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Relating for Learning:

Teaching to Nurture Children's Spiritual Growth

A grounded theory study of New Zealand teachers
making students' learning significant in their schooling

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of

Ph.D.
in
Education

at Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand.

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This thesis is dedicated to my father,
Richard Thomas Joyce (Dick) Clarke,
(1933 – 2004)
who nurtured in me
a sense of wonder for the physical world in which we live,
a yen for a relationship with God,
respect for every person,
and belief in myself.

We are all grounded theorists about our daily life.

Barney G. Glaser (1998:33)

Abstract

The thesis proffers a theory called *relating for learning* about spiritually nurturing teaching, generated using grounded theory research. Spirituality is defined as that to do with the part of a human being that transcends human life, that is to say, that to do with the soul. The human lifetime is understood as but a phase in the growth of the soul, and, therefore, all of life is a spiritual journey. *Knowing* is consciousness of relationships in one's life and what is known is always known in relation to oneself. Furthermore, *learning*, which is understood, in the thesis, to be the means by which human beings come to know and progress through life, is seen as spiritual growth.

Teachers, who are in the business of serving others by assisting them with their learning, are in a prime position to nurture their students' spirituality. The call in the New Zealand Health and Physical Well-being curriculum statement for school teachers to tend to the spiritual well-being of their students is therefore appropriate, although the directness of the request is unprecedented in New Zealand schooling history and teachers are unsure of just what it means for their practice. The broad aims of the doctoral research inquiry are to add to existing understandings of the place of spirituality in New Zealand state school education, and to explore the practical implications of the new understandings for teachers and other educationists. 'Continuing the conversation' (Josselson, 1999) about spirituality in education, and about spiritual nurturance in particular, is important at this time when school teachers are overtly expected to tend to students' spiritual well-being.

The *relating for learning* theory is generated from nine practicing teachers' ideas and talk, and observations of the teachers interacting with students. The theory proffers a psychology of teachers relating to students to nurture their spiritual growth. It identifies establishing and maintaining a trusting, learning-directed relationship with each student as essential to effective teaching. The relationship involves the student trusting the teacher as a capable educational leader, and trusting that the teacher respects and cares for the student. The student's trust, in turn, facilitates the teacher gaining the information and conditions required to effectively develop the student as a learner and assist the student to learn the formal curriculum.

Preface

I was born in 1959 and I had a loving, sheltered and liberal upbringing in middle-class New Zealand. My general feeling throughout my compulsory schooling was one of not wanting to be there. It was not until I left school and was free to live and learn about the world in my own way that I became enamoured with life and learning. It occurred to me, then, that school education in New Zealand could be improved, and I embarked on my tertiary education in the field of education with emancipatory ambitions to save New Zealand school children from the time-wasting doldrums of ineffective compulsory schooling. I was young and passionate in those days!

In 1986, I was one of a team of researchers who conceptualized and conducted a curriculum design research pilot in a New Zealand secondary school. The pilot successfully integrated knowledge and skills selected from Biology, Geography, Outdoor Education, English, Mathematics and Computer Studies. The fifteen mixed-ability, Form 6 (Year 12) students achieved such remarkable results on the pilot course, that the (then) New Zealand Department of Education, IBM and Massey University agreed to fund the Freyberg High School Integrated Studies Project (Freyberg Project), an extensive 3 year project to further develop the findings of the pilot with Form 3, 4, 5 and 6 (Year 9, 10, 11 and 12) cohorts.

The integrated curriculum designs of both the pilot and the Freyberg Project featured: (i) fieldtrips to learning environments beyond the classroom; (ii) student use of computers as learning tools (as distinct from computer-assisted instruction); and (iii) the combining of traditionally separate subject curricula into inter-disciplinary thematic studies. The educational merit of the three respective design features had already been suggested in prior research and literature¹. The Freyberg Project researchers saw potential in pulling the three design features together into an “educational programme that would capture students’ interests by challenging them intellectually, emotionally and physically” (McKinnon, Sinclair, Nolan, 1997:2).

Indeed, the venues of the fieldtrips immersed students in wilderness experiences and pushed the boundaries of their physical endurance. Cooperation was required for survival and students quickly developed a sense of belonging to the group. Teacher-set assignments solved real-life problems and developed, in students, feelings of achievement, competence and usefulness. Student-initiated projects gave students the opportunity to pursue an area of passionate interest.

In the context of progressively developing and field-testing integrated curricula within the Freyberg Project, the research aims included investigation of the educational effectiveness of the innovative curriculum in terms of students' academic performance, motivation and attitudes². Analysis of longitudinal data from the Freyberg Project showed that students in the integrated studies programme performed³ significantly better in English, Mathematics and Science, and had more positive attitudes and higher motivation for learning, than students in the traditional school programme (McKinnon, 1995; McKinnon, Sinclair, Nolan, 1997). In literature about the project, the researchers proffered explanations for the favorable effects of the curriculum innovation in terms of things like the motivating force of computers and fieldtrips, and better opportunities for students to see the connections between traditionally separate subject matter. The Project was deemed a success by the researchers.

My involvement with the pilot left me with two lasting impressions that have had profound effect on my thinking about education. The first was a realization that the 'means-end' model of school education did not adequately explain the student learning that occurred.

The second was an overwhelming conviction that the design of the curriculum in the Freyberg Project was such that the students could not help but learn. *I had witnessed students being exposed to profound experiences that deeply affected the way they*

¹ For example, Papert, 1980; Turkle, 1984; Lawler, 1985; Stenhouse, 1980; Kleinfeld, McDiarmid & Hagstrom, 1985.

² The Freyberg Project researchers also aimed to investigate curriculum innovation adoption and professional development of teachers (Nolan & McKinnon, 1989).

³ Judgements of student 'performance' were based on students' results in School Certificate, an externally set examination administered at the end of Form 5 (Year 11).

thought about the world. This, to me, is real learning and is of ultimate importance to one's life. Nonetheless, my conviction about the inherent educational quality of the curriculum design remained largely unexplained by the Freyberg Project research. This was because the educational effects of the Project's design features were evaluated mainly on the basis of examination achievement. Measurement of specific learning was not attempted. The learning-related findings of the research were consequently limited to identifying general effects of the curriculum design on student achievement. Study of the possible causative relationships between the curriculum design features and specific learning were not possible.

Since then, my academic interest has moved towards the psychological effect of teachers' curriculum design practices on students, and the direct relationships between curriculum design features and specific learning instances. Contemplating the meanings of the words 'learning' and 'knowing', and trying to understand the very essence of learning in childhood, I found myself delving into psychological theories of consciousness, and the relationships between emotions and motivation, value and memory, and connection and attention.

Furthermore, I came to understand that what I call 'real learning', that is to say, profound changes in the way an individual thinks about his or her world, is what constitutes his or her personal spiritual development. (This idea is developed in Chapter 3.) Worldwide academic interest in 'spirituality' is now burgeoning and, not coincidentally, the concepts of 'emotions', 'value' and 'connection' are common in the discourse.

It occurred to me that the design of the curriculum in the Freyberg Project allowed the students to connect spiritually with those aspects of the world that were being presented in the course materials, and I entertained the notion that herein lay the value of the curriculum design to the students' learning. This notion was the inspiration for my doctorate.

Soon after the commencement of the doctorate, which turned out to be a study of teachers teaching rather than curriculum design, it became clear that grounded theory

was the appropriate research methodology. Consequently, I conducted the research “minus mentor” (Stern cited in Glaser, 1998), since grounded theory research about spirituality in education was unprecedented in New Zealand at the time of commencement and my supervisors were relatively inexperienced with the methodology. My main sources of information on how to do it were books on grounded theory and verbal accounts of Masterate students’ experiences of employing the methodology.

In his “Issues and Discussion” book, Glaser (1998) warns of the time and energy wasted by pitfalls such as attempting literature reviews prior to data gathering and analysis, forcing pre-conceived ideas on the emerging theory, and telling colleagues about emerging concepts before the theory is generated. Despite having the warnings in black and white, I learned such lessons very much by experience and, in the reports of the research process in Chapters 5 and 6, I attempt to capture the trials and errors as well as the triumphs I experienced. Far from being counted as a waste of time and energy, however, the obstacles along the way were seen to enrich my understanding of grounded theory research methodology.

The initial stage of the doctoral journey was characterised by a lack of confidence in my own professional authority and I thought that my feelings, my convictions, my insights about spirituality would stand for little in a doctoral thesis. I turned to the literature in order to see what others thought and to use others’ authority to legitimate my own ideas. In the process of responding to others’ ideas, I developed not only my own rapidly crystallizing notion of spirituality, but also the language with which to communicate and debate my ideas with others.

Successfully completing the doctoral research using an unfamiliar methodology could not have happened without supportive supervisors who granted me the autonomy and professional responsibility to do things my way, and allowed me the time, space and encouragement to find my own feet.

Deborah Ayres

Acknowledgements

Glaser (1998:33) said “We are all grounded theorists in our daily life.” I have found this to be true, at least about my own way of thinking. I believe we all practice constant comparison at various levels of consciousness during most of our waking hours, and perhaps even in our sleep, as well. We all go through life processing incoming information, checking it off against and adjusting our existing theories and sometimes generating new theories. But I must say, the time to commit myself whole-heartedly to generating a new theory does not present itself readily in my ordinary life – although I try hard to make time in my everyday busy-ness to stop and smell the roses, that generosity to myself rarely extends to allowing time to actually *contemplate* the roses.

I would like to thank Massey University for granting me a Massey Doctoral Scholarship and thereby creating the opportunity for me to devote time to generate a new theory – time to read extensively about children’s spirituality and about education, both topics dear to my heart, time to meet and watch and talk to, not just one, but *several* inspirational teachers, time to deeply contemplate the essence of their inspirational teaching qualities, and time to articulate and write down the theory that emerged from my contemplations.

Thank you, also, to the inspirational teachers, who so willingly donated their precious time to a stranger’s cause, and who shared themselves so willingly.

