunities to develop her teaching competence at the micro-level and illustrated the connection between activities at the periphery and at the core of the school practices.

Participant Four made some other comments about her learning experiences at university that illustrated her perceptions at this stage of effective teaching and learning. She wanted “useful things”, and “specific” guidance in what to look at during observation sessions; she wanted to be “told” what to look for. These insights came to her after reflection on her teaching experiences and she demonstrated that she has very clear ideas about what may have been useful to her:

*I really don’t think we learn enough useful things.  
I think for immersion week is good for us but just we need to be maybe more specific to requests to asking what to look at and instead of just only come in and feel what the school is about. You really need to know what the teacher concentrates on or some issues like that.  
I was wishing if I could have been told to look at more things in detail there, I would be more aware of things to look at and then that might help me with later when I really actually need to teach. I know, OK because I have observed for that two weeks and I will know what I can do in that kind of situation.* (Participant Four)

Participant Four here was anchoring herself firmly in the role of a passive student teacher wanting to be guided. She wanted her teaching preparation to be:

*... more structured in detail think, that might be helpful for other students that are in the same course.*

In contrast, Participant Eight drew directly on her micro-teaching opportunities during her course to illustrate how it had built up her confidence and helped her overcome cultural demands to be quiet and reserved. Not only did the experiences that she had during her course help her in becoming a more confident member of the university community of practice, as the course demanded that she present in front of her peers, but they also extended her whole communicative repertoire enabling her to overcome her culturally determined reluctance to talk in front of people:
(on groupwork) yeah it was difficult to ask those questions but now I can ask and also speaking in front of others. The first semester one of the units we did micro-teaching, four of us did micro-teaching, did micro-teaching together and second prac, no second semester, we did work, what was the name, team-led discussion. But I felt comfortable to do that because of the first group presentation, micro-teaching. (Participant Eight)

Participant Six, in a similar way to Participant Four found that the university course was more theoretical than practical:

With the university I found that they focus on societal subjects, like the knowledge behind cultural diversity and all that. But you see what I consider that is more important within the classroom is actually the content knowledge. I don’t think university supports us enough in giving us knowledge to transfer to the kids. May be they do give us ideas about equity, diversity and all that theoretical background knowledge but I think we need more support or guidance in what we teach because if you actually look through the course more than fifty percent is about theory, psychology, learning networks and all that. Because I did a full primary four-year course I just don’t think that’s enough. Quite seriously, that’s not enough. (Participant Six)

She was looking to the university to help with “knowledge to transfer to the kids”. As the primary teacher’s role comprises dealing with multiple subjects and areas she felt overwhelmed. As a result when she was on practicum she felt that her repertoire of subject knowledge was lacking. She was also looking in a practical way at behaviour management.

Another area is behaviour management and I do understand depends on where you’re placed – some places are very, very challenging. I think I took behaviour management first semester of this year and it was lectorial only ... how much support can a lecturer give in a room across 200-300 students? But with tutorials the tutors can actually give you more opportunities to scaffold and all that stuff. They get us to read textbooks and all that, that’s all theory, OK. In reality, some may work but most of the time, it is things, little tricks that are not theory and that are not written in theory books that actually get you through the day. Maybe they need to target their resources for us university students a little better. So maybe give us more practical guidance rather than theoretical. (Participant Six)

Participant Six revealed here the stage that she had reached in her development as a student teacher and the influence of her cultural background. She was open to
the idea of “scaffolding” in her own learning, through trying things out in a tutorial but, at the same time she was looking for clear guidance in ways to do things.

Participant Six clearly recognised the contrast between learning about practice and participating in practice. She sought a way to reconcile the two and considered that the university needed to go more deeply into “little tricks that are not theory and are not written in theory books”. Like Participant Four she was seeking more direction in what to look for in her observation sessions and how to use the practicum more actively as a site for peripheral participation.

Participant Seven drew on her theoretical work to inform her lesson planning and found that this aspect of her practice did not match her supervisor’s expectations.

So that was very different because what we are learning there are some important theories and we have to deal with the language classroom but teacher doesn’t know anything about that. Because my supervising teacher graduated from uni four or five years ago, so maybe that content of the study very different. So, yes, sometimes I should explain that why I did that part. I couldn’t explain that very well. So sometimes I was just following the theory in that classroom but “what are you doing”, she ask, “what are you doing?” she was not happy with what I was doing and I tried to explain the theory part, she doesn’t want to listen because she was busy, she was seem very busy, that is why. It’s not the personality issue. (Participant Seven)

Participant Seven was drawing upon her university work to plan her practicum teaching but found that it blocked engagement with her supervising teacher. This is an example of a failed boundary practice that is not helping to make connections between communities (Wenger, 1998). At a local level this supervising teacher’s classroom was not open to the new approach from the student teacher which led to difficulties in building a shared repertoire of practices.

Working at the boundaries between the community of the university and that of the practicum school is extremely complex. It appears for some of the culturally and linguistically diverse student teachers in this study that theory and practice could be
more specifically aligned. The university is providing opportunities but, the
significance of trying out practical teaching in the safety of the university class
before applying it in the world of the school was being missed. It is impossible of
course to replicate the issue of accountability that resides in the practicum school for
the students and the lessons but at the same time student teachers in this study could
benefit from an understanding of how to use their knowledge as part of their identity
as a student teacher.

5.7 Identity work

What are the processes of identity development that are related to the student
teacher’s experiences?

As Wenger (2008) argues “the work of reconciliation (the negotiation of an
identity) may be the most significant challenge faced by learners who move from one
community of practice to another” (p.113). “Learners must often deal with
conflicting forms of individuality and competence as defined in different
communities.” (p.113) This section discusses the participants’ experience of their
practicums as negotiating an identity (or identities) of practice. Wenger (1998, 2000)
proposes three modes of belonging that shape social learning systems and identities:
engagement, alignment and imagination. Engagement involves ‘active involvement
in mutual processes of meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 173), imagination involves
“creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by
extrapolating from our own experience” (p. 173) and alignment is about
“coordinating our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and
contribute to broader enterprises” (p. 174). These three modes are referred to briefly
here in understanding how the participants’ practicum experiences related to their
identity development.
Identity work can be extremely emotionally demanding. This needs to be borne in mind by supervisors when they are engaging with practicum student teachers. Participant Four talked about how she was given feedback by her supervisor:

*but instead she spent a lot of time every in lunch time and after school hours and kind of – she is using the way kind of criticise the work that you need to do this, you need to do that. But it’s kind of OK for me because I’m kind of traditional growing up. So for me is quite acceptable way. But with another student the same as me in the same class she just feels that she is being criticised all the time. She is kind of feel very resistant.* (Participant Four)

She demonstrated some cultural insights and drew upon her own background to find a student teacher identity that she was comfortable with. This identity drew upon her earlier educational experiences that were “traditional”, from which we can infer, “controlling and critical”, based upon finding faults to correct. It reached a difficult stage, particularly for the “other student” with whom she was working in her practicum, who ended up dropping out. It raised issues about the contrast between “critique” which has a positive intent and “criticism” which has a negative and how these two functions are mediated in different cultures and for different purposes.

Participant Four noted:

*Because every day I just don’t feel I like to go to school. Every day I was struggling do I come into the classroom. It’s not really a pleasant thing and a pleasant way to learn things. Yeah, so I was so struggle for the first two weeks, every day.

.... the first two weeks for is just only get one or two hours sleep then we wake up and then you feel, another day, I don’t want to go. I wish I could just drop it you know. I don’t want to continue. Then the voice comes out and says but you’re already starting and this is the final prac. If you can get through this it’s only one month. If you can get through this, then that’s yours you know. So that’s dragging me, OK.* (Participant Four)

Due to the style of interaction, which she felt unable to change, the practicum became a heavy burden for her. The initial alignment that she felt with the criticism,
incorporating her original cultural insights and educational experiences, was eroded as the sheer pressure of the work built up. Her engagement with the demands of the practicum was intense. She drew instead on imagination and saw a better future for herself after the formal legitimisation of the practicum experience was over. The practicum was reduced to a form of credentialising, which helped her to complete it.

For this student, her supervising teacher clearly was expecting something different, some greater level of experience. When this proved to be impossible to demonstrate through practice, even with severe sleep deprivation on the part of the student teacher to try and accomplish the demands, it took the intervention of a University Liaison Officer to restore some kind of balance to the practicum. There is a lot to discuss here in terms of identity work. Initial requests for help from the student teachers were met with feedback at the level of abstract process rather than particular practices:

> Everything comes out and when I write the e.mail to my lecturers. I said is that normally happen when you’re in a prac? The feedback that she gave to me is, I should be happy if host teacher want to spend some lunch time and after hour time to discuss things. (Participant Four)

The supervising teacher was going out of her way to help, which was recognised by the University Liaison Officer, but some misunderstanding had resulted in her requesting work that was beyond the current abilities of her student teachers. This misunderstanding took two weeks to resolve. Participant Four drew on her previous experiences of learning and recognised that there had always been moments of challenge and difficulty requiring growth and change. She recounted:

> In my whole of learning until now I go through a very difficult situation each stage and I found out when I face a very difficult situation or shocking experiences ...then I’ll gradually compromise or accommodate myself to see what is happening in this situation; can I really handle it? (Participant Four)
Her previous experience as a teacher allowed her to imagine completing the practicum. Participant Four was also constantly worried about her identity as culturally and linguistically diverse. However, despite the fact that she explicitly raised this matter with her supervising teacher it was never an issue in her practicum. The issue that she grappled with more closely was the position that a teacher occupies and the responsibility that goes with that:

... in our country a teacher was just constructed into knowing everything, you’re supposed to know everything so you can answer student’s questions. For me it’s very, very challenging things to be knowing everything. Even in reality you know that you won’t possibly know everything. (Participant Four)

This feeling of needing to be all-knowing, which is in sharp contrast to the Australian understanding of the teacher’s role, was connected with her fears about her level of English proficiency.

Also, a lot of reasons is I’m really afraid of using English but thinking a teacher’s standards should be higher than this. I’m not quite sure whether I can achieve this standard, this certain standard, so that’s what I am afraid of because I don’t know how I am going to achieve that. (Participant Four)

Participant Four’s alignment with the more formal teacher-centred style of her early learning experiences led to her being at times unable to imagine constructing a proficient teaching identity in Australia. She conflated content knowledge and language proficiency, arguing that her language repertoire and cultural background mean that she found it difficult sometimes to negotiate her way through the practicum:

... teaching is a very instant thing, even if you are prepared. But when you come to the front you are always facing an unknown thing, unknown response because you never know what your students are going to ask. They were always asking something that you don’t know – because we come from different cultures, a lot of cultures I don’t understand. (Participant Four)
Similarly, Participant Six commented that cultural and linguistic diversity is one part of the practicum that needed to be managed. Like Participant Four, she drew on her educational experiences to show that the social position and hence the identity of teachers contrasted greatly in different contexts:

> In our countries, the government or the society gives a lot of support for teachers. You will hear Asian parents say, if he’s naughty just smack him. ... if you raise you voice at the kids (now), the parents turn round and sue you. ... something I really learnt from my teacher is that you need to manage the kids in order for you to deliver a lesson.

So, if you don’t manage the kids, you can have a perfect lesson and you can write perfect lesson plans, perfect resources, perfect settings but this will not get through to them. So I think managing the kids is one big aspect. I suppose it’s not just for us pre-service teachers from other cultural backgrounds. I think it’s for any teacher that I don’t think we have enough authority in the classroom and not enough support from the government and societal local community. (Participant Six)

Participant Six located herself here as a pre-service teacher from a culturally diverse background to illustrate the complexity of building professional identities between cultures. She also illustrated how she saw her development through her practicum and the identity switching that took place as she took different roles and responsibilities:

> Well, when I’m observing I see myself as a student teacher. But when I’m actually there teaching, I see myself as a teacher. You get students who say, you’re not a real teacher, but I’m like, no when I’m standing up here teaching, I’m the teacher. So, it’s just I do understand that she (supervising teacher) wants to give me as much opportunities to actually experience the real life as a teacher as much as possible but sometimes I do need a little bit more guidance. So that’s just something that I’ve just experienced recently.

One month, hold my breath down, just get through it, I want my report done. I’m on to the next site. So that was my impression of that particular time. But basically from my other experiences I felt more like I was co-teaching with the teachers. Sometimes I’ll be teaching, she’ll step in, add a few more information that I – or clarify or provide a more scaffolding for the students. Or sometimes she’ll take the top half of the lesson, I’ll take the bottom half or maybe we’ll divide the days up or the weeks up. (Participant Six)
The interaction between being a student teacher and an experience of practicing as a “real” teacher and the issues of legitimacy and peripherality that were raised in the consideration of this interaction demonstrate the development of a professional identity for Participant Six. At the same time however, she commented about how this was sometimes a source of tension. For example, in her second practicum she told of her identity confusion:

*It’s just you feel a little bit, you’re concerned about what is your purpose being here. Am I here to learn or am I here to provide you non-contact time? That was one of the questions I continuously asked myself during the second experience. (Participant Six)*

Participant Six was strongly aware of her identity as a “student teacher” and clearly felt that her role was not one of acting as an unpaid teaching assistant. There was therefore a demarcation of responsibility that she felt would not serve any purpose in helping her define herself as a teacher. Like other participants in this study the burden of being given what they perceive to be too much responsibility, or the wrong kind of responsibility, led to a conflict often resulting in a questioning of the legitimacy of the practicum as an opportunity to participate peripherally in the practices of the school.

Participant Two felt the same sense of conflict but over interaction with students in the playground. He used his identity as a fellow migrant to empathise with stories that were told to him but at the same time he found it difficult to reconcile this with his role as a professional teacher. He felt that the boundaries were blurred and that he required a clearer set of guidelines. This illustrates the importance in the participation model of having time to reflect and interact with the supervising teacher.

*and sometimes, like coming from (... ), you come from war-torn countries as well. But having that open talk, it’s sometimes hard to*
know what my boundary about work is. And I talk with this person and how far can I go? Is this person going to go home and, then, you know, going to go and tell their Mum. Or, you know. I would have liked more knowledge in how to tackle that. (Participant Two)

Building an identity of practice lies at the heart of the practicum experience and it has been noted briefly here that the work of building identity for culturally and linguistically diverse student teachers can sometimes have added layers of complexity related to alignment with different educational contexts or cultural mores. This work can lead to student teachers seriously questioning whether they can reconcile their present selves with the professional identity that will be required to participate as teachers in Australia.

5.8 Relationships and power relations

Practicum experiences are sites as we have seen in the sections above for negotiating both professional and personal identities. There is truly a nexus of multi-membership of different communities that interact in the context of the practicum to allow the building of different ways of understanding and acting in the context of the school and classroom.

The relationships that the student teacher develops with the supervising teacher and other key personnel in the practicum school are central to this process. This section considers the different relationships that the participants in this study experienced with their supervisors that facilitated or constrained their experience of the practicum.

5.8.1 Supervising teachers

How do relationships between supervisors and student teachers contribute to the experience of the practicum as a whole?
Supervisors adopted a variety of approaches to their supervision duties for the student teachers in this study, which ranged from being mainly facilitative to more controlling. When we consider the role of the supervisor as mentor for student teachers working at the boundary between the university and the school and also the boundary between the practicum and the wider world we can see that they play a pivotal role. In fact, they control largely whether and how much the student teacher is able to gain access to the resources of the community and determine whether or to what degree they feel as if they are legitimate participants.

Participant Two described three aspects of his practicum experiences in two different schools.