I wish to acknowledge the following list of people for their friendship and encouragement, without which I would never have embarked on this exciting journey, nor made it to the tops of the numerous mountains climbed along the way. Thank you to:

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- Brian Annan, my chief academic critic, for asking me the question: “Is life a spiritual journey, or is a spiritual journey part of one’s life?”;
- Ivan Snook, my first supervisor, for believing in me at the beginning and supporting my application for the scholarship when a lot of other people (including myself) suspected I was crazy, for being a solid backboard of wisdom and expertise against which I bounced my ideas when I was initially conceptualising the research, and for granting me the freedom to pursue my passions in my own time and in my own way.

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Table of Contents

Abstract..... v

Preface.....vii

Acknowledgements..... xi

Table of Contentsxiii

List of Tablesxix

List of Figures.....xxi

List of Boxes.....xxiii

Chapter 1 Introduction..... 1

1.1 Focus on spiritual nurturance..... 1

1.2 Purposes of the thesis..... 3

1.3 Structure of the thesis.....4

1.4 Use of literature in the research and thesis 8

Chapter 2 The Research Context 9

2.1 Overview of the research context..... 9

2.2 Historical factors..... 9

2.2.1 Growing Western interest in spirituality9

2.2.2 Inclusion of spirituality in school education 14

2.3 Inclusion of spirituality in the New Zealand curriculum 17

2.3.1 The structure of the New Zealand national curriculum 17

2.3.2 Reference to ‘spirituality’ in the overarching policy document..... 18

2.3.3 An interpretation of ‘spirituality’ in the Health and Physical Education
in the New Zealand Curriculum statement 20

2.3.4 Reference to ‘spiritual well-being’ in the curriculum documents..... 22

2.3.4.1 ‘Searching for meaning and purpose in life’ in the curriculum
documents 23

2.3.4.2 ‘Personal identity and self-awareness’ in the curriculum
documents 24

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 2.3.4.3 ‘Values and beliefs that determine the way people live’ in the curriculum documents | 26 |
| 2.4 The State’s expectations of teachers: the unclear meaning of <i>spiritual well-being</i> | 28 |
| Chapter 3 Spirituality and Teaching..... | 33 |
| 3.1 The transcendent nature of spirituality | 33 |
| 3.2 The development of spiritual understandings in humans | 34 |
| 3.2.1 Sources of authority | 34 |
| 3.2.2 Defining ‘spiritual understanding’ in the global era | 36 |
| 3.3 Ontological framework: learning as spiritual growth | 39 |
| 3.3.1 Foundational belief: Human life is a spiritual journey during which the spirit grows | 39 |
| 3.3.2 Ethical rationale: collective spirit of humanity and the transcendent’s agenda | 41 |
| 3.3.3 Human manifestation of spirituality | 42 |
| 3.3.3.1 Spirituality as relational consciousness | 44 |
| 3.3.3.2 An integral connection between spirituality and consciousness..... | 44 |
| 3.3.4 The significant role of the teacher in spiritual growth..... | 46 |
| 3.4 The research inquiry and appropriate methodology | 47 |
| Chapter 4 Grounded Theory | 49 |
| 4.1 Introduction to grounded theory | 49 |
| 4.1.1 Background..... | 49 |
| 4.1.2 Purposes of grounded theory..... | 50 |
| 4.1.3 Grounded theory methods..... | 51 |
| 4.1.4 Grounded theory evaluative criteria..... | 54 |
| 4.2 Rationale for choosing grounded theory..... | 57 |
| 4.2.1 Lack of specific research questions | 57 |
| 4.2.2 Lack of foundational theory and language..... | 57 |
| 4.2.3 Desire for the research to be useful to practitioners..... | 58 |
| 4.2.4 Researcher strengths and humility, and acknowledgement of practitioner expertise..... | 59 |
| 4.3 The preliminary research design..... | 59 |

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Chapter 5 Original Impetus, Fieldwork and Preliminary Analysis | 63 |
| 5.1 The phases of the doctoral research | 63 |
| 5.1.1 The original impetus phase | 63 |
| 5.1.2 Introduction to the fieldwork, preliminary analysis and analysis phases | 64 |
| 5.2 Fieldwork: participant selection and enrolment..... | 65 |
| 5.2.1 The participant selection and enrolment processes | 65 |
| 5.2.2 Rationale for participant selection | 67 |
| 5.2.3 The participant teachers | 70 |
| 5.3 Fieldwork: data gathering | 72 |
| 5.3.1 Delineating data gathering | 72 |
| 5.3.2 Summary of the field-data..... | 73 |
| 5.3.3 Interviews with participant teachers..... | 74 |
| 5.3.3.1 Recording interview data | 75 |
| 5.3.3.2 Transcription of sound-recorded interviews | 76 |
| 5.3.3.3 Interviewing and the integrity of the interview process..... | 78 |
| 5.3.4 Observations of participant teachers | 80 |
| 5.3.5 Field-data storage | 82 |
| 5.4 Ethics..... | 84 |
| 5.5 Preliminary analysis | 86 |
| 5.5.1 Preliminary analysis in the doctoral research..... | 87 |
| 5.5.2 The beginning of analysis | 88 |
| 5.5.3 The products of preliminary analysis..... | 89 |
| Chapter 6 Analysis | 91 |
| 6.1 Overview of analysis..... | 91 |
| 6.1.1 Glaser’s representation of analysis..... | 91 |
| 6.1.2 Two analysis stages in the doctoral research | 92 |
| 6.1.3 The use of participant data | 93 |
| 6.2 Generation of the substantive theory | 93 |
| 6.2.1 Identification of the teacher’s main concern and main resolving action | 94 |
| 6.2.1.1 Identification of the teacher’s foci using open and axial coding | 95 |
| 6.2.1.2 Clarification of the concept, <i>concern</i> | 102 |
| 6.2.1.3 Development of the conceptual framework..... | 103 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 6.2.2 Writing the substantive theory | 104 |
| 6.3 Generation of the formal theory..... | 105 |
| Chapter 7 The Participant Teachers' Teaching..... | 107 |
| 7.1 The distinction between 'intentions' and 'goals' | 107 |
| 7.2 The teachers' main concern: learning-directed relationships with students | 111 |
| 7.3 The teachers' primary resolving action: relating | 114 |
| 7.3.1 Interacting with each student to promote a learning-directed relationship..... | 116 |
| 7.3.1.1 Relationship intention: Student understands about the teacher's and student's respective roles in the relationship..... | 117 |
| 7.3.1.1.1 The teacher as carer..... | 121 |
| 7.3.1.1.2 The teacher as <i>respectful</i> carer..... | 124 |
| 7.3.1.1.3 The teacher as leader | 126 |
| 7.3.1.1.4 The teacher as <i>educational</i> leader | 130 |
| 7.3.1.1.5 The student as learner | 133 |
| 7.3.1.1.6 The student as responsible class member..... | 133 |
| 7.3.1.1.7 The milieu | 134 |
| 7.3.1.2 Relationship intention: Student perceives teacher has particular personal attributes | 135 |
| 7.3.1.3 Relationship intention: Student accepts personal, relationship- related responsibilities..... | 136 |
| 7.3.2 Tending to the Self..... | 137 |
| 7.3.2.1 Maintaining professional knowledge and understandings..... | 138 |
| 7.3.2.2 Tending personal health and well-being..... | 139 |
| 7.3.2.2.1 Satisfying personal needs with the job | 139 |
| 7.3.2.2.2 Behaving in a manner at school and with the students that was in keeping with personal ideals and beliefs...140 | |
| 7.3.2.2.3 Following personal instincts, feelings and curiosities when interacting with students..... | 141 |
| 7.4 The teachers' second concern: students develop as learners | 141 |
| 7.5 Teachers' third concern: students learn and achieve in the formal curriculum | 144 |
| 7.5.1 Making learning of formal curriculum content meaningful..... | 144 |

| | | |
|---|---|------------|
| 7.5.1.1 | Selecting and presenting formal curriculum content | 144 |
| 7.5.1.2 | Organising learning experiences..... | 145 |
| 7.5.2 | Convincing students to learn formal curriculum content..... | 145 |
| 7.5.3 | The role of the teacher-student relationship in teaching the formal curriculum | 145 |
| 7.6 | Summary of the substantive (descriptive) theory | 146 |
| Chapter 8 Teaching to Nurture Children’s Spiritual Growth..... | | 149 |
| 8.1 | Emerging understandings as a function of the research method..... | 149 |
| 8.1.1 | The scope and limits of the substantive theory | 149 |
| 8.1.2 | Developing perspectives | 150 |
| 8.1.3 | The concepts <i>being</i> and <i>interacting</i> | 151 |
| 8.2 | Developing understandings about spiritually nurturing teaching | 152 |
| 8.2.1 | Contributions from the substantive theory to understanding <i>teaching</i> | 152 |
| 8.2.2 | Establishing a spiritual perspective from which to examine <i>teaching</i> | 153 |
| 8.2.2.1 | A relational consciousness model to inform the perspective..... | 153 |
| 8.2.2.2 | Other possible models for comparison with the emerging theory..... | 155 |
| 8.2.2.3 | The concept of <i>spiritual face</i> | 156 |
| 8.2.3 | The constitutional element of effectiveness in spiritually nurturing teaching | 157 |
| 8.2.4 | Relational consciousness and teaching | 160 |
| 8.2.5 | The student learning inherent in teachers’ relationship intentions..... | 162 |
| 8.3 | Setting the theory in a school context | 163 |
| Chapter 9 Discussion and Conclusions | | 167 |
| 9.1 | The relationship between the emerging theory and contemporary ideas..... | 167 |
| 9.2 | Care theory and <i>relating for learning</i> | 168 |
| 9.3 | Teachers’ motivation to establish learning-directed relationships with students .. | 169 |
| 9.4 | Teachers’ knowledge about how to effectively teach..... | 170 |
| 9.5 | Support for teachers to develop learning-directed relationships with their students | 172 |
| 9.5.1 | Support from government for addressing spirituality in school education..... | 173 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 9.6 Implications of the <i>relating for learning</i> theory for teachers’ work | 176 |
| 9.7 Further testing of the theory | 177 |
| 9.8 Summary and Conclusions | 178 |
| 9.8.1 Comments on the research | 178 |
| 9.8.2 Summary | 180 |
| 9.8.3 A final word on the theory | 181 |
| Appendix I: Rejected Thesis Introduction | 185 |
| Appendix II: Ethics Protocol | 193 |
| References | 217 |

List of Tables

Table 1: Curriculum Statements for the Essential Learning Areas of the New Zealand Curriculum 18

Table 2: The Objectives Set for Each of the 8 Achievement Levels for the Aim ‘Personal Identity and Self-Worth’ 26

Table 3: An Interpretation of Geering’s Evolutionary Pattern of Culture 36

Table 4: Information about Participant Data..... 74

Table 5: Record of Contact with “W” School..... 83

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Place of Spiritual Well-being (taha wairua) in the New Zealand Curriculum 21

Figure 2: Continuum of Experiences as Spiritual Growth..... 40

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework of Each Participant Teacher’s Concerns..... 111

Figure 4: Conceptual Framework of Relating..... 115

Figure 5: Conceptual Framework of the *Student understands roles* Learning Intention 117

Figure 6: The Teacher Setting Up the Student’s Understanding of the Student-Teacher Relationship..... 118

Figure 7: The Teacher-Student Relationship 146

Figure 8: Diagram of a Student’s Relational Consciousness..... 154

List of Boxes

| | | |
|----------|---|-----|
| Box 2.1: | Questions facing a teacher wanting to attend to students' spiritual well-being | 29 |
| Box 6.1: | Excerpt from page 1 of transcription of first interview with Ms Sally | 96 |
| Box 6.2: | Example of the list of teacher's foci generated from the excerpt in Box 6.1 after open coding | 97 |
| Box 6.3: | Example of the list of teacher's foci generated from the excerpt in Box 6.1 after axial coding | 98 |
| Box 6.4: | Example of the complexity of the axial coding process | 100 |
| Box 6.5: | Master list of teachers' foci during interviews | 101 |
| Box 7.1 | Example of teacher not articulating learning intentions | 108 |
| Box 7.2 | Examples of teachers' talk that reveal their hopes and intentions encompassing more than curriculum achievements | 109 |
| Box 7.3 | Example of a teacher holding a learning goal and yet not being aware that it is mandated in the national curriculum | 110 |
| Box 7.4 | Example of a teacher conveying a relationship intention in an overt manner | 119 |
| Box 7.5 | Example of a teacher conveying a relationship intention in a covert manner | 120 |
| Box 7.6 | Example of a teacher being, both, <i>respectful carer</i> and <i>educational leader</i> | 121 |
| Box 7.7 | Examples of teachers' talk about their passion for children and their role of teaching them | 122 |
| Box 7.8 | Example of a teacher for whom touch is an important medium for conveying caring | 123 |
| Box 7.9 | Examples of teachers' talk about concerning themselves with students' concerns | 123 |
| Box 7.10 | One teacher's sense of responsibility and duty to all students in the school | 124 |

| | | |
|----------|--|-----|
| Box 7.11 | Example of a teacher being a <i>respectful carer</i> while actioning the curriculum | 125 |
| Box 7.12 | Example of a teacher in a school that supported the teacher's <i>respectful carer</i> role | 125 |
| Box 7.13 | Example of a teacher dealing with a student with behaviour problems by explaining the rules | 127 |
| Box 7.14 | Example of a teacher dealing with a student with behaviour problems by working on self esteem | 128 |
| Box 7.15 | One teacher's analysis of her use of humour with the students | 129 |
| Box 7.16 | Example of a teacher modelling learning by consulting others | 131 |
| Box 7.17 | Example of challenges establishing the <i>educational leader</i> and <i>respectful carer</i> roles | 132 |
| Box 7.18 | Examples of the job satisfying the teacher's personal needs | 139 |
| Box 7.19 | Example of a teacher whose personal ideals and beliefs underpinned her behaviour with students | 140 |
| Box 7.20 | Example of a teacher remaining true to her beliefs | 141 |
| Box 7.21 | Examples of developing the student as a learner | 142 |
| Box 7.22 | Example of developing the student as a learner | 143 |
| Box 7.23 | Example of teacher organising learning experiences to connect with students' existing understanding | 145 |
| Box 8.1 | Example of a teacher who <i>intended</i> to be spiritually nurturing but didn't connect with the student | 158 |
| Box 8.2 | Example of a teacher in a school with institutionalised practices that were compatible with her own pedagogical approach | 164 |
| Box 8.3 | Example of institutional philosophy being in tune with the teachers' educational philosophies | 165 |

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Focus on spiritual nurturance

To spiritually nurture another person means interacting with the other in a way that respects the other's spirit and freely allows the other's spiritual growth. The thesis proffers a theory about spiritually nurturing teaching. Although common understandings of what constitutes 'spiritual growth' and, indeed, 'spirituality' exist within culturally defined groups, the abstract nature of spirituality means that definitions of it are always contingent on the epistemological practices of the day. With personal experience currently recognised as a legitimate source of authority⁴ (e.g., Geering, 1975; Neusner, 1972), personal interpretations of spirituality tend to be not only accepted and respected, but also expected to change throughout life as a function of the dynamic interplay of human dimensions that constitute life.

In the literature, the terms 'spirituality' and 'religion' are used to denote various, and sometimes similar, concepts. The multiple meanings evident in the literature create the imperative to specify the intended meanings of the terms in any given writing.

In the thesis, *spirituality* and *religion* are quite distinct concepts. Whereas the term *spirituality* is used to denote a fundamental aspect of the human condition that may or may not be recognised and acknowledged by a given individual, (and which is defined further in Chapter 3), the term *religion* is used to denote a defined set of beliefs shared by a group to which an individual subscribes. The set of beliefs focuses on one or more figureheads that have direct relationship to a transcendent realm. In the thesis, religion is thus understood as a cultural and social manifestation of spirituality that is, by nature, hierarchical and rule-bound. Every person is understood to have a spiritual dimension but not everyone has a religion.

⁴ This trend is explained further in Section 3.2.

The thesis proffers a theory about spiritually nurturing teaching. The theory was generated using grounded theory research with 7 teachers in New Zealand primary schools and 2 in an early childhood education centre.

In the thesis, pseudonyms are used to promote the anonymity of the participant teachers and their students and schools. To distinguish between teachers and students, teachers are addressed with a formal title, and students, with no title, (e.g., Ms Cath is a teacher, Elliot is a student). The practice of referring to a teacher in the female tense and a student in the male tense is adopted as a grammatical convention where there might be confusion.

As a treatise on the issues, challenges and problems teachers may experience in a spiritual nurturance role, the thesis is founded on the researcher's understanding of spirituality which, itself, developed as the research progressed. The research demonstrates the benefits to students' learning of approaching education as though life is a spiritual journey. It assumes the existence of an omnipotent transcendent being, but does not espouse any particular religion. The omnipotent transcendent being is sometimes referred to as *god* (with a lower case 'g' to distinguish the generalised concept of the transcendent from the recognised and named God of Islamic, Jewish, Christian and other religious faiths). The belief, *life is a spiritual journey*, accords ultimate importance on human life, and the education theory generated during the doctorate is founded on this value. The perspective places equal value on all children; each equal to the teacher, equal to the parents, equal to each other, equal to every other human being. It is argued in the thesis that, from this perspective, all learning constitutes spiritual growth and 'real', deep, profound learning constitutes high-level spiritual growth (see Section 3.3.1).

The thesis definition of *spiritual growth as learning* provokes a way of conceptualising 'learning' that arguably differs from understandings of the term commonly underpinning education thinking today. The contemporary understanding of *learning* is typified by recent discourse on the *value* of knowledge; knowledge is a commodity recognised (judged) by educated individuals to have certain value, and those who have learned the most valued knowledge have more kudos. In this view, *learning* is

understood as a taking on of, an acquiring of, valued knowledge. There is an assumption that what is learned is retained over time; once recognised as having attained valued knowledge, an individual retains the associated kudos whether or not the learning is sustained over time. Quite distinct from this value-based view of knowledge and learning, *learning* in the thesis is time-based and constitutes *any changes in what is known*.

The theory generated and developed in the thesis acknowledges and affirms grounded theory research conducted by Hay and Nye in United Kingdom (Hay with Nye, 1998). They came up with the notion of ‘relational consciousness’ as the most fundamental feature of children’s spirituality (ibid.), having started from children’s talk that reflected deep thinking about existential issues in their lives – things that were important to their everyday well-being. In some important respects, the doctoral research can be seen to follow up on some practical implications of their research. The inquiry does not attempt to verify Hay and Nye’s findings but, rather, uses the notion of children’s spirituality being characterised by ‘relational consciousness’ as a starting point (see Chapter 8).

1.2 Purposes of the thesis

The thesis has two purposes. The first is to present the theory about nurturing school children’s spirituality to university colleagues and fellow educationists in New Zealand.

The second purpose of the thesis is to establish the *trustworthiness* of the research and the *authenticity* of the resultant theory by reporting the grounded theory research that led to the theory’s generation and development. The quality of ‘trustworthiness’ is commonly identified by methodologists as an important evaluative criteria of qualitative research (e.g., Guba and Lincoln, 1981 cited Miles and Huberman, 1994; Guba and Lincoln, 1989 cited Ely 1991; Ely, 1991) and it is discussed in the context of grounded theory in Section 4.1.4. The grounded theory methodology literature invariably couples explanations of the definitive methods with the expectation that the methods will be adopted and adapted by individual researchers to suit the contextual constraints and characteristics of each unique research inquiry. Strauss and Corbin note:

As with any general methodology, grounded theory's actual use in practice has varied with the specifics of the area under study, the purpose and focus of the research, the contingencies faced during the project, and perhaps also the temperament and particular gifts or weaknesses of the researcher.