_The relationship with students in the first prac was – I think it was as good as it was allowed to be, because I wasn’t – I guess if you’re given more scope to explore the relationship with your students, it developments more in-depthly. But it wasn’t a bad relationship and they saw me – my teacher wouldn’t say I was a pre-service teacher. So, it was kind of kept secret from them as to what I actually was doing in the classes and that kind of caused a lot of uncertainty within them, and they didn’t know how to relate to me._

_Whereas in the new school there’s you know “He’s a pre-service teacher” and then there’s a history of that as well, so the students already know how to relate to – you know, you’re still a teacher. Like in the other school, you just didn’t where to stand, because you didn’t know what you were to the students, or yeah._

_In my first school, the teacher … she seemed very negative on trying new things in the classroom. It was like, this system is what the parents want, and the principal wants, so it’s what works. And we’re just going to stick to that. Whereas this other teacher… let’s try this new thing for me … so, yeah it was interesting to see the two different perspectives, yeah._ (Participant Two)

There were two different school cultures at work: one which obviously did not include the development of student teachers, or the participation of newcomers among its core practices, and one that did. This results in two contrasting styles of supervision, one controlling, opaque and managerial and the other facilitative and open. It has been discussed earlier that labelling and terms of address have a strong
legitimising function for student teachers in practicum schools. The first experience of Participant Two, where he remained undefined and did not define himself to the students, had a negative effect on his practicum experience because it placed him in an awkward position. The situation arose it seems because the supervising teacher was constrained in his supervision practice by the overall vision of the school. This was extended to Participant Two’s contribution to the teaching, which was also reified into certain hierarchical patterns that could not be challenged.

This contrasted with the attitude in the second school where Participant Two as a student teacher was encouraged to try new things. Participant Two’s reflection about the contrasting styles of teaching and supervision are telling. They allowed him to contrast the possible ways of participating in the two environments. A history of supervision that has allowed practices like terms of address for newcomers to become formalised and so reduce ambiguity or uncertainty for the students, supervisors and student teachers was seen as greatly facilitative for him in the practicum experience.

Participant Three also experienced contrasting practicum experiences.

The first one, the teacher was absolutely incredible, and he had the best rapport with students. But he didn’t seem to have much time. So, because of that and because of not having much confidence because you are just first out on your first prac, that made it seem it wasn’t as – it might have been supportive, but it didn’t feel as friendly or inviting or supportive because there was no time for me. And I can understand that because he was incredibly busy but ...
And then the second one ... it was more “that was a good lesson”; “that wasn’t as good a lesson” or “this is what you can improve on”. Rather than actual detailed feedback that even if it is something that you don’t necessarily want to hear because you want to be perfect first time out, it’s stuff that you need to hear and build upon as a teacher anyway.

(third practicum experience) It’s 50:50 per teacher so they’ve both been really welcoming and friendly. They’ve given me massive amounts of feedback which I never received in my either two pracs beforehand. So it’s just the information that I’ve been given and the
support I’ve been given, is just absolutely incredible, and just, yeah, feels like it’s a really good learning environment for the kids, and then for teachers as well. (Participant Three)

The theme of supervising teachers being very busy is one that features in many of the participants’ accounts. Schools are busy places and therefore, if student teachers are not to take on an extra layer of busyness, formal processes needs to be in place to allow mutual engagement. In her third practicum experience, Participant Three clearly valued the “massive amounts” of feedback that were given to her. It reified her position as “student teacher” but at the same time demonstrated to her that she was valued and on a positive developmental path. This contrasted with her second practicum where feedback appears to have been more procedural and brief. This may indicate simply a different supervisory style but in terms of promoting a sense of legitimacy it is clear which is more valuable for her. Indeed, she felt that the learning culture that was being extended to her was in the fabric of the school, affecting the students and the teachers as well. Participant Three clearly identified the preferred feedback style for her and detailed the positive effects. However, massive amounts of feedback were not as welcome for other participants. For example, Participant Four obviously felt under pressure from both the style and the amount of the feedback that she was given. The relationship with her supervising teacher evolved throughout the practicum from one where she felt that she had to identify with being a beginner and so an appropriate target for “criticism” to one where her efforts were recognised and she felt some form of release from the “room-for-improvement” identity that dominated her earlier experiences. She described this below:

but instead she spent a lot of time every in lunch time and after school hours
The pattern that she has got she starts with positive things, then negative, room for improvement, she doesn’t want to say negative so we are kind of writing “room for improvement”. I kind of find I always had, yeah she is nice to me I think. I got several positive issues on the top and then plenty “room for improvement”. But it’s OK for me just I keep telling myself because I am a beginner, you learn from that, criticise. So OK, I will accept that.

... she start to treat me better, and friendlier I think because I had a kind of feeling that she is not so harsh on me and also because what she asking for and tried to improve the next day.

Also, I kept asking her how I am doing so far. So the feedback she gave me is quite positive. So I kind of find release. Also she mentioned to me she actually thinks that I’m pretty good with a second language and can speak fluently and be able to teach here. So, she thinks I am quite good in that way. (Participant Four)

The supervising teacher’s positive comments about the student-teacher’s second language status had an important impact on her as language worries had dominated her experience initially.

As well as busyness and styles of feedback some participants found that an age differential made an important difference to the relationship that they could build with their supervising teacher. For example, Participant Three described her two practicum experiences below:

In some respects at (...) I felt treated more like a student than a teacher and yet they were very practical in their support. I learned probably far more from the very first prac that I did, than I have at this one.

The supervising teachers at (...) were older, probably my own age or very close to. They’d been teachers for 20 years plus, so I had lots of a wealth of experience to draw on and was able to identify shortfalls and weaknesses and things like that. They were also very good at saying “Hey this is really good, can I use that?” You know.

My supervising teachers at (.2.) are both quite young, 12 months, 2 years experience. They’re both very good teachers but there’s not the depth of something . so I’m sort of ... I’m finding that when I want to ask for – what’s the word I’m looking for? Constructive criticism. I’ll seek out an older teacher and they’ve been absolutely fabulous at (...).

You know they’ll sit down and they’ll go through you know what they do and then check out what I’m doing. (Participant Three)
Participant Three found a stronger sense of mutuality with the teachers from her first practicum because they were similar to her in age. This made her feel “more like a student than a teacher” and she valued their practical support. There was also a strong sense of mutual engagement with the supervising teachers illustrated by their genuine regard for Participant One’s materials and their appropriation of them. In this whole study, there were only a handful of examples of supervising teachers actively participating with student teachers to mutually extend both their practices. It certainly demonstrated a sense of legitimacy for Participant Three and confirmed her roles and identity as student teacher (needing help with shortfalls and weaknesses) and teacher.

In her second practicum, she found that the relative inexperience of her supervising teachers meant that support was more limited and instead she sought out someone who she felt would be able to help her. Participant Three here was demonstrating her maturity in legitimising her own participation in the practicum and extending the notion of supervision and support to include other teachers who would be better able to assist her to develop her teaching repertoire.

On the other hand Participant Nine commented that:

*It's like it's hard for me because the two teachers I taught with are kind of middle aged. It would have been different maybe, if I had taught, went into a classroom with a teacher who is my age or younger. (Participant Nine)*

Participant Nine found that the relationship development with her supervising teacher was one of the most challenging parts of her practicum. As she was not able to talk to other teachers because she did not want to get on the wrong side of her supervising teacher her experiences with the school community as a whole were consequently limited.
The multiple aspects that can impact on the building of a successful relationship with a supervising teacher (of culture, age, experience and personality and even subject area), can interact to make the experience a complex and difficult one, sometimes resulting in the student teacher feeling isolated and marginalised in the community.

Participant Four reflected on how lucky she felt to be in the language department for her practicum, where a sense of mutuality for diversity already existed. It demonstrated again how important the engagement for student teachers at the very local level can be to their overall experience.

I think because I’m in the language department, so of course, those language teachers were more welcoming because they are more acceptable for different cultures... but I think part of the problem is I pretty shy, I am not good in socialising, sometimes I step backwards where I need to face teachers from other departments. (Participant Four)

For Participant Seven her relationship with her supervising teacher became problematic very early in the practicum experience.

In the last semester, I’ve always been assessed by her, so I felt maybe extra tension whenever I talked to her and then I couldn’t express myself very well because I was trying to hid some worse part of me, not to expose everything. But she tried to communicate with me in first few days but after three days, she seemed like she got up and then started spreading bad reputation about me to other teachers, even in front of me because she thought I couldn’t understand what she is saying in English ...but I couldn’t react quickly, couldn’t respond quickly with such a thing, such kind of bad situation because if I did something wrong, that made the situation worse. So I just kept ignoring that stupid looks, very different to her and she upset more and more in the first week. That continued through almost till the end of the practicum, but I tried to communicate with her and then show I am not ignoring you. I’m trying to listen what she says, but sometimes I couldn’t understand what she’s talking about very well. If I ask her too many times it upset her, too, so that was a bit difficult for me. (Participant Seven)
Clearly Participant Seven needed help to facilitate a more positive way of working but she persisted to the end of the practicum. The breakdown of this relationship was hastened by Participant Seven deciding not to go to the staffroom for her morning tea which was a central, informal opportunity in this particular practicum community to engage. Participant Seven’s absence was seen as not wanting to engage socially whereas in fact she wanted to use the time to get ready for her lessons. Unfortunately, some social practices that are not shared in different cultures can lead to misunderstandings like this one that extended in some way for the whole practicum.

Relationship with supervising teachers was a central theme to all the participants in this study. As Kwan, Lopez-Real and Tsui (2009) argue “since mentors (supervisors) and student teachers both possess their own identities, when they interact to establish a mentoring relationship” their individual beliefs and histories and concerns will ensure that “the mentoring relationships are extremely complex ” (p.70). Introducing elements of cultural and linguistic diversity as well can add new layers of complexity particularly when student teachers find that they have to build a new repertoire of behaviours that might conflict with those in their home culture. It is important that supervising teachers and their student teachers have time to build a successful relationship and that both sides have opportunities to develop ways to mutually interact so that these issues can be anticipated and explored.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how important it is that student teachers achieve a sense of legitimacy to take part in the practices of the school and how the withdrawal
of or failure to convey legitimacy can result in their marginalisation, leading to all kinds of problematic issues.

The extended excerpts and structural analysis of one narrative was provided to set out validity through “social construction of a discourse” which assists in establishing the “trustworthiness” of the analysis (Mishler, 1990, p. 429) (see Appendix 2 for other sample analysis). The small narratives, the critical events that resulted in the overall interview were taken as representing a pattern that was emerging in the data for this study. Following Mishler (1990, p. 428), the vignettes provided both the structural and temporal aspects, that is situating participant identity in the “social and cultural contexts”, while the temporal aspect enabled to identify the essential codes and categories of themes that emerged that then could be applied to the rest of the data.

Examining the themes in the narratives allowed an interpretation of the participants’ experiences from a community of practice perspective where the social structures and each individual’s interaction with them led to different experiences of practicum, which are briefly summarised below.

Legitimacy in this study arose for participants in a number of ways ranging from formal initiation procedures from the school to informal comments from students. Participants also drew on their past experiences and different communities to help them build an identity of legitimate participation. At the same time some students put themselves in a marginal position in the practicum school where they felt more comfortable. This also had implications for their engagement then in the practices of the school.

Relationships are also seen as crucial to the experience of practicum and these can be central to the understanding and experience of a sense of joint enterprise.
Particular relationships that were mentioned included relationships with supervisors, University liaison academics, other student teachers, members of staff and students. Sometimes when a central relationship became problematic, participants would find support in different areas. Power and the lack of it formed a central part of some participants’ accounts and dominated their experiences leading them to find it difficult to participate meaningfully. At the same time for other participants the unexpected freedom they were given to legitimise their own practices proved to be constraining rather than liberating due to their complex identification with different communities or alignment with different notions of teacher identities, roles and social position.

Where there are conflicting objectives or goals between supervising teacher and student teacher or university and school it is hard to develop a sense of joint enterprise and it is difficult for the participants to build a sense of mutual engagement that will allow them to participate in the life of the school as peripheral members of the school community. For several of the participants it took a considerable part of a practicum experience to negotiate mutual goals and involved the aid of a specialist university liaison officer. Until these issues were resolved their practicum experience was one of keeping the supervising teacher happy by trying to demonstrate various competencies in the classroom.

The identification of the different communities that exist in the context of a practicum was also found to be profoundly influential in the learning experiences of participants in this study. Some local communities such as those based around subject-centred staffrooms had more of an impact at a local level on participants than the broader communities of the school or the university. For some participants, a lack of awareness of staffroom behaviours and school routines led to their being excluded
from some aspects of the school community with significant effects on their experience of practicum.

A sense of mutuality and legitimacy is essential to the establishment of a meaningful shared repertoire of teaching behaviours, identities and artefacts. For some participants, intense levels of engagement in classes, where they developed their own lessons, resulted in negative feedback and criticism of their teaching, which had an effect on their development as a student teacher. Other participants were granted a more legitimate peripheral role where problems and difficult elements of classroom management or content work were seen as opportunities to develop a real sense of mutual engagement. Thus, there was a great range in defining and enacting legitimacy and peripherality. Sometimes these varied within one department with moderation taking place between different members of staff as to how the practicum should be run.

The elements of teaching repertoire that the participants in this study discussed ranged from cultural and linguistic features of the classroom to particular ways to engage in classroom management. Some participants found that some aspects of their linguistic or cultural repertoire resulted in their marginalisation. This experience could then be mediated in a number of ways including withdrawal or continued engagement brokered by a University Liaison Academic. Several participants expressed the need to build cultural and linguistic routines that would benefit them in managing the classroom and delivering classes and they approached these challenges in different ways.

Central to the notion of situated learning in a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is the building of identity through the processes of participation and reification. Learning involves “becoming a different person” (p. 53). The
complexity of this process is described by the participants in this study as they discuss the elements of their practicum experiences that contributed variously to an identity of belonging or one of not belonging. How they identified themselves in the practicum experience and developed the ability to contribute to various elements of the school practice is central to this study, as is the intense sense of the uniqueness of each individual’s contribution.

These findings are taken up again in the next chapter which considers them by reintegrating the themes discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 and exploring the implications for all the stakeholders in the practicum.
Chapter 6 Discussion

Earlier chapters discussed the background to this study (Chapter 2), the theoretical framework (Chapter 3), the research methodology (Chapter 4) and the findings (Chapters 5 and 6), and were presented thematically, as extended narratives, allowing a consideration of the individual, social and professional influences on the student teachers as they participated in their practicum schools.

This chapter aims to examine the student teachers’ learning from the theoretical perspectives of situated learning, and community of practice, that were extensively discussed in Chapter 3. How the practicum experience constitutes “legitimate peripheral participation” in a community of practice will be explored. How the student teachers’ professional identities are facilitated or constrained by their experiences in their practicum schools (Edwards & Tsui, 2009) is considered and implications for future teacher training opportunities are raised and will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

The main findings related to legitimacy, people and power, community, teaching repertoire and identity development are now discussed.

6.1 Legitimacy and Legitimate Peripheral Participation.

Central to the participants’ experience in this study were the measures that were taken by the practicum schools to legitimise their access to the periphery of the school community. The concepts of “legitimate peripheral participation”, “periphery” and “legitimate” practice are briefly revisited below to set the scene for the discussion of the findings drawing upon relevant literature.
Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that “‘legitimate peripheral participation’ provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become a part of a community of practice” (p. 29). The process under consideration here is the fieldwork practicum for student teachers, which can be considered as a formalised experience of peripheral legitimate participation as the student teachers attempt to become part of the community of practice of the school. This notion, developed by Wenger (1998), contends that peripheral participation “provides an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice” (see 3.3.2 for more detail). Peripherality and legitimacy work together to contribute to the process of helping newcomers to take their first steps in a new community of practice by making allowances for them so that they do not have to undertake a full teaching workload, and they have the opportunity to try things out in an environment that is sympathetic to developing levels of competence compared with the expert levels expected by full members. The practicum experiences of the participants in this study are now discussed in terms of how they were granted legitimacy and peripherality in their practicum schools under the formal arrangements generated by the university and practicum schools working in partnership.

As data from this study illustrated, the process of legitimisation in the complex context of different schools varied immensely. In most cases, for the participants of this study when they arrived at the school a supervising teacher had been allocated for them and a set of experiences designed that would allow them to build their practice through a process consisting of observation and feedback, limited supported teaching and some kind of full teaching experience. Their identity as ‘student
teacher’ was mostly formalised and they occupied a position in the school that was recognised and understood as peripheral by students and staff.