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998:164)

In the doctoral research, variations from what the literature espoused for the fieldwork and analysis stages of the research were rationalised and justified, and resulted in the researcher developing in-depth understanding of how the grounded theory research process works.

To report the author's doctoral journey might also be detected as a third, although lesser, purpose of the thesis. Because grounded theory is very much about the development of the researcher (Glaser, 1998), the author's personal and professional development as a researcher is included to the extent that it relates to the research method and the thesis as a whole.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Grounded theory research does not easily lend itself to reporting the progression of the research nor the development of research-related ideas over time. The structure of the thesis reflects the researcher's attempt to logically present the research in a way that leaves the reader with understandings of the theory and of the process of its generation. The research is conceptualised and introduced in the first four chapters, Chapters 1 to 4, the research itself is described in the middle two chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, and the theory is generated and discussed in the final three chapters, Chapters 7 to 9.

In Chapter 2, the research context is established by briefly describing the philosophical and educational 'landscape' in which the research took place. Various historical factors including globalisation trends and post-modern epistemological developments have opened the way for 'spirituality' as a viable research topic. An examination of the place of spirituality in New Zealand's national curriculum documents raises questions about

what is being asked of teachers with regard to including spirituality in the education they provide for students and creates an imperative for development of theory on spirituality in education.

In Chapter 3, the framework of conceptual understandings about *spirituality* and *spiritual growth* that underpin the research and emergent theory is articulated. As with all research and theory, the thesis is built on the researcher's ontological and epistemological beliefs that are the foundation of all decisions made throughout the research. By their very nature, understandings of spirituality are personal. Transparency serves to enlighten the reader about the way the research has been conducted and thus to assist evaluation of both the research and its contribution to the knowledge base.

[T]he initial step in the design of a [qualitative]⁵ study is investigation and acknowledgement of one's own worldview about how we know what we know.

(Price in Josselson and Lieblich, 1999:1-2)

Although the beliefs are presented in an *introductory* section of the thesis, the chapter is the culmination of five years of the researcher working on articulating ideas and verifying and developing what initially were vague ontological 'hunches'. The beliefs are presented near the beginning of the thesis to assist the logical reporting of the research although the chapter could not have been written at the outset of the research.

The questions identified in Chapters 2 and the ontological argument in Chapter 3 suggest that the rationale underpinning the inclusion of spirituality in the New Zealand Curriculum is not well theorised. Furthermore, there is a lack of theory to inform teachers about dealing with spirituality in New Zealand state schools. At this time in New Zealand education history, therefore, *grounded theory* research methodology seems an appropriate methodology for inquiry into the conceptual understandings of

⁵ **Notation convention:** square brackets within quotes indicate the researcher's additions to or omissions from the text.

spirituality in education, and for generating theory which is relevant and useful to the teachers.

In Chapter 4, grounded theory as espoused by Glaser, as the preferred grounded theory tradition, is described and the researcher's rationales for choosing grounded theory, and Glaser in particular, are explained. Because the researcher had no previous grounded theory experience and no one available to tutor her, her methodological understandings developed dramatically as the research progressed. One of the key implications of this 'minus mentor' status of the researcher is the on-going adaptation and refinement of methods throughout the research. This is reflected throughout the thesis by the reporting of what actually happened, against Glaser's procedural 'instructions' as the starting point. The chapter includes evaluative criteria for judging the quality of the research and resultant theory, and ends with a preliminary research design as a starting point for the fieldwork.

In Chapter 5, four phases of the research are identified as original impetus, fieldwork, preliminary analysis and analysis. The first three phases are then reported, rationalised and discussed, while the analysis phase is reported in Chapter 6. In grounded theory research, the fieldwork and analysis phases of the research overlap. Although Glaser recommends that the researcher start pro-actively analysing the data as soon as the fieldwork commences, the participant selection process required gathering data from several participants before proceeding with in-depth analysis. To the extent that the researcher was developing a variation on Glaser's recommendations during the fieldwork phase, however, in Section 5.5 a 'preliminary analysis stage' is identified in which the researcher, 'minus mentor', was developing her analysis capabilities.

In Chapter 6, the two key stages of the analysis, i.e., substantive theory generation and formal theory generation, are described. In Chapter 6 and the following two theory-generation chapters, the analysis stages are presented in a systematic manner that, both, builds a picture of the generation of the theory, and illuminates the grounding of the theory in the data. The analysis and theory generation processes, however, were not orderly in reality. In grounded theory research, much of the data analysis is a mental process; one of the primary analysis tools is the researcher's intellect, with all the

personal experiences, analytical thinking skills, and language abilities that ‘intellect’ encompasses. Because it is impossible to articulate and present every logical pathway from the raw data to the conceptually rich, complex theory, the analysis is, instead, reported in a manner that demonstrates the researcher’s trustworthiness in moving through successive levels of abstraction from the raw data to the theory.

In Chapter 7, the substantive theory is generated from the data. The substantive theory developed is descriptive theory about how the participant teachers teach. It was argued earlier that the participant teachers were at least *capable* of being spiritually nurturing (see Section 5.2.2), and the substantive theory is developed by identifying what was important to the participant teachers and considering the *actions* they took to address those concerns. At this point in the research, the emerging theory is a detailed description of a group of (likely) spiritually nurturing teachers’ *acts of teaching the students what the teachers think the students ought to learn*. The non-critical methods used to generate the substantive theory are phenomenological in nature and do not include deductive reasoning.

In Chapter 8, the substantive theory is developed into a wider, formal theory about teaching to nurture spiritual growth, named *relating for learning*. The formal theory is developed by considering the substantive theory within a conceptual framework of relational consciousness (Hay with Nye, 1998), and involves the researcher taking a further step away from the data to develop the substantive theory to a higher level of abstraction. The new understandings are compared with the data and examples are drawn from the data as illustrations throughout the chapter. Ideas from relevant literature are also compared, discussed and integrated into the theory.

In Chapter 9, some implications of the *relating for learning* theory for New Zealand school education are considered. Some strong connections between contemporary ideas and the *relating for learning* theory are identified with a view to seeding further, post-doctorate inquiries and development of ideas. Finally, conclusions are drawn about both the theory and the research methodology.

1.4 Use of literature in the research and thesis

By choosing grounded theory research for the doctorate, the researcher is “running counter to the evidentiary canons of conventional descriptive and verificational research” (Glaser, 1998:76), and the resultant thesis also ends up being unconventional. In a conventional thesis, a review of the research and literature in the intended area of study is deemed essential in the introductory chapters to establish the context for the inquiry at hand. A thesis with no initial literature review would be criticised as deficient. For grounded theory research, however, Glaser (1998) recommends purposefully *avoiding* review of the literature on the topic of study until a latter stage of the research process, namely towards the end of the generation of theory, in order to enhance the ‘theoretical sensitivity’ of the researcher. He argues that this better enables the researcher to analyse the data free of pre-conceived ideas about what will be found.

The doctorate aims to contribute theory about teachers nurturing children’s spirituality in New Zealand schools, and the theory is grounded in teachers’ experiences and practices. In order to satisfy both the formal requirements for the doctorate and the dictates of grounded theory, the literature is employed in the introductory chapters to: (i) support the researcher’s understandings of the New Zealand school situation within which the research is to be conducted; (ii) elucidate the researcher’s understandings of the term ‘spirituality’ that underpin the research; and (iii) inform discussion of the chosen research methodology, namely ‘grounded theory’. Use of the literature in these ways assists to set up the research in the introductory chapters, and to report what actually happened, in the following chapters. A pre-research review of the specific field of the inquiry, namely *teaching practice that nurtures spirituality*, is omitted, thus abiding by Glaser’s precepts for theoretical sensitivity.

Later in the thesis (Chapter 8), aspects of the literatures indicated by the emerging theory are identified and subjected to analysis by a process of ‘constant comparison’ with the developing theoretical structures. Ideas in the literatures (in the area of the emerging theory) are thus treated as data near the completion of the analysis stage of the research. In this way, contributions from other writers serve to enrich the theory.

Chapter 2 The Research Context

2.1 Overview of the research context

Various historical factors including globalisation trends and post-modern epistemological developments have opened the way for ‘spirituality’ as a viable research topic. Growing Western interest in spirituality has led to the inclusion of spirituality in many countries’ state-mandated school curriculums, including New Zealand’s. The way spirituality is included in the New Zealand Health and Physical Education curriculum statement raises questions about the place of spirituality in the New Zealand curriculum and what is being asked of teachers with regard to including spirituality in the education they provide for students. The questions point to an imperative to develop theory on spirituality in education.

2.2 Historical factors

2.2.1 Growing Western interest in spirituality

Globalisation means people of different faiths now exist side by side in much of the world (Luke, 2002). Although a commonly accepted definition of spirituality is elusive because interpretations of *spirituality* are still diverse, new understandings of spirituality are nevertheless coalescing based on increasing recognition that spiritual experiences and considerations are common to all human beings.

Research that explores the meaning of spirituality, the place of spirituality in school education and the practicalities of nurturing children’s spirituality at school is in keeping with growing Western interest in spirituality and education in both secular and religious domains. The growing interest is evidenced by the rapidly expanding literatures on ‘spirituality’ and ‘spirituality in education’. Many people from diverse walks of life, while holding different views about the meanings and significance of ‘spirituality’, nonetheless seem to be converging on a common understanding that spirituality is common to all human beings in the same way that physical and

intellectual dimensions pertain to all human beings. In many Western countries, a mandate to address children's spirituality at school is replacing former insistence that teachers have no right to impose religious education on children and state schools should be secular in nature.

Numerous reasons for the current increase in popular and academic interest in spirituality have been tendered from historical, philosophical and many other perspectives. Four are particularly pertinent to the research at hand: (i) the emergence of post-modern thought; (ii) the convergence of ideas on spirituality from many different academic fields; (iii) contemporary developments in research methodology; and (iv) social and environmental issues.