On the other hand, their experiences did not always run in concert with the program that they were expecting and so expectations of levels of participation varied on both sides, the student teacher and the supervisor. Also, some students, due to administrative oversights or staff shortages, became legitimised to take full loads and were pressed into teaching unsupervised or unguided for different periods of up to two weeks. Some students found that this facilitated their development while others were overwhelmed, illustrating the importance of considering individual responses to different pressures. Others found that their supervising teachers had extremely high expectations of them, that they were not expecting, which meant very little support was provided. This resulted in their legitimacy constantly being questioned as they struggled to achieve a professional identity that met these standards.

The range of experiences for participants in this study illustrates that some practicum schools are better than others at creating a practicum experience that promotes engagement and participation and that sets clear goals for the student teachers to achieve (Grossman, Hammerness, McDonald & Ronfeldt, 2008). Another central element that was lacking for some participants in this study was a purposeful connection between university preparation and practicum experience. LaBoskey and Richert (2002) recognise that student placements need to be “safe, nested contexts for learning where the principles are well-blended and where there are a reflective focus to the work” (p. 32). In other words, they are arguing that a classroom that is a good learning environment for students will also provide a good learning environment for student teachers and that university expectations and school
expectations are in alignment. Further, there will be safe opportunities to try things out and meaningful and supported reflection on practice teaching experiences that encapsulate the notion of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’. In a practicum where a student is left unsupported and in charge of a class these notions are violated and the practicum can become a potentially adverse experience in “survival”.

Achieving a sense of legitimacy for student teachers in their practicum schools is therefore central to establishing what Grossman et al. (2008) describe as “structural” and “conceptual” (p. 274) coherence for practicum experiences. The conceptual side refers to the ideas and notions that can be carried through from the university to the practice school, while the structural side looks at how these experiences can be implemented in the form of activities and assignments, “the alignment of ideas and learning opportunities” (p. 274). Both these notions of coherence will be important for teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as they adjust to different cultural expectations and strive to develop as a teacher in the new cultural environment. Given the range of experiences here, there is an argument therefore for closer alignment between university staff and practicum supervisors in building a coherent vision of the practicum that achieves both student teacher development and opportunities for students in schools to interact with different elements of a teaching repertoire, including cultural and linguistic factors that may be different to their own.

Coherence can also be seen clearly in the physical arrangements that were made for student teachers. In terms of “place” some student teachers were given a formal desk, computer and email accounts that were very positive in constructing their identity as legitimate participants in the school. Others had to create their own space and fight a tide of indifference or even hostility to their presence in the
staffroom or the classroom. “Terms of address” were also an important means of providing legitimacy. In this study, they ranged from a formal structured introduction at assembly to no formal reference to the purpose of the student teacher being in the classroom at all. These experiences also varied across public and private schools with some individual schools carrying out the process of legitimisation in very positive ways. However, the fact that there was such a range of ways of granting or denying legitimacy observed, and that they can have such an important impact on student teachers, illustrates that this is an area that needs to be discussed. If this is not formalised, then at least it needs to be recognised as a topic of interest and relevance to student teachers on practicum. The notion of legitimacy as part of a professional community of practice may be helpful here as it allows the entry of newcomers to the school community to be considered as a formalised experience of situated learning. This can then be explored in detail, where student teachers, through their participation in the community build a teaching identity in which they “learn to think, talk, and act as a teacher” (Mouza, 2007, p. 167). Further it allows specific consideration of how the features of the social setting, the practicum school, “constrain or afford particular practices associated with learning and thereby constrain or afford the learning itself” (Clark & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 956).

The fact that the required levels of participation and responsibility for preparation and teaching load were so variable in this study reflects not only the contrast between individual schools and their arrangements for practicum, it also emphasises the powerful individual roles played by the supervising teacher and the teaching staff at the practicum school. In some instances this was associated with a corresponding lack of power granted to the student teacher. However, this may also be exaggerated by cultural concerns and expectations on both sides (Campbell et al.,
At a structural level, student teachers from a more formal culture, where teachers tend not to be directly questioned, may initially find it difficult to challenge or question the demands made on them by supervising teachers in a practicum context, even when such comment is invited. However, it is more helpful to first consider these relationships on an individual basis grounded in the different practicum teachers and the different school communities than as cultural traits determined by ethnic or cultural background (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). At the same time, supervising teachers may interpret reticence as laziness, lack of interest or lack of engagement rather than as a lack of experience in participating in similar social environments. As student teachers develop a stronger sense of identity and have greater exposure to the structures of the school it will become easier to negotiate relationships.

In this study, where there were mismatches in expectations, University Liaison Officers played a crucial role for some students in renegotiating expectations of participation in the social structure of the school and the classroom. These situations were also often exaggerated by the general busyness of the school environment and the limited time for active reflection and negotiation of common aims, between the student teachers and their supervisors or other staff, which raises questions about the formal administration of the practicum experience at some schools.

Many of these issues could be addressed on a procedural basis with opportunities for active and regular open communication between all parties. However, time is required to achieve this. Part of the practicum experience should be the opportunity to build a clearer picture of each other’s objectives; indeed, this could comprise part of the notion of peripherality, which is the opportunity to engage in meta-discussion about engagement in the practicum. For students whose
community membership has included very different ways of engaging, such as automatically affording their teachers high levels of respect, this would be very helpful in legitimising their developing identity in the new community. At the same time the school community could extend itself as different forms of participation and activities grow at its boundaries through student teachers from CALD backgrounds moving along their trajectories of becoming teachers. For these activities to extend the legitimacy granted to diverse cultural and linguistic student teachers an over-arching concept such as that of “cultural safety” (Williams, 1999) may be helpful for all parties. It could provide a starting point for the discussion of diverse ways of being a teacher in a culturally diverse society like Australia. This would help to identify those factors that promote and extend positive practicum experiences for all student teachers as well as those that may hinder the engagement of CALD student teachers in Queensland schools (Miller, 2009).

Whilst recognising the central role that practicum plays in the development of student teachers, Mouza (2007) argues that practice teaching opportunities often fall short for them as a result of problems arising with suitable placements, contrasting ideas about the various roles that student teachers and the supervisors might undertake, and mismatches between the expectations that student teachers bring to the program and the practicum experience itself. The range of experiences described by the students in this study certainly highlights a number of factors that can directly impact on the student teacher’s experience and underlines the central importance for good preparation for the practicum, a clear understanding of the goals of the practicum, their roles, and the importance of knowledge about procedures to follow and people to contact if there are any difficulties.
This preparation can be done in a variety of ways. Putnam and Borko (2000), for example, suggest that working with relevant case studies prior to practicum gives student teachers the opportunities for preparation to build a tacit understanding of the metalanguage and linguistic repertoire that they may need to open up opportunities for participation in schools where the pedagogical strategies that they meet may not align with those explored in their coursework. Mouza (2007) suggests that such strategies may be employed in both the real and the virtual world, with student teachers perhaps able to engage in discussions and case study deliberations online as they prepare for their practicum experiences. Topics to explore could include a range of diverse areas, which could anticipate and allow rehearsal for potential difficult areas of practicum. These could extend beyond the common pedagogical and content concerns to include broader social considerations about how to successfully engage with the different stakeholders in each practicum school. Also, listening to the narratives of teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who have successfully completed their practicums in Australia or CALD teachers who are working in Australian schools may be helpful in establishing a personal process by which to negotiate a personal “place” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004) in the practicum school. Sharing of common stories can help to build tacit knowledge of how to make connections and increase engagement in the practise of the school.

6.2 People and Agency

Relationships and particularly relationships with supervisors form a central part of most participants’ experiences in this study. In Wenger’s (1998) terms “a social concept of identity entails a social concept of power and, conversely, that a discussion of power must include considerations of community, negotiation of
meaning, and identity” (p. 190). In other words, the exercise of power over the student teacher’s experiences are enacted in how much legitimacy they are given or perceive to have been given to participate peripherally in the practices of the school along the dimensions outlined above.

In working with a supervising teacher this process is characterised by Maynard (2001) as involving a tension between the two notions of “fitting in” and “being yourself”. For culturally and linguistically diverse student teachers there may be added layers of complexity, particularly in considering new classroom routines and classroom language, that impact on their ability to fit in but also in their access to their supervising teachers and the kinds of communication that were open to them. The very range of diversity of the experiences of the participants in this study illustrates the open and fluid nature of the supervision process in Queensland schools which allows for huge individual variation and style. In some situations, this individuality and different forms of accountability meant that student teachers were sometimes at a loss in terms of knowing how to proceed and tried to ‘fit in’ without really understanding their objectives.

The experiences of some of the student teachers in the present study were similar to those of the International students in Spooner-Lane, Tangen and Campbell’s (2009) study, who found that their practicum experience was hindered by issues related to their relationship with their supervisor. While this group differed to the participants of the present study they shared some aspects of cultural and linguistic diversity and Spooner-Lane et al. (2009) argue that there is not at present any unit in the preparation course that discusses the kind of negotiation skills that student teachers may need when they go out on their field experience. At the very least this means that valuable time is often lost when communication between
supervisor and student teacher is unclear or when issues arise. This, of course, would not only be relevant to culturally and linguistically diverse students both international and local but also to local native English speaking teachers who may be significantly younger or older than their supervising teacher, or come from a different social or educational background. Indeed, this present study reveals examples of relationship breakdown that are more strongly influenced by age and experience differences than any overt cultural or linguistic reason. All students on practicum would benefit from an explicit emphasis on assertive communication at the very least and perhaps a set of steps that they can follow with their University Liaison Academic in the event that they feel there is a problem. Supervising teachers would also benefit from such a set of guidelines. Time is so short in the practicum context that unresolved issues can extend for the entire time of the practicum with unfortunate or distressing consequences.

In this study, the role played by University Liaison Academics was emphasised by some participants as the only reason that they felt able to continue and finish their practicum. These roles included renegotiating program goals, providing direct and visible support in a hostile staffroom, and re-calibrating aims and objectives so that they more adequately aligned with the student teacher’s level of competence at the particular stage of their pre-service training. They played a vital shock-absorbing role for some students and showed that the boundary between the school and the university can be a dynamic context for establishing greater mutuality between the two communities.

LaBoskey and Richert (2002) also found in their study that supervisors are absolutely central to the successful process of a practicum. However, they also argue that the university or the school does not support many supervisors, either financially
or in the goals of the program. They argue that they need to “include professional
development opportunities for the supervisors where they, too, can examine in a
parallel manner the program principles and how those principles might inform their
supervisory work” (p. 31). For the participants in this study the University Liaison
Academics did play this kind of role in supporting both the students and the
supervisors through their input. However, they were often only consulted when
things had reached a difficult stage, communication had broken down or the student
was at risk of failing the practicum. By then the emotional impact on both supervisor
and student was usually intense and the work of reconciliation was complex and
difficult. More preparation before practicum about setting mutual goals and
understanding responsibilities would therefore help to prevent such situations arising.

Another area where relationships between supervisors and students caused
friction in this study was in the use of feedback and the expectations regarding
suggestions made. In many cases, communication was given on the run and
supervising teachers were too busy to establish sufficient time for discussion and
reflection. In some cases, suggestions for changes to lesson plans and lessons were
given on the day of the lesson with the result that the student teacher was in a
constant state of stress in their teaching. Student teachers who were unsure of
themselves with their linguistic repertoire, or their use of some aspects of English in
the classroom, and who therefore made great efforts both to prepare visual aids and
to rehearse the presentation phases of their lessons, experienced increased
difficulties. In some cases, their competencies in various areas such as literacy were
questioned, with supervising teachers making judgements based on personal
perceived shortcomings in accent or discrete literacy skills such as spelling errors.
This is not to say that a practicum experience should not include spontaneity, indeed
many participants in this study found that the practicum experience pushed them into a new way of interacting with lessons and students. However, adequate time needs to be given for feedback and reflection.

There is value here in considering the distinction between the “learning curriculum” and “teaching curriculum” described by Lave and Wenger (1991 p. 97). A learning curriculum consists of situated opportunities for learners to participate and is viewed from the perspective of the learner. A teaching curriculum on the other hand is constructed for the instruction of newcomers and so all knowledge is mediated through “an instructor’s participation, by an external view of what learning is about” (p. 97), which therefore can limit the learner’s access to the various real practices of the community. What is essential therefore is for both sides to understand the purposes of the practicum at both a practical and reflective level. In that way mismatches in expectations and various competencies will not arise and clear roles and responsibilities will allow clearer communication and more productive practicum experiences. Also, supervising teachers may benefit from an explicit discussion of how sociocultural principles can be implemented in the practicum for their students so that clear expectations can be established from the outset and both parties need to be encouraged to reflect and share their reflections as part of the process of building a professional identity (LaBoskey & Richert, 2002). On this point, Laboskey and Richert (2002) argue that practicum programs need “to include professional development opportunities for the supervisors where they too, can examine in a parallel manner the program principles and how those principles might inform their supervisory work” (p. 31). In this way, time will not be wasted as supervisors and student teachers seek to clarify goals as they participate in the practicum.
For the participants whose practicum experiences necessitated the interaction of a University Liaison Officer, communication had broken down at some level with their supervisor at the school. In community of practice terms the University Liaison Academic in these situations was acting at the boundary between the school community and the university community (Wenger, 1998, 2000). As Wenger (2000) argues: “Developing the boundary infrastructure of a social learning system means paying attention to people who act as brokers” (p. 236). In the practicum context these include supervising teachers on the school side and academics on the university side. Supervising teachers in this study adopted a range of supervision styles from coercive to facilitative. In the examples where University Liaison Academics were required to negotiate some new way of interacting, for some reasons, the student teacher had become marginalised, withdrawn in some way from the school community and unable to function in the practicum school without assistance. In all these cases there was a reified expectation on the part of the supervising teacher that the student teacher was not meeting certain levels of competence or failing to demonstrate required levels of performance, sometimes based on very arbitrary judgements. Opportunities to discuss goals and standards before the practicum, perhaps with supervisors and liaison academics together, would have been useful to avoid the situations reaching such a critical state.

For student teachers in their practicum school, there will always be a range of experiences that are hard to anticipate and this is one reason that a sense of legitimacy and safety are important. Wenger (2000) considers that in order to maximise learning at the boundaries between communities of practice that a “generative tension” needs to exist between experience and competence. Further, he argues that this requires:
Something to interact about, some intersection of interest, some activity; 
Open engagement with real differences as well as common ground 
Commitment to suspend judgement in order to see the competence of a community in its terms 
Way to translate between repertoires so that competence and experience actually interact (p. 233).

Very often where the relationship between the student teacher and their supervisor broke down the emphasis of the practicum had become one of meeting goals, that was related to pedagogical competencies, but interaction was minimal due to other commitments or pressure of time. Typically, engagement became directive on the part of the supervising teacher and dependent for the student teacher. There was little time for the student teacher to move outside an intensely local focus to reflect on their experience. To illustrate, there were difficulties with the student teacher’s linguistic or teaching repertoire, with the student teacher feeling unable to move outside the repertoire that was prescribed by their supervisor, or finding it impossible to build or extend their personal repertoire due to pressures, including limited time. The asymmetrical power relationship between the student teacher and the supervising teacher also posed a constraint. There is a tension between the supervisor’s roles of overseeing, role-modelling and ultimately passing or failing the student teacher, while also encouraging the individual and personal teaching development of the student teacher through forms of participation.

When the practicum became compromised, in this study the University Liaison Officers interacted in a number of ways at the boundaries between the university and the practice school. They acted as interpreters allowing the student teachers’ voices to be both heard and understood in interpreting the supervising teachers’ objectives; they became joint mentors providing an extra level of feedback and interaction, but most importantly, they provided an opportunity for negotiating or re-negotiating the
objectives of the practicum that opened the way for continued engagement between supervisor and student teacher. For example, for Participant 12, the University Liaison officer contributed to her final practicum experience by intervening directly with the supervising teacher to negotiate opportunities for her to continue with her practicum and for her to demonstrate her competence to her supervising teacher’s satisfaction. When there is tension between supervisor and student teacher it can dominate the student teacher’s experience. Indeed, LaBoskey and Richert (2002) in their discussion about good student teaching placements identify that for student teachers who find themselves in less compatible placements “their reflections were more concerned with their immediate situations and their relationships with their cooperating teachers, than with their own learning or their future learning” (p. 29). Similarly, for the participants in this study, this illustrates that when there are tensions between supervisor and student teacher that lead to the denial of positive peripheral participation in the practices of the school, then the emotional ramifications can be intense, leading to the student teacher being unable to participate to their satisfaction. As Wenger (1998) argues, “with insufficient participation our relations to broader enterprises tend to remain literal and procedural: our coordination tends to be based on compliance rather than participation in meaning” (p. 187).

The University Liaison Officer appears to be in a positive position to re-negotiate ways of engaging between student teachers and their supervisors; however, in this study, University Liaison Officers were most likely to be brought in only when some major problem had occurred or the student teacher was at risk of failing their practicum. This valuable boundary brokering role is therefore restricted, which, given the clear potential that it affords for both supervising teachers and
student teachers to generate powerful connections at the boundaries between their communities, means that there are wasted opportunities for more interaction, engagement and negotiation of meaning between different teaching repertoires. As student teachers try to build a stronger identity of participation in the practicum school they need to be able to build their teaching repertoire, but a loss of confidence in their ability, or in their supervising teacher can restrict them in this goal.

One of the central findings of this study was in the range of experiences that participants had in the local environment that was supportive of their learning and the building of their professional identities. In this complex environment Wenger (1998) argues that the work of integrating our various forms of participation lies “at the core of what it means to be a person. Multi-membership and the work of reconciliation are intrinsic to the very concept of identity” (p. 161). In particular, he considers that, in this work of reconciling different forms of identity that different ways of engaging in practice can be individually based, that different levels of accountability may result in different responses to similar circumstances and that the repertoire of one community may be completely inappropriate in another community. Thus, what is possible for the participants in this study as they undertake their practicum relates closely to how they reconcile their multi-memberships of different communities and how successfully they extend their individuality to participate meaningfully in their practicum schools. This may involve confronting deeply held beliefs and engaging in practices that lie outside their experience. The opportunity to reflect on these experiences will therefore be important in the construction of a healthy professional identity. Rodgers and Scott, (2008) argue that constructive developmental theory may offer a structural underpinning of teacher training experiences that provide “support, challenge and vision”. It is in the “challenge” domain where student
teachers, in a safe environment, may reflect on the “limits of their own thinking, values, histories, and the ways these limitations could influence their teaching” (p. 750). Sharing these reflections with other student teachers will help them to construct a teaching identity that is appropriate to the particular environment of their practicum school.

6.3 Cultural and Linguistic issues

Participants in this study described a number of experiences that were related to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These can be divided into three main areas: cultural and linguistic background as constituting a problem or disturbance to their practicum experiences; the feeling that they needed more preparation for their practicum for both content language, pedagogical language, that is language as a key factor in teaching repertoire; and, cultural and linguistic diversity as a positive value. One other interesting area that emerged is the area of bilingual student teachers’ linguistic repertoire, which may have features that challenge the core linguistic repertoire recognised by supervising teachers or University Liaison Academics, particularly in regard to spelling (Windle, 2009).

Differences in language and culture are central to “teaching around and across difference” (Luke & Goldstein, 2006, p. 2) and all of the participants in the present study recognised and acknowledged the importance of language as part of an essential teaching repertoire. Indeed the study revealed not only the importance of effective linguistic skills for practical teaching but also their central position in negotiating a shared repertoire through everyday interaction in the community of the school. There is therefore a need for student teachers to have a clear understanding about how language and other cultural features work in their practicum school. One student teacher in this study for example finished her practicum in a marginalised
position because of her misreading of the importance of staffroom interaction through morning tea rituals. Tusting (2005) argues that

“Research on Communities of Practice needs to include analysis of the language used. However, it is also clear that, within this model, language is only part of what is going on and it is therefore necessary to draw on tools for this analysis which can deal with not only the language but also the relationships between language and other elements of the social process: the relationship between language and the other processes going on in interaction at the micro level, and the role of language in the relationships between local communities and broader social processes” (p. 41).

The influence of local communities, such as staffrooms, plays an important role in the experience of the practicum for a student teacher and supervisor. At the very least the opportunity to discuss possible classroom experiences and share narratives with other student teachers and teachers will go some way to heightening awareness of the different social configurations that may exist in a school and that may have an influence on the experience of practicum. At the same time, however, it is clearly impractical to attempt to predict all the possible situations that may arise and the language that may be appropriate to respond to them. However, Tusting (2005, p. 45) presents an interesting discussion on the central role of language in communities of practice that could provide a useful starting point for student teachers from different cultures to begin to consider and reflect upon the role of language and the particular language features that may underpin the social relationships in a practicum school community.

In a formal training context, Miller (2009) argues that programmes for teacher training that wish to explicitly meet the needs of teachers from diverse backgrounds need to make changes at the programme level to address the needs of diverse student teachers both in the university classroom and in the practicum. To do this Miller (2009) argues that teacher training programmes need to:
Ensure lecturers interrogate their own assumptions about language use and cultural expressions.
Value alternative knowledge and languages in material ways.
Have all students engage critically with the nexus between identity and language use, both theoretically and in practical terms before and after the practicum.
Problematise the role of language in discrimination.
Have an explicit focus on the language in the specialist content areas (needed by both international student teachers and the many students from non-English speaking backgrounds in their classes).
Build in language support of ESL teachers who need it, including work on Australian accents and cultural references.
Promote systematic collaboration between local and international students in tutorials and assignments (p. 53).

These recommendations, if adopted in teacher training programmes, would promote an inclusive and integrated approach to diversity. In the context of a pluralist society, there is a place for all participants to interrogate their own assumptions about language use and cultural expressions, which will allow possible issues to be flagged and discussed both in general and in the context of the practicum. This would be helpful in avoiding situations where student teachers may not have anticipated that their accents or their language use might present a problem. At the same time it might allow a discussion about the cultural positions and ways of behaving that are current in local schools and differences between local schools in different areas. Student teachers from backgrounds where the identity of “teacher” commands instant respect, for example, would be able to discuss and consider the multiple implications for student teachers and teachers in teaching in an environment where such assumptions cannot be made and so would not be in a state of shock when they first encounter an Australian classroom.

It would also be helpful for there to be a closer collaboration between university and practicum schools relating to this matter so that mismatches do not arise in expectations between university preparation courses and student teachers’ practicum experiences. Spooner-Lane, Tangen and Campbell (2009), in their study,
suggest that CALD teachers would benefit from an immersion experience focusing on sociocultural awareness, language learning and pedagogical experiences before they commence their practicum. They also suggest that important work needs to be done in matching CALD student teachers with appropriate supervisors, training supervisors in their supervision roles and building in enough time for the supervising teachers to provide appropriate support rather than undertaking their supervisory role in addition to their normal teaching load.

Spooner-Lane et al. (2009) are discussing international students from Asian backgrounds, in particular, in making their recommendations, but all student teachers, CALD, bi-lingual and local, could benefit from the immersion experience suggested as it would allow more time to align their practicum goals with their practicum experience. As Tang (2004) argues “student teachers need to be facilitated to examine how their previous experiences might have influenced their construction of teaching” (p. 201) on an individual basis. Cultural and linguistic considerations could be central to this. She further argues that a “partnership culture” (p. 201) where practicum schools and university faculty work together to provide the most productive learning experiences for student teachers in both the coursework and fieldwork elements of their practicum is an essential element in effective teacher training, emphasising again the importance of recognising the central role that supervisors play by offering them support and development in that role.

The importance of considering individual CALD student teachers is also considered by Cruikshank, Newell and Cole (2003) who draw attention to the complications of providing meaningful support programmes that will meet the needs of diverse groups. They argue for the integration of support from the very beginning of the course utilising the four approaches to support that are currently offered at
Australian universities: content based, support, tutoring and self-directed learning (p. 146). Peeler and Jane (2005) argue that this support should extend beyond the practicum for teachers from diverse backgrounds and should be available for them through the first few years of their teaching career. They argue that there are many advantages to a situation like this for the whole school community. “Strategies that include the valuing of new understandings and professional sharing between the longer serving teachers and the newcomers can lead to positive steps towards enriching teacher’s knowledge and, in turn enhancing students’ learning” (p. 334).

The limitations of this thesis mean that a more detailed discussion of individual effects of race, nationality and language background on student teachers’ experiences await further discussion. However, a more in-depth discussion of these areas from a narrative perspective would allow further exploration of how the community of the practicum school contributes at a policy and systemic level to the identity development and learning of CALD student teachers.

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, situated learning theory contributes a different perspective on learning for these student teachers and brings into focus the central importance that participation in the community of the school plays in their development of a professional identity.

Chapter 7 draws on these findings to make some practical suggestions for practicum experiences for CALD student teachers, extending the notion of building knowledge and competencies, and exploring ways of preparing to participate in a new community. At the same time some suggestions are made both at the university and school supervisor levels on how legitimate peripheral participation might be
better achieved for CALD teachers in Queensland schools drawing upon the notion of “learning communities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 214) and “communities of difference” (Shields, 2004). This moves the primary focus of the practicum experience away from the notion of demonstrating discrete skills and competencies in different contexts to a consideration of how the contexts themselves can be better aligned with the goals of successful participation in practice for these teachers.
Chapter 7 Conclusion

The final chapter concludes this study into the experiences of student teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by discussing the significance of the study, and by making recommendations for further research in this area. The chapter also offers some suggestions for practice drawn from Wenger’s (2000) dimensions of engagement, imagination and alignment.

The implications for practice and policy are also made explicit as they relate to the research question: what are the facilitating and constraining factors for culturally and linguistically diverse students undertaking their fieldwork practicum in Queensland schools?

7.1 Significance of this research study

Preparing and supporting CALD student teachers on practicum is a complex and under-researched issue challenging teacher education courses in Australia. Previous research has revealed that many teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds experience significant difficulties in their fieldwork experiences (see Chapters 1-3). The present study’s findings support this overall picture but show that while this problem is often ascribed to issues of language and culture it is much more complicated than the way it has been generally identified, understood and represented. To explore this matter more deeply, this study focused on the process of identity formation for CALD teachers, using a narrative framework and an interpretive lens derived from community of practice theory and legitimate peripheral participation. This allowed an examination of how identity formation for these teachers was influenced and informed by the social practices of their practicum
schools (Billet, 2007; Edwards & Tsui, 2009). This account of community, identity, and ways of participating in the life of the practicum school reveals the difficulties and successes that CALD student teachers experience in social, rather than explicitly cultural or linguistic terms. It demonstrates the importance of the social place that is afforded student teachers, as a part of the school culture of their practicum school, and the contribution that this makes to their development of a professional identity.

7.2 Significance of the social learning framework employed in this study

The social learning framework employed by this study provided a means to consider the contribution of communities of practice in the practicum schools to student teachers’ professional development. This theoretical lens helped in identifying and exploring the complexities of individual journeys by highlighting the roles played by individual student teachers, their supervisors and other important stakeholders, such as University Liaison Academics. These roles provide the means of access to the communities of practice, which in the case of student teachers provides them with a form of legitimacy to participate in a peripheral way before being given full teaching responsibility. The study’s conceptual framework also offered ways to understand the student experience of participation in a community of practice when diverse language and cultural issues may represent a challenge to the accepted norms of professional behaviour.

The notion of a community of practice was found to have an explanatory role in this study but also helped to provide a focus for reflection on the possible, positive ways of extending participation for student teachers, supervisors and mentors. That is, ways of building connectedness and effective participation in a school’s communities of practice can meaningfully be explored and considered by using the
concepts of engagement, alignment and imagination. Further suggestions for extending this theory are presented in 7.5.4.

7.3 Significance of using a narrative inquiry methodology

Using a research inquiry based on narrative inquiry, CALD student teachers’ stories provided very rich insights that help to explain and identify what has previously remained silent or simplistically attributed to linguistic or cultural deficit. The use of the three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinnen, Pushor & Orr, 2007; Clandinnen & Connelly, 2000) as a means to simultaneously explore the elements of time, place and person in their practicum experiences generates an understanding of the complex social space in which the participants are engaged. The power of these narratives to generate understanding of their experiences allows us to make recommendations for pedagogical practices that are also centred in narrative. For example, Mitton-Kukner, Nelson and Desrochers (2010) claim that:

In an attentive relational way, thinking narratively repositions the learning in service learning. Connecting with teachers and students in the contexts of their lives, rather than in the traditional contexts of subject matter and evaluation, asks individuals to consider their identities – to inquire into them in a way to understand how their teaching and learning lives were and continue to be shaped (p. 1168).

For CALD student teachers the opportunity to observe and reflect and engage in structured conversations with their peers, both culturally and linguistically diverse and local, is vital to help them make connections to the social community of the practicum school. Han and Singh (2007) argue that often CALD teachers in education programs do explore different conceptualisations of what it means to be a teacher in Australia compared with their experiences in other countries. However, as Han and Singh (2007) emphasise, this knowledge is not subjected to “explication, analysis or critique” (p. 303). More explicit engagement is therefore needed to
explore the implications of diverse educational backgrounds and what might need to be changed, extended, or withdrawn for different student teachers in Australian schools. Both the recognition of diversity and its implications for individuals need to be further explored perhaps by drawing upon conversational protocols, such as those presented by Levine and Marcus (2010), where experiences are shared in a structured way and the focus is on building new understandings of shared experiences. This could empower CALD student teachers to draw upon their unique backgrounds in order to share insights about possible practical implications for teaching in Australian schools.

### 7.4 Limitations

The main limitation of this study is that the only voices that have been considered are those of the student teachers. The other stakeholders in the practicum experience also could be heard so that we can build a fuller picture of the practicum experience incorporating the perspectives of all participants in the interacting communities.

This research is cross-sectional and therefore represents a small number of CALD student teachers who have been completing their teacher training courses between 2008 and 2011. A longitudinal set of case studies, that follow students into the workforce and explore how they build upon their practicum experiences, could provide insights into the best means to support early career CALD teachers. At the same time it would also provide data that could be used to explore and extend fieldwork practicum experiences and the development of resources for use in teacher training courses. For instance, narrative resources could be provided to CALD student teachers for them to use in discussion to identify and reflect on practices that have helped CALD teachers to successfully participate in different schools.
7.5 Implications

What follows in this section are the important implications of this study for research, policy, practice and theory.

7.5.1 Implications for research

Many of the student teachers in this study made explicit reference to building their cultural knowledge and language skills. In many cases they used their observation sessions to write down the language forms their supervising teacher used to achieve their pedagogical goals and then tried to use these for themselves. For educators, Barton and Tusting (2005, p. 52) argue that the role of language in the negotiation of meaning in community of practice can be explored in more depth. As part of a shared repertoire, language certainly plays a central role. Barton and Tusting (2005) argue that:

attention to language use within communities of practice offers a better understanding of the dynamics of participation and reification, and in particular that the lens of critical social linguistics can offer ways of conceptualising the role of local interaction in sustaining broader social structures and relationships. (p. 53)

Linguistic areas around which participants in this study expressed an interest in building their knowledge included, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and content pedagogical knowledge. Observation and analysis of the particular language forms that teachers use in their everyday teaching would reveal the huge diversity of language-in-use and the different ways that individual teachers achieve their teaching goals. These could then form useful starting points to consider the language practices that individual student teachers from diverse backgrounds might adopt as part of their teaching repertoire. In addition, a deeper analysis of the ways language contributes to the building of a successful student teacher identity would be a valuable way to extend this study (Kramsch, 2011).
Another area that could be explored would be the perspectives of other stakeholders in the practicum experience, such as the supervising teachers and University Liaison Officers, to gain a more comprehensive picture of their understanding of the practicum school as a community of learners and how they work with student teachers to support them in their building of successful professional identities. Kwan and Lopez-Real (2010) use Wenger’s (2000) matrix to describe the identity development of supervisors working with pre-service teachers. As well as its use as a tool for describing the process they argue that the matrix could also be used by the supervisors as a “means of self analysis and a way towards self-awareness” (p. 730). Further research, therefore, could focus on other dimensions of identity, community and practice to operationalise these concepts as ways to understand complex learning processes and to design activities to promote learning (See example in 7.5.4).