(i) Post-modern thought

Forty years ago, any research that explored possible relationships between spirituality and education was firmly rooted in the theological academic field. The association between spirituality and religion was perceived by most as incontestable, the relationship between them not commonly thought about or understood by those outside certain academic fields. Theological research findings and discourse were dismissed or ignored by many non-religious educationists.

Recognition of developing epistemologies as characteristic of a new, 'post-modern' era, however, have resulted in increasingly common understandings of spirituality as a human dimension inherent in all human beings, and religion as a cultural and social manifestation of the spiritual dimension. Today it is (at least theoretically) possible to study spirituality from a religiously 'neutral' perspective, and to theorize about spirituality in a way that is philosophically acceptable to both religious and non-religious people.

To talk definitively about ‘the post-modern era’ that has lead to this new and liberating understanding of spirituality is somewhat misleading because, as Toulmin pointed out in *Return to Cosmology*:

[Our post-modern world] has not yet discovered how to define itself in terms of what *is*, but only in terms of what has *just-now-ceased to be*.

(Toulmin, 1982, cited in Doll, 1993:4)

Nevertheless, several conceptual developments can be identified that pervade contemporary thinking in many academic fields, and are arguably emerging as characteristics of post-modern thought. Three of these, in particular, have had unquestionable influence on the recognition of spirituality as a viable topic of research inquiry:

1. Reality is an open, not a closed, system. Development of this concept required acceptance of the idea that the closed system of the physical universe that constituted reality in the modern era is only part of the whole story. The post-modern paradigm embraces an understanding of reality as an open system that extends beyond the universe boundaries of space and time.

An open system does not constitute a rejection of what we have come to ‘know’ in the pre-modern and modern eras. Rather, it embraces all that exists now with a healthy tentativeness by adding an acceptance that there is so much more that is yet to be known. To embrace an open system is to concede that we can never, and will never, ‘know it all’. Whereas ‘spirituality’ was once rejected by some on the grounds that some spiritual beliefs held an unacceptable view of reality which reached beyond the physical universe, now the reality of such concepts as an omnipotent transcendent being (e.g., God) are widely acknowledged as at least possible.

2. ‘Knowledge’ and, by inference, ‘truth’ are ‘in the eye of the beholder’. This epistemology developed from within the social sciences which recognized the lived reality of people’s personal experiences and thereby challenged the

modern paradigm based on Cartesian rationalism and Newtonian empiricism. Although its validity is still hotly debated, it remains a significant factor in the growing acceptance of spirituality as a legitimate reality.

3. 'Change' is perceived as non-linear, and understood in terms of transformations which self-generate out of chaos. Quantum theory, computers and non-linear mathematics (Doll, 1993) back up these post-modern understandings of change. The new understandings have challenged modernist concepts such as evolutionary development of humanity, and opened the way for the possibility of divine intent. They have challenged modernist rejection of concepts such as souls and life-after-death, and opened the way for pluralistic acceptance of personal spiritual realities.

(ii) The convergence of ideas on spirituality from many different academic fields

Post-modern understandings are affecting all but the staunchest of traditional academic fields. Doll elaborates:

Indeed post-modern thought has pervaded the arts, humanities, literature, management, mathematics, philosophy, science, the social sciences, and theology.

(Doll, 1993:5)

Currently, such formerly disinterested and traditionally diverse academic fields as physics, human biology and social science have joined theology in pursuing research interest in spirituality. As a consequence, inquiry into spirituality appears to be burgeoning in several different and, at first glance, seemingly contradictory, directions simultaneously. Closer scrutiny of the emerging understandings, however, reveals that, not only are the diverse academic fields converging on common understandings of spirituality, but that the clearly-defined boundaries of the fields, themselves, are also starting to blur together. Propitiously, spirituality is proving to be a unifier.

Lincoln and Denzin, in a book chapter discussing the development of qualitative research, note:

Since the turn of the [twentieth] century, the human disciplines have been moving on a spiritual journey that would join science and the sacred.

(in Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:423)

It is not only movement in the human sciences that is promoting that joining. The impetus is coming from other sciences, as well. Of particular note is the emerging interface between quantum physics and theology. Perhaps the most surprising boundary blurring has been the suggestion by some physicists that our inquiry into the physical world is pointing towards the existence of God. ⁶

(iii) Contemporary developments in research methodology

Philosophizing and theorizing within the new ontological era has resulted in new ways of doing research, theorising and of understanding praxis. The non-physical nature of spirituality makes it difficult, if not impossible, to research within the modern, scientific paradigm. Development of academically acceptable non-scientific research methodologies such as ethnography and phenomenology has contributed to the increase in popularity of spirituality as an acceptable and viable topic of research inquiry.

(iv) Social issues

The literature often justifies embracing the post-modern paradigm and the consequent focus on spirituality in terms of reaction to human destruction of the world and the limitations of the modern (scientific) era to deal with the problems.

Some present-day writers see spirituality as a human dimension that has been illegitimized – ‘pushed underground’ – by the modern era from which Western civilization is currently emerging. They argue that this has been to the detriment of humanity and the earth in the physical universe as we know it.

More typically, however, some writers claim that contemporary Western society is facing issues which are the legacy of modernism and its insistence on secularity:

- money-oriented business models where accountability and following organisational rules are more important than morality and ethics;

⁶ To read more about this, refer to Tilby (1992) and Polkinghorne (1996).

- urbanization causing loss of touch with nature;
- colonization causing denigration and, in some cases, annihilation of first nations peoples;
- increasing violence;
- increasing incidence of suicide in youths;
- increasing incidence of pregnancy in teenage women; and
- continued under-achievement of students from minority ethnic groups in state schools.

The suggestion is that spirituality has an important part to play in re-establishing some sort of moral order, (e.g., Palmer in Kessler (2000), Miranti & Burke (1998), Dickmann (1980), Kolander & Chandler (1990)). Although the credibility of the suggestion is arguably impossible to ascertain, it remains a common motivation for contemporary interest in spirituality.

2.2.2 Inclusion of spirituality in school education

The upsurge of academic and popular interest in spirituality, and the increasing recognition of the important place of spirituality in Western societies, is evidenced by the recent and unprecedented inclusion of spirituality in the national school curricula of several countries. *Spirituality in education*, as an area of research, is in its infancy, however, and generally speaking the rationales for including spirituality in schooling have not been research based, nor even clearly elucidated. Not surprisingly, the way that spirituality has been included in the curriculum varies widely between countries.

In Great Britain, spirituality has been included in the compulsory curriculum content. The Education Reform Act (1988) and the Education (Schools) Act 1992 have mandated schools to tend to the spiritual development of every child. The United Kingdom National Curriculum Council (April 1993), in a paper intended to guide “schools without a religious foundation” in their understanding of spiritual and moral development, and in response to the legislated demands on schools, described ‘spirituality’ thus:

[Spirituality is] a dimension of human existence ... which applies to all pupils. The potential for spiritual development is open to everyone and is not confined to the development of religious beliefs or conversion to a particular faith. ... The term ... [applies] to something fundamental in the human condition which is not necessarily experienced through the physical senses and/or expressed through everyday language. It has to do with relationships with other people and, for believers, with God. It has to do with the universal search for individual identity – with our responses to challenging experiences, such as death, suffering, beauty, and encounters with good and evil. It is to do with the search for meaning and purpose in life and values by which to live.

(The United Kingdom National Curriculum Council, 1993:2)

The paper goes on to list “many aspects of spiritual development”:

- beliefs
- a sense of awe, wonder and mystery
- experiencing feelings of transcendence
- search for meaning and purpose
- self-knowledge
- relationships
- creativity
- feelings and emotions.

The extent to which ‘moral and spiritual development’ of students has been achieved is now one of the criteria by which the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) judge schools. Just how these aspects might be accurately judged by OFSTED to have been “developed” in students is the subject of extensive debate, and raises issues regarding the ambiguity of the curriculum mandates (Erricker, 1998).

Students’ spiritual well-being was first mentioned in Australian and Victorian state curriculum documents in 1994 (Fisher, 1999). In Western Australia, the impetus for addressing spirituality in state schools was seeded in the non-state school education sector when it made moves to identify a multi-faith list of base-line human values (Wallace, 2000). Following their lead, the government’s Curriculum Council collaborated with representatives from the Catholic sector, the tertiary sector, Anglican schools, Christian community schools, a Jewish school and an Islamic college to

produce a set of “Core Shared Values”. The *Core Shared Values* were subsequently integrated throughout the new Curriculum Framework for all schools in Western Australia (state and non-state). The implication was that if teachers promoted the *Core Shared Values*, they would be contributing to the spiritual development of the students (ibid.). The Western Australians have thus interpreted *spirituality* as values that they want their educated children to have and its inclusion in the curriculum has taken the form of ‘teaching values’.

More recently in Australia, Fisher (1999; 2000) has suggested ‘levels of spiritual health’ that are derived by comparing children’s ideals for spiritual health (what makes them feel good) and their lived experience. Fisher’s research studies the effect of the various levels of spiritual health on children’s learning/academic achievement.

Also in Australia, the “Five Strand Approach to Religious and Values Education” has been adopted by a number of AHISA schools, i.e., independent schools. This is an approach developed by Dr Peter Vardy, Heythrop College, University of London.

In the New Zealand curriculum, ‘spirituality’ was first mentioned in the 1937 Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools. It was re-introduced into the national curriculum when the curriculum was reconstructed in the 1990’s after a curriculum review which purportedly took into account 21,500 submissions from the public (Committee to Review the Curriculum for Schools, 1987). The ‘new’ curriculum was developed over 8 years following the publication of *The Curriculum Review* (ibid.). It is an achievement-oriented curriculum that sets over 1,116 objectives for all students to achieve in seven ‘learning areas’ over 13 years.

The curriculum writers’ *rationale* for including spirituality in the national curriculum is not addressed in the policy documents. This is surprising, on the one hand, because inclusion of spirituality in the curriculum is unprecedented in New Zealand schooling history and one expects such a potentially controversial addition to be explained in some detail. On the other hand, as an academic field in its prime in Western education, spirituality is barely researched and yet to be theorised, and lack of a clear rationale for including it is not surprising at all.

In Section 2.3, the place of spirituality in the curriculum is examined from the viewpoint of a teacher asking the question, “What is expected of me with regard to including spirituality in the education I provide for students?” Because the curriculum writers’ expectations of teachers with regard to including spirituality in the *actioned* curriculum are not addressed directly, the intended place of spirituality in the curriculum can only be gleaned from examination of ‘things spiritual’ in the curriculum documents.

2.3 Inclusion of spirituality in the New Zealand curriculum

2.3.1 The structure of the New Zealand national curriculum

In New Zealand, a country with a total population of 4 million and a school population of 760,000, the ‘new’ national curriculum for all state-funded schools is written and disseminated by the Ministry of Education. The mandated curriculum is set out in an overarching policy document, *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) (hereafter referred to as *The Curriculum Framework*), and a series of supporting curriculum ‘statements’ (Education Amendment Act 1991).

The curriculum is organised into seven ‘essential learning areas’; Language and Languages, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Social Studies, The Arts, and Health & Physical Well-being. Each learning area has supporting documentation in the form of one or more curriculum ‘statements’ that describe the curriculum mandates in more detail (see Table 1).

Table 1: Curriculum Statements for the Essential Learning Areas of the New Zealand Curriculum

| 7 Essential learning area | Supporting curriculum statements |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Language and Languages | <i>English in the New Zealand Curriculum</i> (Ministry of Education, 1994) <i>Tihe Mauri Ora! Maori Language, Junior Classes to form 2: Syllabus for Schools</i> (Ministry of Education, 1990) <i>Te Reo Maori: I roto I te Marautanga o Aotearoa</i> |
| Mathematics | <i>Mathematics in the New Zealand Curriculum</i> (Ministry of Education, 1992) |
| Science | <i>Science in the New Zealand Curriculum</i> (Ministry of Education, 1993) |
| Technology | <i>Technology in the New Zealand Curriculum</i> (Ministry of Education, 1995) |
| Social Sciences | <i>Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum</i> (Ministry of Education, 1997) |
| The Arts | <i>The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum</i> (Ministry of Education, 2000) |
| Health and Physical Well-being | <i>Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum</i> (Ministry of Education, 1999) |

2.3.2 Reference to ‘spirituality’ in the overarching policy document

Reference to ‘spirituality’ in the overarching policy document, *The Curriculum Framework*, is obtuse. Although *The Curriculum Framework* does not address spirituality specifically, within the descriptions of the Social Sciences, Arts, and Health and Well-being learning areas, it indirectly includes 3 goals regarding students’ spiritual learning. It suggests that students will:

- (i) understand about ways in which different people meet their spiritual needs (in the description of the Social Sciences learning area on page 14);
- (ii) recognise the spiritual dimensions of their lives (in the description of the Arts learning area on page 15); and
- (iii) take responsibility for their own health which “encompasses [among other things] the ... spiritual dimensions of a person’s growth” (in the description of the Health and Physical Well-being learning area on page 16).

The first of these learning goals requires students to *acquire specific content knowledge about spirituality*, and begs the question of how to define ‘spiritual needs’. The second learning goal requires students to *recognise their own spirituality*, and begs several questions regarding how to define ‘spiritual dimension’ and how one comes to recognise it in one’s own life. The third learning goal requires students to *take responsibility for their own spiritual health* and begs the question of how to define ‘spiritual health’.

Given the vein of the references to spirituality in *The Curriculum Framework*, a teacher in New Zealand could expect the curriculum statements in the Social Sciences, Arts, and Health and Physical Well-being learning areas to expand on the intentions for the students’ learning in the area of spirituality. The statement for the Health and Physical Well-being learning area, *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999), includes an explanation of spirituality (see Section 2.3.3) and, while the Social Sciences and Arts curriculum statements do not address spirituality directly, they do include the *aspects* of spirituality that are identified by the explanation. Indeed, the *aspects* are also addressed in curriculum areas not flagged by *The Curriculum Framework* as learning areas within which students’ spiritual development is expected. Examination of the occurrence of both explicit mentions of spirituality and the aspects in the curriculum statements is the focus of Sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.4.

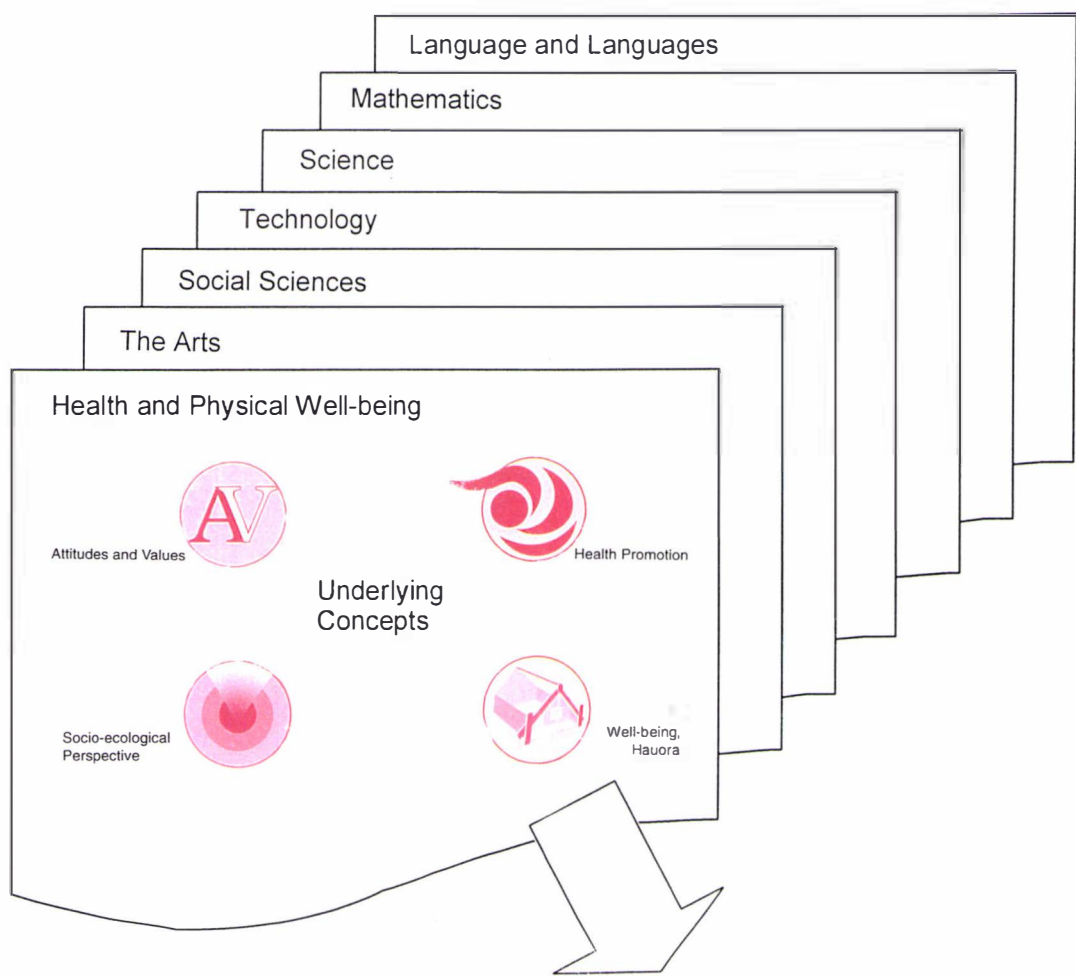
2.3.3 An interpretation of ‘spirituality’ in the Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum statement

‘Spiritual well-being’ (taha wairua) is specifically addressed in the Health and Physical Well-being learning area. The curriculum statement, *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999), specifies four “underlying concepts” of the learning area; well-being (hauora), attitudes and values, health promotion, and socio-ecological perspective. Figure 1 shows the Maori model of health used to explain that ‘spiritual well-being’ (taha wairua) is one of four fundamental dimensions of hauora. The other three dimensions are physical well-being (taha tinana), mental and emotional well-being (taha hinengaro), and social well-being (taha whānau).

The choice of the curriculum writers to include concepts that ‘underlie’ the already complex and multifaceted structure of the Health and Physical Education curriculum raises questions about their intentions for those concepts. What does holding spiritual well-being as an ‘underlying concept’ of the learning area mean for *the way* teachers teach and *what* teachers teach? Presumably, the ‘underlying’ status of the concept of *hauora* implies that the curriculum writers intended *regard for students’ spirituality (and the other three dimensions of well-being) to be integral to all considerations of learning and teaching* in the Health and Physical Well-being learning area.

Similarly, the other three ‘underlying concepts’ enjoin the teacher’s regard for students’ attitudes and values, for promoting health, and for students’ understandings of the effect of social and environmental factors on health. These three underlying concepts, however, are presented in an explanatory and prescriptive manner, while the statement’s presentation of the concept of hauora (of which spiritual well-being is identified as one dimension), is purely descriptive. That is to say, expectations of what spiritual well-being as an underlying concept actually means for what teachers teach and the way they teach it are not elucidated, while expectations of the implications of the other three underlying concepts, (i.e., health promotion, the socio-ecological perspective, and attitudes and values), for teaching and learning, are spelled out in some detail.