7.5.2 Suggestions for policy

For some of the participants in this study, particularly those who were undertaking a Graduate Diploma course, the practicum, or the observation days at the practicum school prior to the commencement of the practicum, provided their first opportunity to experience Australian school life. Preparation courses should consider providing more flexible and alternative arrangements for CALD student teachers, such as an extended practicum, which would allow them more time for the process of participation in, and reflection upon, the local culture of teaching, learning and school life.

CALD student teachers would also benefit from more explicit opportunities to engage with the implications of individual diversity and the demands of the
Australian school system through structured discussion and sharing with peers and CALD teachers. This would allow them to make better sense of the demands that will be placed on them as individuals in their practicum experiences and by working with CALD teachers in schools could lead to a better understanding and acceptance of the value of diversity in the different school communities where the practicum takes place.

Opportunities for explicit reflection on the language forms being used by teachers they have observed would also be beneficial for this group of students. This would allow questions such as: “Is this the most appropriate form of language to use here?”, “Can I use this directly? What are some different ways of saying the same thing?” and “How does this relate to my previous experience?” Opportunities could then be given to rehearse different language forms, with their different pedagogical functions, in role play situations at the university (Spooner-Lane, Tangen & Campbell, 2009). This would allow student teachers to develop more effective engagement with the special language forms and cultural demands of the practicum and have opportunities to discuss them explicitly before the practicum begins.

The practice teaching and micro-teaching opportunities already offered to these students as part of their university course need to be given a more explicit focus. Some of the students in this study did not recognise these sessions for what they were: an opportunity to rehearse, to try things before they were in the real classroom. Rather they saw them as less intensive classes and the opportunity to have a bit of fun. The notion of shared repertoire, and the idea of building a shared repertoire, should be highlighted in these sessions.

As well as this, feedback from established CALD teachers who have already been teaching for a while in Queensland schools about how they built connections
and found unique ways to belong in their schools could be sought. Through the process of naturalistic generalisation (Stake, 1978) CALD student teachers could draw on the individual knowledge and practices of these teachers in order to illuminate their own situation. CALD teachers from the past could also become peer mentors for CALD student teachers. This would provide opportunities for engaging in an “experiential-relational-reflective process” (Mitton-Kukner et al., 2010, p. 1163) where student teachers could extend their understanding of how individual diversity influences the development of their personal practical knowledge of teaching and apply it to their own experiences.

Framing the practicum experience as one of identity development would be beneficial in exploring how cultural and social factors may impact upon participation. There are opportunities for language and learning units to be involved in this process on a consultative and practical basis, working alongside the faculty to develop pre-practicum workshops that aim to make learning experiences explicit to students. Given that the group of student teachers who identify themselves as culturally and linguistically diverse is so broad, these language workshops could be usefully opened to all students and act as a means of extending participation in the context of a truly diverse community, consisting of international, locally-diverse, Indigenous students and students from different social backgrounds.

7.5.3 Suggestions for supervisors

This study highlights many areas for practical work, both from the researcher’s side as a language and learning professional and with suggestions that can be made for supervisors and university liaison officers. In this section I make some suggestions for practical initiatives to apply social learning principles in action for student teachers and their supervisors. I argue that promoting an explicit focus on
building a professional identity through engaging in and between different communities of practice can assist supervisors to support CALD student teachers in their practicum experiences by explicitly helping them to build different modes of belonging to the school community.

To achieve this, supervisors could actively engage in discussions with student teachers about ways of engaging with their practicum experience and how this could be extended. Drawing on Standard 1. (National Professional Standards for Teachers, 2011), part of which sees teachers “using expert and community knowledge and experience to meet the needs of students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds” (p.8), supervisors could adopt a value oriented approach to student diversity. Values such as “being responsive to diversity” could provide a stimulus to explore any issues that they, as student teachers, are facing in relation to their own diversity. Wenger’s (2000, p. 240) matrix could be used as a practical element to structure reflection and discussion about individual learning experiences. Also, through use of the matrix, the supervisor’s role as facilitator in the development of a healthy professional identity for student teachers is emphasised. Accordingly, they could work together with their student teacher, perhaps at a set time in the week, to reflect on the experience of the practicum in so far as it is contributing to the development of an identity for teaching. Using this matrix the three dimensions of identity development or modes of belonging, that is, engagement, imagination and alignment, can be explored in relation to the “crucial qualities that must co-exist to constitute a healthy social identity” (Wenger, 2000, p. 240), that is, connectedness, expansiveness and effectiveness.

My version of Wenger’s (2000) matrix (see Table 7.1) is presented below as a tool to guide supervisor/student teacher interaction. The questions have been
formulated for use by supervisors working with student teachers to promote reflection and build discussion on how to make the most of their practicum experience as an ongoing source of professional identity building.

Table 7.1 Matrix for guiding discussions between student teachers and supervising teachers before and during the practicum (adapted from Wenger, 2000, p.240)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Connectedness</th>
<th>Expansiveness</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong></td>
<td>What are you doing to build connections with the school community? Are you running into any barriers to connecting? What are they? What things can you do to build stronger connections with staff, students, parents etc?</td>
<td>Is your practicum equipping you with ideas you can use in your lessons and future teaching career? Can you reflect on experiences you have had that have helped you move forward, practically or conceptually?</td>
<td>How far is your practicum experience helping you towards your goal of becoming a teacher? What are some things holding you back? How can you minimise these?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imagination</strong></td>
<td>How is the practicum experience helping you to realise your plans of building a professional teaching identity? What other factors do you need to consider to help build a professional teaching identity? If you picture yourself teaching in five years time, what do you look like? What does this imply?</td>
<td>Drawing on your experiences, what kind of practical lessons do you see yourself building on as you extend your teaching experience?</td>
<td>How far does your practicum experience contribute to your identity as a student teacher and move it closer to being one of a teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alignment</strong></td>
<td>How does your position in other communities help you build your identity as a teacher in the Queensland school system?</td>
<td>How comfortable are you working within curriculum guidelines and in conjunction with your supervising teacher? Does this help you feel</td>
<td>What will people hear you saying when your voice is heard in the future as you make contributions to the school community in your role as teacher?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What principles and values in yourself may you need to challenge in order to connect to the needs of the Queensland school community? part of a larger system? How do you feel about that system?

Other questions might include, for example: do you feel connected with the school community? What are some things that you can do to become better connected? Following discussion, checklists can be generated or goals set, for instance, on practical ways to become more connected. Some of these may be informal, such as contributing to staffroom conversations; others may involve practical ways of sharing knowledge in the classroom. Similarly, the dimensions of expansiveness and effectiveness can also be used to focus a de-briefing session using questions such as: “Are the things that you are doing allowing you to participate to your satisfaction?” And, “Is your experience here contributing to you building an identity as a teacher? If not, what do you need?” Opportunities for reflection could be formalised in regular de-briefing sessions but at a minimum close to the time of the student teacher’s interim report and towards the end of the practicum. In this way, they could both provide a focus around practical activities that could be undertaken and also as a guide on what needs to improve, and how to improve it, so as to build more productive ways of participating in the practicum.

Supervisors are identified as centrally important to student teachers' experiences of practicum. So, workshops that contain an element of cross-cultural consciousness-raising should also be extended to supervisors to give them opportunities to explicitly share stories and reflections about how diversity can be scaffolded for student teachers in their practicum experiences. These opportunities
could be structured using formalised protocols such as the “critical friend protocol” (Levine, 2011, p. 939), whereby supervisors share stories of supervision and discuss them with their peers. A particular format is used to promote conversation around particular points, with the goal of finding different ways to approach individual situations. These sessions would provide insights into ways to support diverse student teachers and promote diversity as a positive value in practicum schools.

7.5.4 Implications for theory

The conception of learning that a social learning perspective embodies has proved to be a powerful tool in illuminating the experiences of the student teachers under consideration in this study. Drawing on the seminal works of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), the central relevance of concepts such as legitimacy, peripherality and identity have generated an understanding that takes into account the complexity of learning that occurs for CALD pre-service teachers in and between two communities, the university and the practicum school. Work in this area, concerning the development of mentors and student teachers using community of practice theory and activity theory, is currently being explored also by Tsui, Edwards and Lopez-Real (2009). Other researchers that have drawn upon social learning theory have called for greater definitional clarity in the central terms, such as participation and practice (Edwards, 2005; Handley et al., 2006), or greater exploration of the central elements, particularly language, that might comprise shared repertoire in a community (Barton & Tusting, 2005). Both these areas would provide avenues for future research that could shed light on different areas of learning in different contexts. Yakhlef (2010) critiques the notion of practice based learning theory and seeks to develop an integrated theory that combines acquisition-based theories of learning with participation-based theories by considering the learning of
new knowledge as both socially and cognitively based. Research in this area would promote an exploration of how participation at different levels can be evaluated. Hughes, Jewson and Unwin (2007) conclude their critique of the community of practice notion by suggesting that it is “one which is rich, complex, multi-stranded and deserves to be the focus of intensive further theoretical analysis and empirical research” (p. 176). Extending this theory to explore further aspects of the practicum experiences of CALD teachers and their transition to mainstream schools will further contribute to an understanding of their learning and provide insights into the most appropriate ways to support their experiences.

7.5.5 Implications for researcher

This study has had a strong impact upon my professional role as a language and learning advisor. In this role, student teachers are often referred to me for assistance with difficulties they may be having on practicum. The requests are often phrased in terms such as, “the student teacher needs to work on their accent” or “they need to work on their pronunciation”. Such statements highlight the central position occupied by the perceived need to build students’ cultural and linguistic skills. However, this study has demonstrated the importance of taking both a social and acquisitional view of learning. It has identified the need to consider deeply the impact that the contexts of learning may have on the learning of individuals from diverse backgrounds. These include both the university context and other contexts where fieldwork may be undertaken. It has also shown, through taking a narrative approach, the importance of considering individual responses to different experiences and the rich picture that this can reveal.

For CALD students, both local and international, there is still a case for drawing directly upon the experience of language and learning unit members with
their qualifications in English as a foreign language, particularly for support in improving academic writing. However, in the case of CALD pre-service teachers who have been referred because of concerns in regards to their practicum performance, it is more likely that consultations will now proceed on the basis of identifying the most appropriate ways to assist students to participate fully in their practicum. While the referral may be framed in language or cultural terms, the support required needs to be tailored closely to individual needs. This means that the advisor has to look beyond language and cultural issues and consider the practicum experience as a whole, inviting the student to reflect upon how their cultural and linguistic background may be affecting the ways they interact with the social community of the practicum school.

This study, and my personal investment in it, has been both an unsettling and enabling process. It has been unsettling because it has forced me to look beyond my professional skills and knowledge in the area of cultural and linguistic skill development, which continues to be the primary focus of language and learning support for students in the university setting. With students participating in fieldwork the model of support needs to be extended to include ways of assisting the transition from university to practicum school. The study has been enabling in the sense that it has provided an understanding of the practicum from a social learning perspective and, with this understanding, the means to support them that extend beyond the notion of cultural or linguistic deficit.

This reframing of education from a process of acquiring skills to one of building a new identity through participation in a community has, therefore, challenged me to simultaneously reconsider my role and the role of my colleagues, and to explore the experiences of the student teachers undertaking practicum in a
different way. The exploration involves a consideration of pre-service teachers as members of their own community, the university community and as new members of the practicum school community. Their process of identity development, in the nexus of multi-membership of at least three different communities, is a great challenge for education students. It can also be stressful, particularly as we have seen, when one or more of these communities may hold newcomers in a marginal position due to their cultural or linguistic background. Understanding the social configuration of this stress as something that arises from the whole experience rather than as an individual failure of language or cultural knowledge can be a starting point in looking for ways to participate more fully.

My role as a language and learning professional has, therefore, expanded to form a kind of third space between the university and the practicum school, where students can share their stories and build an understanding of their experiences from perspectives other than those offered by their training courses or practicum experiences, which are often influenced by the need for assessment. Reflecting on the support gained from the language and learning team at a difficult point in her practicum, one student teacher, Participant Four, said:

> you point out what is the real point, the main focus that I should be focusing on because I was a person who needs help and stuck in my thinking, keep thinking my problem is English

Through reflecting on her experience, Participant Four reframes her difficulties and gains a new perspective on her experiences. From a negative cycle of obsessing about language deficit she begins to reflect on other aspects of practicum, including the act of reflection itself as a way to move forward. Sharing her experiences and telling stories of practicum encourages her to rethink her goals and explore them in broader terms, not limited by a cultural or linguistic focus. This is the opportunity
for her to recognise the centrality of her agentive position in making connections with the school community, to value the importance of her early steps as a student teacher and to recognise the contribution that is made by the school community to that experience. Through conversation and discussion she “re-stories” (Mitton-Kukner, 2010) her experience and, in the process, identifies steps that she can take to advance in her practicum. Individual appointments between language and learning staff and student teachers, therefore, can be used in this way to reflect upon and discuss the purpose of the practicum, consider its stresses, and explore practical ways to engage positively with the community of the practicum school.

Sharing some representative case studies about how other student teachers in similar positions have succeeded and the strategies that they used can be motivational in helping students to see themselves in a different light. Referral to appropriate support people in the Education Faculty or in other parts of the University, like counselling services, may also be undertaken. It is not the case that language or cultural issues are ignored in these consultations. Indeed, on some occasions opportunities may arise to discuss the language that may be useful in these situations through engaging in role-play, giving structural advice about specific language use and providing opportunities for rehearsal of the language demands of the course. However, I find that active language development work is far better mediated within faculty workshops or working with other student teachers so that the advice is contextualised within a local community of learners rather than abstracted or generalised. In addition, as a language and learning advisor this study has made me more aware of the boundary brokering role (Wenger, 2000, p. 240) that I take between the university and the school community. In this role, I am seeking to create opportunities for student teachers that will contribute to their goal of building a
professional identity and that will result in helping them to access the resources they need from the university and the practicum school community. At present, this is mainly mediated through discussion and reflection on an individual basis but there is certainly room for generating workshops for student teachers in which they can share experiences as a community of learners and gain different insights about how to engage in their practicum schools.

7.6 Conclusion

This study investigated the factors facilitating and constraining the fieldwork practicum experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse student teachers in Queensland schools. Exploring these student teachers’ experiences from a social learning perspective allowed a consideration of their identity development and engagement in the social culture of the practicum school. It demonstrated the role that school culture plays in promoting learning through the growth of a professional identity. From this perspective, the efforts made by CALD student teachers are thrown into relief against the complex background of how the school community organises the transition experiences of newcomers. A narrative inquiry focus allowed this study to emphasise the importance of employing a multi-dimensional view in considering practicum experiences during a time of increasing diversity in classrooms and teacher training courses. Important suggestions for policy and practice have been made relating to how practicum experiences might be better supported for this group of students. These suggestions draw upon social learning principles and the importance of providing the opportunity for individuals to reflect narratively about their experiences in the particular social spaces of their practicum schools.
Reference List


Reference list


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Appendix 1 Participant Information

Factors facilitating and constraining the practicum experience for culturally and linguistically diverse students in their fieldwork practicum experiences in Queensland schools

QUT Ethics Approval Number 0908000776

Research Team Contacts

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<thead>
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Description

This project is being undertaken as part of a Doctor of Education (EdD) project for Martin Reese.

The purpose of this project is to gain a deeper understanding of the fieldwork practicum experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse student teachers who have undertaken their practicum in Queensland schools.