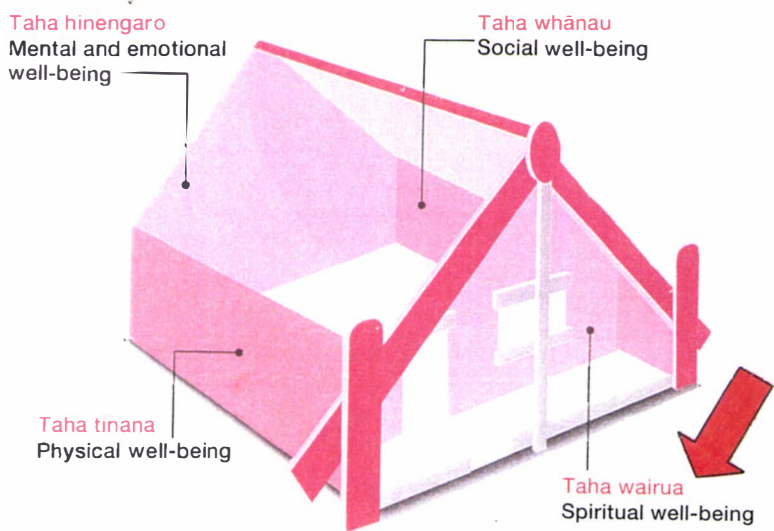
**Figure 1: The Place of Spiritual Well-being (taha wairua)
in the New Zealand Curriculum**



**Well-being (hauora)
Whare tapa whā model***

The whare tapa whā model compares hauora to the four walls of a whare (meeting house). All four dimensions are necessary for strength and symmetry. (Duffie, 1994 cited Ministry of Education, 1999.)

*The whare tapa whā model is reproduced with permission from Learning Media.



A more pressing question might be raised by those concerned by the possibility of religious zealots using the implied imperative (to tend to students' spiritual well-being) to push their own religious barrow on an unsuspecting community: What interpretations of 'spiritual well-being' are teachers expected or permitted to take?

Despite the implied imperative to attend to 'spiritual well-being', the curriculum writers' intended meaning of the concept is not defined within the curriculum documents. Instead, an attempt to delimit the concept is made by providing a list of three aspects of one's being that, presumably, the term refers to within the curriculum documents:

- (i) "personal identity and self-awareness";
- (ii) "the values and beliefs that determine the way people live"; and
- (iii) "the search for meaning and purpose in life".

(Ministry of Education, 1999:31)

A bracketed addendum briefly suggests the place of religion in this mandated view of spiritual well-being: "(For some individuals and communities, spiritual well-being is linked to a particular religion; for others, it is not.)" (ibid:31).

The three-item list is a reductive, piecemeal approach to explaining the meaning of 'spiritual well-being'; it simply states the curriculum writers' understandings of the parts that the concept includes. No attempt is made to analyse the parts, i.e., to identify their common elements or to synthesise understandings of the sum of the parts to capture the holistic, abstract nature of things spiritual. Furthermore, the literature suggests that, as a taxonomy of things commonly identified by people as constituting spirituality, the list of three aspects is not comprehensive.

2.3.4 Reference to 'spiritual well-being' in the curriculum documents

The occurrence of 'spiritual well-being' in the curriculum documents also presents as piecemeal because, although it is not specifically objectified (that is to say, specified in terms of achievement objectives) anywhere in the curriculum documents, two of its three listed aspects *are* objectified. Neither expectations of teachers nor direction for teachers regarding promoting 'spiritual well-being' are given within the curriculum

documents, but aims and objectives relating to ‘personal identity and self-worth’ and ‘values’ are. Notwithstanding the questionable effectiveness of teaching ‘values’ and ‘personal identity and self-worth’ via achievement-oriented curriculum, the implication is that, if students achieve the parts, then they will have achieved the sum. That is to say, the implication is that if the aims and objectives under the auspices of ‘values’ and ‘personal identity and self-worth’ are achieved by students, spiritual well-being will result. This questionable proposition is addressed further in Section 2.3.4.2.

2.3.4.1 ‘Searching for meaning and purpose in life’ in the curriculum documents

‘Searching for meaning and purpose in life’, listed as the third aspect of spiritual well-being, does not appear in the curriculum documents in terms of aims and objectives. This aspect refers to the seemingly universal human trait of personal cosmological and philosophical striving.

Arguably, learning throughout the whole curriculum contributes towards satisfaction of the striving. In the same vein, it could be argued that the aspect is indirectly addressed in one of the nine principles that *The Curriculum Framework* specifies all schools must ensure are embodied in their programmes:

The New Zealand Curriculum relates learning to the wider world.
The school curriculum will provide learning which students can see to be relevant, meaningful, and useful to them.
(Ministry of Education, 1993b:7)

The intent of the principle, however, seems to be a sort of general ‘flavouring’ action whereby schools and teachers endeavour to ensure that at least some of the curriculum experienced by students results in personally meaningful and useful learning. It is possible that teachers could adhere to the principle and still not touch on students’ search for meaning and purpose in life.

2.3.4.2 'Personal identity and self-awareness' in the curriculum documents

Throughout the curriculum documents, the terms *personal identity* and *self-awareness* do not always appear together, and are often paired with other similar but distinct terms such as *self-worth* and *self-esteem*.

In *The Curriculum Framework*, the intended effect of learning at school on one's 'sense of identity', 'self-knowledge', 'self-worth' or 'self-esteem' are specifically mentioned in only two of the descriptions of specific learning areas; The Arts, and Language and Languages. In the description of the Arts learning area:

The arts are important to the growth of self-knowledge and self-worth.
(Ministry of Education, 1993b:15)

In the description of the Language and Languages learning area:

Confidence and proficiency in one's first language contribute to self-esteem, a sense of identity, and achievement throughout life.
(Ministry of Education, 1993b:10)

Like in *The Curriculum Framework*, in the supporting curriculum statements for the *Language and Languages* and the *Arts* learning areas, reference to the spiritual aspect of *personal identity and self-awareness* is in terms of implied effect of students learning in the areas, and is not specifically addressed in aims and objectives of either curriculum. For example, in *The Arts* curriculum statement, general statements are made about how participation in *The Arts* affects personal identity. For example:

The arts enable people to participate in collaborative and individual pursuits that contribute to community and personal identity
(Ministry of Education, 2000:9)

The arts develop the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of human experience. They contribute to our intellectual ability and to our social, cultural, and spiritual understandings
(Ministry of Education, 2000:9).

The implication is that, simply by participating in the Arts curriculum, one will develop one's sense of personal identity and self-awareness.

Similarly in the introduction to the Mathematics curriculum statement:

Mathematical understanding and skill contribute to people's sense of self-worth and ability to control aspects of their lives
(Ministry of Education, 1992:7).

The Curriculum Framework also mentions 'self-esteem' in the description of *Self-management and Competitive Skills* which are one of eight groups of *Essential Skills* teachers are mandated to develop in all students across the whole curriculum throughout the years of schooling:

Students will develop self-esteem and personal integrity
(Ministry of Education, 1993b:18).

The Health and Physical Well-being learning area is identified in *The Curriculum Framework* as the main curriculum context for students developing a sense of personal identity and self-awareness:

This area of learning enables students to learn about and develop confidence in themselves and their abilities
(Ministry of Education, 1993b:16).

'Personal identity and self-awareness' is explicitly included in the *Health and Physical Education* curriculum as an achievement aim, namely "personal identity and self-worth" (Ministry of Education, 1999:8). It has an achievement objective set at each of the 8 achievement levels (see Table 2).

Table 2: The Objectives Set for Each of the 8 Achievement Levels for the Aim ‘Personal Identity and Self-worth’

| Level | Approx. age of student | Achievement objective under the aim of ‘personal identity and self-worth’ |
|-------|------------------------|---|
| 1 | 6 years | Students will describe themselves in relation to a range of contexts. |
| 2 | 8 years | Students will identify personal strengths that contribute to a sense of self-worth. |
| 3 | 10 years | Students will describe how their own feelings, beliefs, and actions and those of other people contribute to their personal sense of self-worth. |
| 4 | 12 years | Students will describe how social messages and stereotypes, including those in the media, can affect feelings of self-worth. |
| 5 | 14 years | Students will investigate and describe ways in which people define their own identity and sense of self-worth and the ways they describe other people. |
| 6 | 15 years | Students will demonstrate an understanding of factors that contribute to personal identity and will celebrate individuality and affirm diversity. |
| 7 | 16 years | Students will critically evaluate societal attitudes, values, and expectations that affect people’s awareness of their personal identity and sense of self-worth in a range of life situations. |
| 8 | 17 years | Students will critically analyse the impacts that conceptions of personal, cultural, and national identity have on people’s well-being. |

The arguable implication is that, if students achieve the set objective at each level of their schooling, they will have achieved the stated aim of “personal identity and self-worth”. That is to say, at the end of their secondary schooling, they will have a sense of who they are and they will consider themselves competent and lovable (Corkille Briggs, 1975). Using a prescriptive model of curriculum to achieve the aim “personal identity and self-worth” is problematic because it assumes a developmental pathway that has been neither proved nor theorised.

2.3.4.3 ‘Values and beliefs that determine the way people live’ in the curriculum documents

Consideration of the intended meaning of “the values and beliefs that determine the way people live”, which preceded a search of the curriculum documents for reference to it, revealed the term as circular and unnecessarily verbose; *values and beliefs* are defined in terms of *the way people live* (see definition of *values* inset below). That is to say, *all*

a person's beliefs and values determine the way that person lives. There is no set of a person's values and beliefs that *does not* determine the way the person lives.

Also, the way the term is used as a curricular description of what teachers are expected to teach each child is ambiguous because it confuses learning focussed on one's own beliefs and values, which are inherently personal, with learning focussed on the values and beliefs of a group, which are generalised.

'Values', in partnership with 'attitudes', are a feature of *The Curriculum Framework* and are addressed in terms of aims and objectives in curriculum statements for several learning areas. *The Curriculum Framework* defines values *in terms of* beliefs:

Values are internalised sets of beliefs or principles of behaviour held by individuals or groups.

(Ministry of Education, 1993b:21)

It mandates teachers to develop students' *attitudes and values* in every essential learning area, although treatment of *values* in the respective curriculum statements varies markedly.

Notably, the curriculum writers recognise the arts as a medium through which students can "investigate their own values and those of others, and ... recognise the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of their lives" (Ministry of Education, 1993b:15).