Participation

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw from participation at any time during the project without comment or penalty. Your decision to participate or not participate will in no way impact upon any aspect of your current or future relationship with QUT.

Your participation will involve a focus group discussion and possibly a follow-up interview. Both focus group discussion and interview will be of around one hour in duration and will be held at Kelvin Grove Campus during normal business hours. Focus groups and interviews will be audio-recorded.

Expected benefits

It is expected that this project will be helpful in developing support services for students who are going out on practicum.

Risks

There are no risks beyond your usual university attendance and your usual involvement in field experience placement associated with participation in this project. The questions asked will be about topics that are familiar to you. However, because we have been involved field experiences for a long time, we know that a small proportion of students experience distress during field experiences. Should you require help with managing this distress QUT provides for limited free counselling for research participants of QUT projects who may experience discomfort or distress as a result of their participation in the research. Should you wish to access this service please contact the Clinic Receptoist of the QUT Psychology Clinic on 3138 0999. Please indicate to the receptionist that you are a research participant.

Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially. Your name is required to arrange the focus groups but your name and any identifying details will be removed and you will be allocated a pseudonym (false name) when the audio-recording is transcribed. All focus group participants will be reminded at the beginning of the session about the necessity of treating the contents of the focus group discussion as confidential.

The focus groups and interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will be invited to verify the transcripts if you wish. The recordings and the transcripts will not be used for any other purpose than the conducting of this research project. No one will have access to the recordings or the transcripts other than the researcher and his supervisors. Data will be kept on a password protected computer and in a locked filing cabinet.

Consent to Participate

I would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate and to provide your e-mail address so that I can contact you to arrange the focus group and interviews. Please return the consent form to me via mail or email at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

Questions / further information about the project

Please contact Martin (contact details above) to have any questions answered or if you require further information about the project.

Concerns / complaints regarding the conduct of the project

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Unit on +61 7 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au. The QUT Research Ethics Unit is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.
Appendix 2 Narrative analysis

The two accounts of participants’ experiences are provided below to illustrate how the data analysis process was undertaken.

**Participant Four**

Participant Four undertook a Graduate diploma in primary education. She completed two practicums, one of four weeks that was more of an immersion experience and the other a dedicated practicum where she had the opportunity to teach. Constraining factors primarily were related to the supervising teacher’s expectations. Facilitating factors included a lot of personal meta-knowledge about teaching and learning and ultimately the improved relationship with her supervising teacher. Participant Four’s initial impression of an Australian primary school was one of “shock”.

> Because it’s just so different from what I have been taught – growing up. Like Asian countries we’ve been taught – sit straight and go in a class and sit in a class for 40 minutes and then give you 10 minutes break, and then came back, sit another 40 minutes, or something like that and we start early.

She contrasted this early experience, with the quiet reading and basic writing that students in her home town immediately got at school. She noted different timings, different responsibilities and different levels of attention that the children receive from the teacher.

> But in here students just come in here and playing. Mostly for me it’s just playing. Even in the classroom, yeah, I was surprised they arrange the time because from 9.00 actually 9 o’clock to 11.30 that is their morning section and no break between. Mostly in this section teacher will put them in – focus learning in this morning area. All the kids sit on the carpet, that’s another thing, we never sit on the floor, that is improper way for us. That’s amazing. The amazing thing is kids in a group help each other, that’s very good. It’s not because we
don’t help each other, it’s just we’re more individually working and like in here there’s more group work.

Participant Four found the whole pedagogical approach in Queensland extremely different from that of her home county. She compared everything from a cultural perspective and in her initial impressions she was reflecting upon the taken-for-granted assumptions that she brought into the immersion experience and challenging them. Some of them, like sitting on the floor, require some adjustment in terms of what is considered socially appropriate or “improper”. She also found that there was great cultural diversity in the classroom. She said:

Many of the children even they are not born in Australia, they don’t speak English. Particularly two classes they even had two or three kids from India who don’t speak any English at all. That’s why we were told that teacher was so happy that we could come to help, especially one of the students from India so she can really help with the kids from India. For me it was really amazing how can a teacher cope with all this variety of students in one class. Your aim is to teach them something so they can learn. That amazed me – big task.

The immersion experience for Participant Four was a positive one. She was comfortable as a student teacher in the classroom as she took the opportunities to observe the teaching, learning and classroom layout. She and another student teacher were integrated into the school as though they were members of the community, and assisted in many ways in the classroom. These roles however were not specifically structured and, while the classroom teacher clearly had a plan, this is not necessarily shared with the student teachers. Thus, unclear communication about classroom goals left the two student teachers unsure about their roles. As a result, they concentrated upon their roles as unofficial teacher aids.

Also because we are student teachers and for myself I still don’t know what my role is, so I’m not quite sure whether I can give instructions if someone needs discipline or things like that.
Participant Four distinguished between the role of the teacher as the person who is out at the front with the role that she was adopting in the class as a supportive resource. She also illustrated her own views on the value of teaching and learning activities in the classroom. “Just giving feedback”, in an informal way contrasts later with more formal feedback when she is asked to formalise her opinions of the children’s work and speak out to the whole class.

Mostly in a group I’m just helping and then encouraging, and also just give feedback when I watch what they’d done or doing their work. I try to give feedback so they’re kind of interested. Also, because we are new to them, so they are kind of wondering what we are doing. Especially in early years, some kids, especially for me, especially for the Asian, Asian kids they kind of want to get close to me when I’m in a group, or very actively come to me and ask, can you help me with this? Or can I read to you?

For Participant Four this immersion experience represented an opportunity to construct an impression of teaching in Australia. Initially, she drew upon her own educational background and cultural background to gain an understanding of the different context of the Australian school. At the same time however, as there was no formal definition of roles she felt comfortable acting as a teacher’s aide and so found herself actively taking part in the class, but only by way of providing informal support under the control of the teacher. There came a moment when the teacher invited her to give some feedback to the students about a presentation that they did when she suddenly experienced a conflict of identity. She described the situation below:

Then all of a sudden, the teacher asked me to give feedback and give opinions to what they presented. That for me is a kind of – I was just kind of surprised and also kind of difficult because I was a bit afraid, even with just a student, because I don’t really have enough confidence to – it was because they are teachers so they are supposed to stand in front of the class and speak, make speech. All of a sudden I was a bit stunned. I tried to think if I was in group therapy, things like that because I am a psychologist. So I thought what would I do in
that role, I would give feedback of what I observed. So I gave each student the feedback, what I think is good and what can be achieved.

Participant Four here clearly did not think of herself as a teacher. She did not see herself as being able to “stand in front of the class” and make a speech. Because this is a spontaneous invitation to act as a teacher she found herself drawing upon a role with which she was more comfortable, a psychologist, to take a leadership role. Further, she said that:

I tried to be positive because for Asian, maybe not Asian, just for myself, it is really easy to be critical because you’re always being asked to achieve something and when you achieve that means you are good enough and they you need more, do more work. You are not really rewarded or praised for what you have achieved. In here I learn they do praise a lot, really a lot for me. So, I thought this is the couch we are on, so I need to do that. Especially young kids they need that. ... actually they are really doing very good. I wasn’t expecting the kids, they are just year our and five and then they are doing their own play’s dialogue and that is amazing.

As well as drawing upon her professional background Participant Four also reflected upon the feedback style that is customary in Asia.

... because for Asian, maybe not Asian, just for myself, it is really easy to be critical because you’re always being asked to achieve something and when you achieve that means you are good enough

She reflected that Asian styles of feedback were more critical than those used in Western countries and adjusted her form of address to be positive and not critical. The invitation to act as a teacher had a powerful effect on her and caused her to question her language and cultural routines, not only in the classroom but also outside in her social world.

So I thought that was very good and in some way I just couldn’t find the right – I just couldn’t find the right words in English to express myself in many situations. That makes me very frustrated and that’s why I just really get afraid of standing in front just to speak. I always think my words are not enough because this is my – if you want me to speak in Mandarin I will tell exactly tell you what the words are I want to use and I know a lot of beautiful words, but in English
sometimes I couldn’t find the proper words. So, that’s kind of frustrating.

As well as the frustration of working in two languages and the difficulty in finding the most appropriate nuanced responses for students in her second language, Participant Four, through her observation of other teachers, found that she was impressed with the way they delivered feedback and correction. In response to this she said:

_I do try to give positive – and I do learn because I heard the teachers speak a lot of different language for me, because they said, “You’ll make a wrong choice and how can you make a right choice?” and they’re not telling you, “Oh you’re supposed to do that, you shouldn’t do that!” And instead of that they said,” I think you’ve made the wrong choice, do this again and make the right choice”._

Participant Four took particular note of communication routines that involved simple declarative language and invitations to consider things in a different way and make alternative choices. She contrasted this communication style with the more imperative and directive style of feedback involving the teacher providing the “right” answer and advice.

_For me it’s like an alien language, a really alien language. I really want to learn that kind of language even in my life conversation. That would be pleasant to hear for other people, instead of my critical, “You should be doing that, you should be doing that.” So that for me I really learn a lot._

Participant Four reflected that the style of classroom interaction that she had observed and attempted to put into practice had a place in her “life conversation”. The subtlety of language use in the classroom and the sophisticated level of proficiency that is required to achieve this ability formed a central theme of her narrative as she talked about her second practicum experience.
Participant Four’s second practicum experience was an extremely intense one. She felt that the supervising teacher believed that she and another student with whom she was paired had more teaching experience than they actually had.

I think I feel maybe welcome on the first day, but then the second day start being I feel like kind of pushing by the host teachers and because I think of the misconceptions that she might thought that we had some experiences before. But actually this is our first semester so we had no teaching experience at all.

This made the situation difficult for the two novice teachers and neither of them felt that they could raise it with the supervising teacher who held all the power. The supervising teacher for Participant Four was very well-organised and provided a clear structure for the practicum by requesting lesson plans and teaching observation notes from Day 1.

The first week she is not quite happy about what my observation note is. She kind of let me know that my observation note is quite insightful, but it’s just not detailed enough. For the first few days I don’t really know what to look for or what to observe, instead of general knowing, start knowing the whole routine and how teachers do her teachings and what language she was using. I was kind of catching doing like that, but what she wants us to do is more in detail, what she had done with some students in some strategies and I need to kind of pick it out and explain why or try asking questions to her like why she is doing this.

Unfortunately, neither of the two students under her supervision had any experience in achieving either observation notes or detailed lesson plans. This meant that the pressure of the first two weeks was increased for Participant Four and her fellow student teacher and it was not until the other student began to stop coming that the situation was somewhat resolved through the intervention of the University Liaison Academic. Participant Four also felt that the feedback was not helpful because it was so critical, resulting from the fact that the supervising teacher expected her student teachers to be at a different standard. This may also have
reflected a cultural expectation on Participant Four’s part, who may not have been able to find a constructive element in the feedback that she was being given.

Yeah and also because like the first two weeks you’re kind of being criticised all the time and you think should I be here, am I doing any help because you are doing things but you don’t - she thinks that you are not doing enough. Everything comes out and when I write the e.mail to my lecturers I said, “Is that normally happen when you’re in a prac?” The feedback that she gave to me is, I should be happy if host teacher want to spend some lunchtime and after hour time to discuss things.

Clearly the supervising teacher was going out of her way to facilitate the practicum experience for the two students and the university liaison officer recognised this in the efforts that she was making that obviously go beyond that which were expected. Unfortunately, e.mail communication did not manage to convey how serious the situation was and it took a practical visit for the situation to change.

But the main point I want to say is, is that kind of standard that we should be in with this prac. … not until the girl, she has been problem, serious problem that host teacher tried to fail her, then lecturer start to come out to talk and then she realised the demanding our teacher is asking. Then she realised we are being pushed too much and I was hoping that if that had happened sooner, maybe I won’t feel badly about the first few weeks you know. Because every day I just don’t feel I like to go to school. Every day I was struggling do I come into the classroom. It’s not really a pleasant thing and a pleasant way to learn things. Yeah, so I was so struggle for the first two weeks, every day.

Two weeks had passed, with the supervising teacher expecting one standard and providing the student teachers with help to come up to that standard.

Interestingly, Participant Four drew upon her formal schooling experiences, which were very controlled and directed, to create a way of participating in the practicum and attempted to meet the demands that were placed on her. She described the process:
... but instead she spent a lot of time every in lunch time and after school hours and kind of – she is using the way kind of criticise the work that you need to do this, you need to do that. But it’s kind of OK for me because I’m kind of traditional growing up. So for me is quite acceptable way. But with another student the same as me in the same class she just feels that she is being criticised all the time. She is kind of feel very resistant.

The resistance that the other student teacher felt culminated in her withdrawal from the practicum. For Participant Four, on the other hand, she found she was able to draw upon the “traditional” educational experiences that characterised her own education. She found that the style of feedback is quite “acceptable” for her. So, while one student teacher found it impossible to proceed, Participant Four found a way to continue participating. It was however very demanding emotionally and physically.

Ok. The first two weeks for is just only get one or two hours sleep then we wake up and then you feel, another day, I don’t want to go. I wish I could just drop it you know. I don’t want to continue. Then the voice comes out and says but you’re already starting and this is the final prac. If you can get through this it’s only one month. If you can get through this, then that’s yours you know. So that’s dragging me, OK.

Participant Four drew on her previous experiences of study and listened to her inner “voice” which gave her an imagined future that would extend beyond the intensity of her present experience. She also expressed a culturally influenced belief that “getting through” the experience was important, revealing her notion that the practicum at one level is simply for credentialing purposes. Her supervising teacher had a traditional way of giving feedback that Participant Four described:

The pattern that she has got she starts with positive things, then negative, room for improvement, she doesn’t want to say negative so we are kind of writing room for improvement. I kind of find I always had, yeah she is nice to me I think. I got several positive issues on the top and then plenty room for improvement. But it’s OK for me just I keep telling myself because I am a beginner, you learn from that, criticise. So OK I will accept that.
The criticism was couched in positive terms, there was “plenty room for improvement” and Participant Four adopted the role and identity of a beginner that allowed her to withstand the pressure on her performance. At the same time there was obvious confusion for the supervising teacher on the level that the students were expected to reach. As Participant Four said:

*Our host teacher kept comparing us to another two students from Canadian, they are also QUT students, in our same class, but they are in different classrooms. She says if they can do it, you can do it. But she didn’t realise they already had some experiences in Canada. Not until the third week she realised that they had teaching experiences. Then she is starting to lose down a bit for us.*

A further aspect of confusion lay in a lack of agreement about the goals for the practicum from the perspective of the university and the school.

*Also what she had the criteria is different from what we had from the website from QUT so I was wondering what is the standard or what requirement for us because we had two different things.*

This added another layer of uncertainty for the student teachers and was a further stressor in their efforts to meet the requirements of their supervising teacher. Participant Four was engaged in observation and teaching from the first week of this practicum. She described the process below.

*They also worry about the session that you’re going to teach because I was so nervous, anything about my language, about behaviour management and about I can’t even name every kid. I don’t know what their talent or their special or what the special need for each children. You kind of worry everything, all in your head. It’s kind of very, very stressful. Then comes to the time – then it comes to your turn then I start kind of, the first week my voice is just so soft and she kept telling me, you need to be firm and your voice should be loud and much, much louder. When I stand in front of the classroom I was kind of - even the clapping I was going like this – you’re supposed to do like this and then I can only do like this. She says nobody can hear you. I said yes I did actually think you know it’s kind of frustrating; I can’t even do good my talking and clapping. Yeah, that was very stressful.*
The practical teaching, as we can gather from the description above, proceeded from a position of great anxiety. Participant Four was almost overwhelmed in worrying about the students, the subject she was teaching, the language she was going to use and the techniques that she was going to use. As a “beginner” here she described that the students could not even hear her clapping or her instructions, as they were so quiet and tentative. She was struggling to adopt the identity of a teacher who was ready to take charge, give instructions and set up activities. The insights that she gained in the first practicum about being positive and giving effective feedback had become overlaid in the stress of the multiple demands that are always on a teacher. Participant Four was also extremely anxious about her language. This contributed to her lack of confidence:

Also, I would ask her every time after my sessions, I would ask her, is my English OK? The first thing I’m asking is my English OK? Is my English understandable? She said, ‘Yes, yes. Just need to louder your voice, that’s all she’s asking. It’s not being critical for personal or any cultural diversity things, no not at all. So I’m pleased with that. But that is another main issue I was always worried about.

Her supervising teacher allayed these fears about language and chose to focus instead upon the volume and projection of her instructions. As a result of this, the fact of trying to teach in her second language ceased to be the major stressor for her. Rather, issues became more general. As she said:

I think most is an overall feeling of pressure. Yeah, because from my host teacher she didn’t give me much extra pressure according to my English or anything like that. Also she mentioned to me she actually thinks that I’m pretty good with a second language and can speak fluently and be able to teach here. So, she thinks I am quite good in that way.

Participant Four’s supervising teacher did not entirely dismiss the language issue, though. She responded in a positive way by providing models of language that Participant Four could use.
Also, she tried to teach me – she did think that my instructions or explanations or sometimes expectations for students can be more simplified and more explicit. So I asked her and then she is kind of modelling that for me. So I can just model the language that she used instead of using mine. It’s easier for me to just adapt her way and also for students it is good. So I find that is very helpful.

At a practical level, Participant Four found that she could incorporate her supervisor’s models of language into her own teaching repertoire. She drew upon the insights that she had gained in her first practicum to construct a new way of using language, particularly classroom language, that she felt would be central to her as a teacher. The contrast between the teachers that she had experienced in her own life as a student and the kind of teacher that she wanted to become is a theme that runs all through her narrative. Her earlier experiences as a student where instruction was primarily undertaken in a strict and directive way also had an impact upon her responses to the university teaching experiences that she had had. For example she talked about one example of microteaching that she engaged in as part of her course:

I could say the tutorial from mathematics that we get really in touch with the material that actually happened in the classroom. We kind of knowing, Oh they’re using this and using that and using all the paper strips and things that we normally won’t have contact with. Because for me this is a kid’s toy. If I don’t have kids I don’t play with it. But in the tutorial for mathematics we do have time and we spend time to play with it and then to kind of get, OK. But, while we were in the tutorial we don’t really understand why, you know. You just think, oh this is so fun, an easy time to get past. But when you come to the school environment you realise, oh, this is actually the object or things or material that the kids were using and teacher was using this to educate them or teach them or for their teaching, playing being for the teaching. I think that is useful in a way. Maybe one of the microteaching is kind of can relate it. You’re kind of getting the idea of that teaching is kind of like this way. Sit on the carpet and do an activity, then clapping and then go back to group. It’s kind of routine would happen in every class. You kind of OK you associate that microteaching to actual classroom. OK, that’s why they want us to do that.

Participant Four was talking here about her later understanding of the value of the microteaching that she undertook. It only became useful for her as she
participated in her practicum and then reflected back. At the time, she considered that it was just an “easy time to get past”. This highlights that for students who have come from very different learning environments the objectives of the lessons that they engage in may not be immediately obvious for them. Their view of learning may include a strong notion that serious teaching and learning opportunities are mediated with the teacher at the front of the class spelling out information. In particular, activities that have a game quality or that involve levels of interaction with other students may be dismissed as less useful than more formal activities. This was a case in point. The fundamentally useful and practical activity in the microteaching opportunity was wasted for Participant Four at the time and so could not be built into her practical teaching style until she had had time to experience the real classroom and to reflect upon how a socio-cultural approach to teaching and learning may provide as positive learning opportunities as the more direct transmission model that she is used to. The intensity of the practicum experience was not therefore leavened by anything that she could bring from the university classes and so the practicum was dominated by the evolving relationship with her supervising teacher. This resulted in a feeling of positive momentum and emphasised both the central importance of relationship- building and style of feedback to the practicum experience.

On the third and fourth week she is starting to – once the student is not there she start to treat me better, and friendlier I think because I had a kind of feeling that she is not so harsh on me and also because what she asking for and tried to improve the next day. Also, I kept asking her how I am doing so far. So the feedback she gave me is quite positive. So I kind of find release.

After her fellow student teacher had withdrawn and the complication of that relationship was removed the practicum started to be less stressful, though no less intense. Participant Four considered that she may have used her previous practicum
experience better if she had had more specific instruction in what to attend to. She said:

*I think for immersion week is good for us but just we need to be maybe more specific to requests to asking what to look at and instead of just only come in and feel what the school is about. You really need to know what the teacher concentrates on or some issues like that. I was wishing if I could have been told to look at more things in detail there, I would be more aware of things to look at and then that might help me with later when I really actually need to teach. OK because I have observed for that two weeks and I will know what I can do in that kind of situation.*

This related to the issue discussed above about the micro-teaching experience.

Participant Four’s previous learning experiences had clearly not encouraged reflection or independence. This meant that as she engaged in her new learning environment in Australia, she felt that she required more explicit information about the purpose of the course activities. Through this, she may have gained more benefit from both her micro-teaching opportunities and her observations of other teachers. However it is important not to under-estimate the complexities that cross cultural and cross linguistic interactions can add to any learning experience, especially one which combines formal learning with practical experience in real situations like a practicum. Participant Four summed it up when she said:

*With this education I think what most shocked me is because the system is so different and the environment is so different from what I’ve been brought up in. Also, a lot of reasons is I’m really afraid of using English but thinking a teacher’s standards should be higher than this. I’m not quite sure whether I can achieve this standard, this certain standard, so that’s what I am afraid of because I don’t know how I am going to achieve that.*

Thus, Participant Four’s experiences were strongly influenced by her educational past and her pre-conceived ideas about the role, social position and knowledge that teachers were expected to demonstrate. As she said:
In our country a teacher was just constructed into knowing everything, you’re supposed to know everything so you can answer student’s questions. For me it’s very, very challenging things to be knowing everything. Even in reality you know that you won’t possibly know everything.

There was tension therefore between the idealised notion of a teacher and the practical reality of participating as a beginner and a student teacher in the practicum. Trying to achieve a certain idealised standard of language, while at the same time feeling compromised by a lack of English and cultural and content knowledge, placed strong demands on Participant Four. She also raised the notion of spontaneity:

... teaching is a very instant thing, even if you are prepared. But when you come to the front you are always facing an unknown thing, unknown response because you never know what your students are going to ask. They were always asking something that you don’t know – because we come from different cultures, a lot of cultures I don’t understand.

It was therefore impossible to prepare for everything that may come up in the classroom. Participant Four did acknowledge that the practicum experiences that she faced here are consistent with her learning experiences in the past. Her previous experiences of success led to her being able to suspend judgement and to engage fully with the experience.

In my whole of learning until now I go through a very difficult situation each stage and I found out when I face a very difficult situation or shocking experiences ...then I’ll gradually compromise or accommodate myself to see what is happening in this situation; can I really handle it?

At the same time she explicitly recognised, perhaps through her training as psychologist, that teaching could involve the challenging of old identities. Participant Four revealed her meta-awareness of this process when she identified the role conflict in herself as she switched between personal and professional self as a means to understand different situations.
I had a conflict myself in many situations, even teaching my kids. Sometimes I would become a normal person, sometimes I’d become as a psychologist and critical myself says, how can you do this in your life and you know how to do it, and you know the proper way, or you know what is the best you should do. Then sometimes I just go between these two rows.

Another feature of this practicum was the level of physical demand that was placed on the teacher. As she said in relation to a day spent in observation and planning:

*I will sit behind the class and find a good spot to observe what she is teaching and write crazy observation notes. In the same time I hope this day can finish sooner and then doing things like that. By the end of the day you think, Oh God, it’s finally finished today. Oh God, I have so much observation I have to write down. Then 3.30 she finally had time to sit down and talk to us about what happened today and also planning for tomorrow. So that comes a time that we need to know – Oh OK, wow what I’ve done today is something good and something bad. Then that’s OK, let’s forget about it. I need to write reflection on that tonight and observation notes from today and also planning for tomorrow.*

Time pressure was a constant theme and came with the experience of transition from a novice to a more experienced teacher. Part of this for Participant Four could be explained by the level of competence that the supervising teacher was demanding from the very beginning of the practicum, which is clearly above that which the student teachers could demonstrate. On the other hand, busyness was a constant theme of many student teachers’ accounts of their practicum experiences and it is hard to replicate this outside the actual practice. Therefore the first impressions of the practicum school and the expectations of the supervising teachers are key determinants of how the practicum will be experienced at first. This can then set the pattern for the next few weeks unless very clear means of communication are set in place. Participant Four continued to participate in the life of the school after she had finished her practicum. The role as a volunteer contrasted sharply with her role as student teacher. As she said:
Because like I still go one day back to the school for volunteer and within that day I feel I am a guest, because you’re not really being responsible for anything. It’s kind of feels so strange. I think the first two weeks after I finished my prac and I go into the classroom, I see things so differently within that month. Everything is so close related to me, every detail.

There was a heightened sense of awareness therefore for Participant Four in her role as student teacher that was related to “responsibility”. With the opportunity to contrast the two roles, that of “volunteer” and that of “pre-service teacher”, she illustrated her understanding of the shifting identity that is required in pre-service teachers as they make the transition to teachers. She also illustrated strongly that this change in understanding and responsibility came about through her engagement in the real classroom with the students. It also illustrates the increased pressure and responsibility that came with the shift from “peripheral participation” as a welcome guest, helper and observer to the “full participation” in the life of the classroom that was required from a teacher.

But once that month is finished, in the same classroom interact with the same kids but everything is so unrelated to me. It’s kind of like you don’t feel that responsibility for every single kid, every single minute they were in the classroom. You kind of like, I can do this, I can do that, I can help this, whatever I like. If I don’t feel I want to do things I can just sit back and observe. If I am more willing to do things I can just push myself to do this, do that you can do whatever. But still you know assist the host teachers.

But within the prac it’s kind of, this is your classroom and when you are teaching then every kid is your responsibility, and even is not your turn to teach, I feel I need to keep an eye on every single kid, every single minute, it’s kind of like that. So, it’s so different for me, yeah.

Participant Twelve

Participant Twelve undertook a Bachelor of Education course where she completed four four-week practicums and a four-week internship. Participant Twelve described four practicum experiences:

I think my first prac was the best one because I felt more welcomed into the school and everyone was really kind and they showed me like
what to do and how to do everything. My second prac that’s where I
got overworked and I was treated more like a relief teacher, and then
the third and fourth prac that was just mental.

Clearly there was a great variety in her experiences and a range of different
constraining and facilitating factors. Participant Twelve reflected on why she felt so
welcome and supported in her first practicum.

I think it was just the teacher introducing me to all the staff and they
said, ok, they had everything organised so I didn’t feel they just forgot
about me. It was like, oh yes, you’re some random prac student here.
So that actually made me feel more welcome than all my other pracs
because they knew who I was before I got there and they had a folder
ready for me with my name on it. Then I had the information and so I
was prepared before I actually started my prac.

The formal introductions and the obvious preparations that had been made for
Participant Twelve before she arrived at the school were clearly important for her.
The label that she granted herself as “some random prac student” reflected perhaps
her own tentative identity at this time as this was her first experience of practicum
and she was only eighteen years old, the same age as some of her students. This
school provided an organised set of experiences for her. She said:

They kind of let me have little observations to begin with and they
followed the uni structure more and so then I felt more a sense of, I
don’t know, welcome I guess.

When the supervising teacher found that Participant Twelve was confident with
short periods of teaching, she gradually took over whole lesson blocks. She found
that this “worked better” than some of her experiences in her later practicums. It was
a very supportive and graded experience.

Participant Twelve’s second experience of practicum was very different. She
reflected that it was

One of those unique situations because the supervising teacher took
long service leave and forgot to notify the uni about it, so they passed
me onto another teacher who then did not have enough time for me
because she was head of department.
Then I was treated as a relief teacher and had actual relief teachers supervising me but not necessarily assessing me, which made it difficult for my relief supervising teacher to mark me because she only observed two lessons out of the whole four week block. I just started teaching the first day full lessons and I had to wing it on the first day because I thought OK my supervising teacher is going to be there, you know it’s going to be OK. I’ll have that slow transition as my first prac. ... well I walked in, the first day at school, and everyone is like, who are you? I was like; ‘I’m the prac student’. It’s like, ‘Oh we have a prac student sort of thing’ and I was like ‘OK did not anyone inform you inform you I was turning up sort of thing?’. Then I rocked up to the lessons and they are like “do you have the lesson organised?” I was there going, ‘Lesson? What lesson? No one told me anything’. My original supervising teacher apparently told the head of department that I was to organise the lessons and I wasn’t informed of that, so that communication line was kind of broken.

A collection of circumstances had added up in this second experience to place the student teacher in an unsupported position. Participant Twelve was positive and upbeat when she reflected that:

But I managed, I don’t know, that whole prac made me realise the amount of work teachers have to do. I survived it and also only until the final week my site coordinator actually notice that I was doing the entire teacher’s load and only then was like ‘Oh are you OK?’ When I really needed help on the second week, when I was having that mental breakdown going, oh what am I doing here, why am I even teaching?

She waited to be noticed, and by that time it was too late to rescue the practicum and turn it into the kind of experience that she had anticipated based on the very positive experience of her first practicum.

... like my first prac how everything was so structured and organised and yes it was this, this that slow transition to my second prac everything is dumped on me. I felt like I wasn’t prepared for it, because I didn’t go through that transition.

However, after this experience, Participant Twelve traced the problems that she faced in her fourth practicum to the issues that she felt might have been picked up in her second practicum if she had been being monitored and supported more closely. The supervising team for her third and fourth practicum, she considered:
... actually blamed my second prac for my poor literacy and they said I can’t read or write English properly and I had like critical literacy issues. They just noted all the problems I had and I was there going OK. They passed me on my third prac and then on my fourth prac it came, I think day 5 and they gave me the “at risk of failure” and they just told me that ‘No sorry you’ve got poor literacy, you can’t teach, we don’t even know why you are going to be a teacher because you are not suited to it’.
It wasn’t so much of, I don’t know, constructive criticism. It was that negative: you’re crap, that’s it, why are you here?

To be accused of not being suited to teaching after five days into a six-week practicum experience in the fourth year of her course must have been extremely difficult and this was reflected in Participant Twelve’s narrative. At the same time it seems that there were few procedures in place for welcoming student teachers at this particular school. As a result, things started badly:

_I think it took about five minutes and they thought, no, I’m not a part of their kind of niche and I was just on the outside
I did not feel welcome at all in that staffroom. No one talked to me. I was just in the corner … I had to move the shelves and everything so I could create the desk myself._

The staffroom is a key location for student teachers to interact with other teachers. The neglect that Participant Twelve experienced initially had implications for her sense of identity as a pre-service teacher. Indeed, the difficulty of the relationships encountered early in this practicum led to her considering her whole future plan of becoming a teacher.

_So I don’t know whether they do that to everyone or whether it’s just for prac. students, that’s something I don’t know. But to go through that has made me question like whether I should be a teacher or not. Because I would not want to experience that again. There were times when I was like, no, I am just over it._

The feeling of being excluded was experienced in different ways but it was clearly significant and distressing. She presents some examples that illustrate how socially awkward she felt and how difficult the situation became.
Yes, as a person, to have the whole group there talking and you walk in, you felt like they were worse than the students because I knew they were talking about me behind my back because I would walk in and there is silence and I am like obviously someone has walked into the, you know, staff room and there’s silence and they are looking at you and you are trying to be nice. You are still saying “Hi, How are you?” and all that and they won’t involve you in any conversations and you say something like to be involved and they kind of go,” oh yeah”, it’s like there is no acknowledgement.

Ultimately, this situation was resolved through a combination of working with the teachers and intensive assistance from the University Liaison Officer. In fact, this staffroom had a reputation for being difficult to break into. After talking with one of the teachers at the school who had had a similar experience with that staffroom Participant Twelve reflected that:

It was comforting to know that someone else was going through that and was explaining to me, you are not the only one, there is nothing wrong with you. You are not doing anything wrong, it is just who they are.

The affiliation with this other teacher clearly comforted Participant Twelve as she was struggling with the complex social demands of the practicum and allowed to her to reflect upon the whole experience as one of particular group membership.

I found out from other students that not many people like that staff room, because it’s the people in it and their personalities. … there is that stereotype with all Business Education teachers that they have this very stuck up personality and so I didn’t fit the stereotype and I was there going, Oh OK. … So it’s not more about students and being accepted by students and the students giving you a hard time. I found it was more about the staff than the students, that teaching is a lot to do with the people you work with and not necessarily who you teach. After I got the QUT liaison involved and they did constant checks so it was daily checks on me to make sure I was alright and I think the staff actually realised - I don’t know whether that I wanted to be there or whether they thought I had got the Uni involved you know that I am not going to tolerate their behaviour that it was only then they started to be nice to me and I felt more welcomed. So it was a very long intensive process to get from being annihilated to just sort of feeling that welcome in the staff room.
Participant Twelve, on reflection, considered that the two factors that might have played a key role in her marginalisation, as well, of course as the predominant local staffroom exclusivity, to be cultural and age-based.

*I was like there going, OK, I felt I had it tougher than anyone else. I don’t know whether that had something to do with my race because everyone in that staffroom were like middle class sort of Anglo Saxon background but the thing is I felt like I got along better with the kids because 70% of the kids in that school were New Zealanders and they respected me more and behaviour management was not so much of an issue for the early stages. I don’t know whether that actually was a bad thing for me in the staffroom because I would go in the staffroom and I felt alone. ... I actually enjoyed the company of the kids more than the company of the teachers.*

When she was working with people of her own age there was a strong sense of interaction. This emphasises again the importance of being able to communicate and participate naturally to build a successful social and professional relationship in the school.

*That is just the staff room culture. ...I felt with the students I can handle them all, like I could make that interaction. I think it’s also the age gap as well. But I can make that interaction with the students, but with the teachers it’s more difficult.*

As a professional learning experience, this practicum for Participant Twelve was certainly extremely intense. Communication with other staff and her supervisor also seemed to be direct and blunt, at least for the first few weeks, when Participant Twelve considered that

*You are just better off being quiet but then they take that as you not taking initiative or not being involved in the staffroom. That kind of hurt me the most, because it is like how can I be more involved in the staffroom when they have not given me opportunities to do so?*

In some ways, in this school it appeared that the role of the staffroom as a context for teacher development had been neglected and that the staff rather focused upon the more clearly observable aspects of the practicum, particularly those relating to classroom procedures and teaching. Opportunities for Participant Twelve to
engage with the other teachers were therefore lost until intensive negotiations took place. It would be interesting to discover how the University Liaison Officer managed to influence this staffroom and the exact contribution that they made. However, all Participant Twelve observed were that intensive talks were undertaken.

I bought that up with the QUT liaison officer and they managed to solve it out and it was only after I think two weeks of intensive talks with the QUT liaison, my supervising teacher and that only then I actually started to feel, including on my internship where the staff was being more nice to me and were acknowledging my existence.

Participant Twelve’s experience in the classroom is now considered. As we have seen above, after five days into her fourth practicum she was presented with an At Risk of Failure form. After receiving this she contacted the University Liaison Academic and the experience of practicum began to improve after that. It appeared that the At Risk of Failure form was not submitted officially and indeed, the following week Participant Twelve was found to have “improved” despite the fact that she had not taught even one lesson after the matter had been raised. Participant Twelve considered possibly that:

I think they were giving me a hard time, probably, I don’t know, make me work harder see if you work under pressure you could perform at your best, something like that, that’s what I think they did. But to fail me or be At Risk of Failure, that really hurt me, because I didn’t think I deserved it. Because I knew I did so much more work than anyone else. Because there was I think three other people who were on the same prac as me and I had folders like that thick.

The issue that led to Participant Twelve being faced with an At Risk of Failure form was directly related to classroom practice, using the whiteboard. As she related:

Yeah and I’m left handed and I hate writing on the board and that’s why I have written everything on OHTs and everything prepared beforehand to avoid writing on the board. ... Like the kids would tell me, Oh Miss, we can’t read your writing ... well I will try and write clearer for them and do print writing, but then I’ll make spelling errors and I’ll forget how to spell words because I’ll be freaking out
so much because I am there trying to get all the words at the right
levels and not go wonky. Then because of that – just because I made
two or three errors I was accused of poor literacy. Since my
pronunciation for some of the words are quite strange – I copped a lot
of flak for that as well.

So, left-handed, “wonky” writing on the whiteboard with some spelling errors,
in the supervisor’s eyes, constituted a level of literacy representing an inadequate
teaching standard in this school. At the same time, Participant Twelve was aware of
her shortcomings in board work and spelling and tried as far as possible to alleviate
them through anticipating needs and planning ahead. These issues were also coupled
with questions being raised over Participant Twelve’s reading and speaking.

So I had trouble speaking because I hate reading out loud as well,
with the texts that I don’t know and I had to read the books out to the
students. Thankfully they are a low literacy class because I had two
literacy classes I had a really low literacy class and when I was
reading I was like stopping at some of the words, going, oh, what is
the next? Some of the students in that class can’t read and so when I
was reading to them they were more than happy to read. When I was
reading, sometimes I would stutter and the teachers would just say
that is poor literacy as well, you know that is me not having effective
English skills.

Participant Twelve put some of her performance issues down to nervousness:

I think that’s just nerves getting the better of me. But then the students
saw me being normal, as not me - they think that teachers are this
alien sort of thing but they realised and they thought, Oh, she’s just a
normal person. And me being young as well also helped because with
them being a low literacy class they are like oh, ok, you know it’s ok
to stuff up, it’s ok to make mistakes, you don’t have to be a
perfectionist.
Because I think teachers aim to be like these perfect people to have all
the correct skills and stuff but I tell students I don’t know it and I
don’t know how to do this. Ok how do we spell this? I don’t know.
You know I’m willing to admit that and I think that works better with
the students because they can see right through you if you want to try
and .... They saw right through me when I stood there going Oh crap,
I don’t know how to spell this particular word. And I’m trying to look
for things and I was like, Oh OK I’ll just ask the students

There was a clear contrast here between Participant Twelve and her
supervising teacher concerning expectations and standards. The supervisor clearly
had in mind that effective teaching includes perfect spelling, neat blackboard work and fluent reading out loud, without hesitation, as comprising the requisite skills for a student teacher. She also felt that when these skills were compromised in any way that it represented grounds for risk of failure of the practicum. Participant Twelve on the other hand was aware of her limitations and tried as far as possible to limit them by using transparencies or PowerPoint so that she did not need to write much on the board. She also invited students to share with her in the process of establishing the correct spelling for words that were causing difficulty for her.

Participant Twelve’s oral language also attracted adverse comment:

* Saying “like” a lot and I say ‘coz’ and abbreviating words, they also said, no that’s poor literacy.

She responded to this by registering her way of speaking as part of her identity as a young person and felt that this established a connection between her and her students. However, there was clearly a conflict here, at least in the supervising teacher’s mind, between language that was appropriate for a teacher and the language demonstrated by Participant Twelve as a pre-service teacher.

* I was there going OK, but I felt more comfortable because the students understood me and I thought well that’s just me they were like, “No that’s just you and the problem is you are not performing the correct literacy to the students and you need to do that.”

The supervisory team gave Participant Twelve advice about the appropriate levels of language for a teacher in the context of establishing a particular level of competence in her oral and written skills that they felt was appropriate for a teacher acting as role model for students. She was not alone in experiencing this situation. She said:

* The thing is I told one girl who is also doing her internship and her pracs, because we all did our same pracs at the last school as well, so we’ve been at the same pracs and the same schools. She is, like, yeah,
I do the same (enrolling students’ help with spelling). So, I didn’t feel like it was just me.

From Participant Twelve’s narrative it is clear that the situation got progressively worse and that her relationship with her supervising teacher became increasingly difficult.

But it gradually got worse for me and they just told that pretty much I was dumb in the most subtle way but it was so obvious. Because I would get a page of notes of where they would say, that’s constructive criticism. I showed it to my friends and they would be going “What!” Because by then all my other friends that went on their pracs did not have to write lesson plans and all that and mine was very detailed and you had to have everything set.

Her position in the school community in the classroom and with her supervisors contributed to a sense of powerlessness which further reduced her confidence to participate in the classroom.

The worst part is it’s not me actually feeling comfortable in the classroom because I am looking at her (supervisor) and she’s looking at students and what I used to do I’d look at her for cues in what to do instead of just developing my own teaching strategies. I was more feeding off her energy to actually understand Oh what am I doing wrong to fix it so then I would get that approval from her. … I can try and do my best but I felt like my best wasn’t good enough because I wasn’t getting that approval from her.

The situation for a while became one of trying to please the supervising teacher’s requirements rather than concentrating on teaching the classes. She found that that her supervising teacher herself had experienced some very difficult practicum experiences and reflected that this may have been contributing to her approach.

I noticed with her (supervisor) she was comparing all my experiences to her prac. experiences and saying how tough she had it and how lucky I should be. I felt I don’t know whether that was her personal, you know kind of vengeance on the world, going OK, well I’ve had a tough time so I’m going to make every other prac student have a tough time or whether that was just directed towards me because I wasn’t good enough for her, sort of thing.
This was combined with the difficult situation in the staffroom leading to the student teacher to hypothesise about why things were so difficult. She was strongly aware of her role and identity as a “student teacher” and felt that this role should mean that she was given special consideration in her attempts to make the transition to full time teacher. She felt that the “student” role should involve some more learning opportunities.

... it’s either that the culture way or it’s because I am a student and because of that they’re like oh you’re just a student. But I felt that even if I am just a student, I am there to learn and I didn’t feel like they were giving me opportunities to learn as such. I felt like I was getting shut down every day. It was a horrible thing to wake up each morning and go to that school because I thought I was the problem and it wasn’t until the QUT liaison officer actually analysed the situation and they had someone come out, the course co-ordinator come out and you know review my lessons and all that and fair enough I had problems with work lessons, no teacher is perfect, but fair enough, everyone can improve, but I didn’t believe I was that terrible that I should be at risk of failure and that my literacy is that terrible.

The University Liaison Officer then played a key role in the remainder of the practicum experience of Participant Twelve.

I think without him (liaison officer) I don’t think I would have made to where I am now, I don’t think I would have graduated. Because in a school it is very much that power play since I couldn’t go to my site coordinator because it’s best friends with supervising teacher ... 

The Head of Department also played an important role in supporting her. She redefined the goals of the practicum as meeting the requirements of the supervising teacher but also offered a less stressful future “in the real world”.

(the head of department) She almost took the role as the supervising teacher and I learned more from her. ... then she goes, it’s not a matter of you know, changing you, it’s just a matter of making the supervising teacher happy and that comforts me in a way. Because I was like, OK it’s not me that the problem, it’s just they want you to teach like them and so that’s what you have to just do now and then when you get out there in the real world you can teach however you want to teach.
With her saying that I was like OK, there is some hope. But without her and like the QUT liaison I probably wouldn’t have made it. I would for sure; there is no chance in the world.

In this practicum experience there was a sense of strong control that the supervising teacher had over the standards that Participant Twelve was expected to reach. As both Participant Twelve and her Head of Department noted, it was important to reach these standards. At the same time, however, Participant Twelve did not find it easy to communicate with her supervising teacher or to seek help. As she said:

*Then I’d be OK well, what do I need to do? I would ask her for help and then she would just say one or two lines, oh you could try this and I’d be like, Oh OK and then she’ll just turn around and talk to someone else.
*I didn’t want to seem rude to interrupt, because I don’t want to be known as that prac. student who interrupts their conversation. Then she says, then she went and said that I didn’t ask enough questions.*

Clearly no clear routines had been established for feedback. Perhaps the supervising teacher was trying to encourage independence. Participant Twelve did indicate earlier that she thought that maybe she was being tested to see if she could work under pressure. She drew on her university work to try and meet the standards that had been set for her and to bridge the theory/practice nexus.

*Well I did show a lot of the curriculum work I did during uni and all this stuff to the teachers to prove to them that I can design units. They were surprised because they were like, oh we didn’t think you would have that in you. That offended me in a way because it’s like, well with the time constraints that I have it is difficult to make six lesson plans in one night and make sure they are all interactive and they are all that, you know, higher order thinking. I got to the point where I was like I don’t know what to do and I was pretty much using every single subject that I did over the past four years to create something.*
As she was getting little support in the classroom Participant Twelve drew upon the more theoretical work for which she had received good feedback from the university. This did lead to positive developments in the classroom.

I had my supervising teacher tell me, no that’s too difficult for them. …she questioned me saying, no, that’s not going to work and was surprised when it did. ...

As the supervisory pressure decreased Participant Twelve began to feel that she was making more of a contribution to the students in the classroom. As she said:

... it was basically my internship that allowed me to have that room to develop all those skills because my supervising teacher wasn’t in the room. So I felt more comfortable and I felt more relaxed as a teacher. That’s when I realised I do tell students stories that relate to – because they love stories and it was pretty much on my internship I actually felt more comfortable than any other pracs. So my first prac and my internship was pretty good.

Participant Twelve talked about how she made connections with the students through her cultural alliance with them and how she felt that she needed more information, for example, when she found out about a girl who was being abused by her mother, which helped her to understand some of the behavioural problems that she was demonstrating. With two students whose friend had committed suicide she demonstrated maturity and empathy as a teacher in attending to their grief. At the same time she drew upon her own high school experience as her growing maturity allowed her to adopt alternative ways of getting essential tasks done.

These two students, ultimately, in the end, on my internship they gave me a card saying that I’ve inspired them to be a teacher. And I was like, Ohhh, and the shock on the teacher’s faces when I showed them the card was just like, how did you manage to do them – like to make them do work? And I’m like, I didn’t make them do work, I gave them that choice

I remember in High school, I had teachers pushing me to go, “Ok you’ve got to do this, you’ve got to do that, and I’m like ‘No’, but give students their own time, ok well you’ve got to get it done at the end of the lesson. You’ve still got to get all this work done.
Towards the end of her practicum the stories that Participant Twelve narrated show that she was becoming more confident and that she was contributing in original ways to the school and engaging with teachers. She had become comfortable enough to share ideas and make suggestions.

But the problem is that since it is so theoretical I had the teachers giving me flak about it, saying it’s not fun. Then I am like, well legal studies is a theoretical subject and like you should make it more fun. Then I did the poster activity with them and the teachers were happy with that but then half the time they don’t listen if you are doing activities or group activities with them, they don’t necessarily listen. But when I am telling them stories about what’s happened to me like I’ve related to contracts and you know, criminal law and all that, and I made up stories and all the rest of it or got them to make up a story and develop a case, a made up case from it, I realised they worked better and they are much more talkative and they are more willing to learn.

We have already noted the difficulties that Participant Twelve’s spelling and teenage argot caused. On the other hand, she felt that her appearance allowed her to make contact with culturally diverse students more easily.

I don’t know whether that’s a cultural thing because most of the students were New Zealanders and I was like fine ... you have that similarity that boundary where it is the same and you can make that connection with the students but then it’s more difficult with the teacher.

And most of them thought I either was an islander or actually come from New Zealand. ... because of my cultural background that I actually made that initial connection with them. Because I do think without that cultural background it would be difficult to actually talk to them because they were troubled teenagers

This final practicum for Participant Twelve placed high demands on her and required serious negotiation at different levels between the university, the school and the supervisory team. It illustrates that social factors and relationships are central to any practicum experience and that, despite Participant Twelve’s initial misgivings about being placed in a staffroom that had clearly been entrenched in their ways for a
number of years, new alliances and accommodations can be made through different forms of active intervention.