In The Arts curriculum statement, teachers are mandated to assist students learn about values, and to clarify their own and others' values. In the Social Studies curriculum statement, the objectives regarding values are mainly to do with learning about people's different values. To this end, values clarification is one of three learning processes by which teachers are mandated to have students learn. The other two processes are inquiry and social decision-making.

That teachers are expected to have students 'clarify their own values', and 'respect others' values and beliefs', and at the same time teach students to "participate effectively and productively in New Zealand's democratic society and in a competitive

world economy” (Ministry of Education, 1993b:3) raises an age-old ambiguity of state education. The curriculum writers’ imposition of a democratic and competitive value base might be at odds with a student’s values and beliefs, in which case the teacher faces a dilemma about whether to support the student’s personal values clarification or support the state’s political agenda.

2.4 The State’s expectations of teachers: the unclear meaning of *spiritual well-being*

Apart from a few general statements asserting the connection between the specific learning areas and personal identity, spiritual understandings, and personal values, the relationship between students’ learning in the respective curriculums and developing their spiritual well-being is unspoken and implied in the curriculum documents.

Teachers would recognise the objectives for values and developing personal identity and self-worth as contributing to development of students’ spiritual well-being, only to the extent that the curriculum statements are understood and utilised as an integrated whole. It is as though the curriculum writers, in the face of pressure to include something inherently controversial in the curriculum, have found the courage to mandate teachers to address it, but not the courage to go as far as to advise *how to do it*.

The literature suggests that, as a representation of spirituality, the three-aspect taxonomy offered by the *Health and Physical Education* statement is not comprehensive. A teacher wanting to do the curriculum documents’ bidding and attend to students’ spiritual well-being, will likely be faced with a barrage of questions, even after reflection on the occurrence of the aspects within the curriculum documents: “What *is* ‘spiritual well-being’? How do I promote it in/to the students in my class? How do I know when the students are experiencing it? Is it something I can assess and measure in the students, and judge whether or not they have achieved it? Are there behavioural indicators of a ‘spiritually healthy’ child and, if so, what are they? How do I judge whether or not my actioned curriculum *is* underpinned by regard for the students’ spiritual well-being?”

Box 2.1: Questions facing a teacher wanting to attend to students' spiritual well-being



'Well-being' implies a notion of health, i.e., that there is a desirable condition of spiritual *wellness* towards which teachers are aiming. There are no indications within the New Zealand national curriculum documents of what the aspects of spiritual well-being (recognised by the curriculum writers) look like in a spiritually well person. They give no indication of how 'personal identity', 'self-awareness' and 'the values and beliefs that determine the way people live' contribute to spiritual wellness. Similarly, readers of the curriculum may be left wondering what attributes of one's 'search for meaning and purpose in life' indicate spiritual wellness. Without a definition or an explanation of the meaning of spiritual well-being, it may be difficult for teachers to

judge whether or not their students are experiencing it as the curriculum designers intended.

In order to develop a better understanding of what it means to be 'spiritually healthy', one could project commonly understood concepts of 'health' onto one's understandings of spirituality. Such an exercise raises thought-provoking questions.

- Health implies an *absence of illness*, i.e., that one is not sick. Question: What is spiritual illness?
- Health implies *fitness*. Question: What does it mean to be spiritually fit?

Fitness suggests, among other things:

- *stamina*; Question: What does spiritual stamina look like?
- *fast recovery rate*; Question: What constitutes a fast spiritual recovery rate?
- *strength*. Question: What does it mean to be spiritually strong?

One can be *fit for different kinds of physical activity*. Question: Does this imply a fitness for different aspects of spirituality?

- Health implies *emotional buoyancy*, i.e., that one is free from mental disease that controls the emotions. Question: What constitutes spiritual buoyancy? What form does spiritual disease take?
- Health implies that one is *well nourished*, i.e., that one is subject to a healthy diet. Question: What constitutes a healthy spiritual 'diet'? What are the characteristics of a person who is spiritually well nourished?

The answers to the questions and others like them will always be personally constructed, depending on personal beliefs and understandings of spirituality, and on personal ontologies and experiences. It remains for governments wishing to mandate tending to *spiritual well-being* in state education to come up with a multi-dimensional characterisation of spirituality that is acceptable to all whom the schools serve.

That the answers to the questions in Box 2.1 above are not addressed in the New Zealand curriculum documents is hardly surprising, because the questions point to perennial issues that characterise both historical and contemporary debates about

spirituality, debates that encircle and trouble the meaning of spirituality and its rightful place in education.

Post-modern research is beginning to inform the debates but it appears that inclusion of spirituality in the New Zealand school curriculum is not based on research evidence. Lack of a research foundation is symptomatic of being a new and undeveloped domain in the curriculum; common understandings and a common language with which to share understandings are yet to emerge.

There is no evidence in the curriculum documents, that the curriculum writers have considered the possible special nature of *children's* spirituality. Some contemporary researchers are working on credible answers to the teachers' questions (see Box 2.1) by studying people's experiences using methods that honour children's voices, e.g., Children's Spirituality Project (Hay with Nye, 1998) and Children and Worldviews Project (Erricker, Erricker, Ota, Sullivan, & Fletcher, 1997). Research-based answers to the questions have the best chance of providing New Zealand teachers with a reference point from where to start considering what the curriculum mandate means for their teaching practice.

The doctoral research aims to contribute to the discourse. As with any people-oriented research dealing with the non-physical world of experience, the thesis is built on a foundation of the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions. Chapter 3 develops the researcher's assumptions into a framework of conceptual understandings about spirituality and spiritual growth. The conceptual framework clearly points to a role for the teacher in students' spiritual development.

Chapter 3 Spirituality and Teaching

Understanding is a human activity. Our trying to understand spirituality is a struggle because we are trying to understand with our human brain something that is so much more than we can ever experience as a human being.

Entry in the researcher's journal, 18 July 2002

3.1 The transcendent nature of spirituality

The doctoral research is conducted from an ontological perspective that embraces the possibility that spirituality and the spiritual realm exists beyond human response and understanding. It runs counter to the tendency in many academic circles in the last century or two, which has been towards a humanistic treatment of 'spirituality' that defines spirituality in terms of human psychological phenomena like perception, cognition and consciousness. For example, "Bucke (1923) refers to spirituality as 'cosmic consciousness'; Maslow (1970) called it 'being-cognition'; Ouspensky (1934) called it 'the perception of the miraculous'" (Kirkland in Best, 1996:261).

Humanists confine reality to a *closed system* (Doll, 1993) defined by the boundaries of the physical universe, i.e., space and time. While humanist interpretations have yielded some useful understandings of human's *experience* of spirituality, to define spirituality in terms of human existence in space and time, to pin the label of 'spirituality' in a humanistic fashion to psychological patterns detected in humanity, like searching for purpose and meaning in life, or contemplating the mysterious, seems to miss the essential point. Why call it 'spirituality' if it is already known as these other things?

In the thesis, *spirituality* is about the *spirit*, or soul, which is the part of a human's existence that *transcends human life, time and the physical world*. The boundaries of reality are thus different from those understood in humanist interpretations. Reality is understood as an *open system* (Doll, 1993) that extends infinitely in an infinite number of directions.

The affective education movement has provided a medium for growing understandings of *transcendence*. John Miller, from the affective education movement, presents a

model of ‘transpersonal education’ in his book, *The Compassionate Teacher*. He defines transpersonal education as focussing “our Centre, the Higher Self” (Miller, 1981:9) otherwise known as “the Transpersonal Self” (ibid.:4) which, by the way he defines it, is synonymous with a soul. He quotes Mike and Nancy Samuels in their book *Seeing with the Mind’s Eye*:

Jung called this centre “*the self*.” ...Throughout the ages men have been intuitively aware of the existence of such a center. The Greeks called it man’s inner *daimon*; in Egypt it was expressed by the concept of the *Ba-soul*; and the Romans worshipped it as the “genius” native to each individual. The common thread of all these ideas is that all people can have contact with the information necessary to direct their own growth and fulfillment. This information comes from a part of them deeper than their ego, a part *that works by itself*. ... The Universal Self is the personification of that part of a person which is always in harmony with universal law; a personification of the inborn healing abilities.

(Samuels & Samuels, 1975:148 cited in Miller, 1981:4)

The ontological perspective from which the research is conducted encompasses a spiritual realm with its own agenda that is ultimately good, and human beings as a medium through which the spiritual realm transmits that agenda.

3.2 The development of spiritual understandings in humans

3.2.1 Sources of authority

While the legitimacy of an ontological perspective that assumes transcendency is popularly debated, the honouring of every individual human being as having an important spiritual role to play in ‘the scheme of things’, (whatever form the scheme may take), is common in the contemporary Western world. Furthermore, while the literature on ‘spirituality’ reveals an extensive range of accepted definitions of the term, increasing credence is being paid to personal ‘inner’ wisdom as a legitimate source of authority for spiritual understandings. Many contemporary definitions of spirituality commonly include reference to personal meaning making. Many authors credit personal experience as playing a primary role in developing their own understandings.

An explanation of the current abundance in the spirituality literature, of personal experience as a source of one's understanding of spirituality, is provided by Lloyd Geering (1993) who has identified an evolutionary pattern to the development of human culture. Geering (1993) notes that human culture has been evolving for at least 50,000 years, and perhaps much longer. He identifies three progressive phases of the development of human culture: ethnic, transethnic and global, and each is defined according to its apparent source of authority.

Geering explains that, until about two and a half thousand years ago, all human cultures were exclusively "ethnic" and encompassed language, patterns of thought, belief and behaviour that were derived from the authority of forbears and past tradition. The "transethnic" level of culture began to emerge in the first millennium before the Christian era when a variety of prophets, seers, philosophers and other radical thinkers criticised the traditional ethnic cultures by appeal to supposed transcendent sources (such as God, Brahman or Truth) existing beyond the ethnic boundaries. The result was new cultures that "had the capacity to cross over ethnic boundaries and join different ... ethnic groups into new forms of social unity. ... [A] person's ethnic orientation [became] secondary to one's transethnic commitment. Being Buddhist, for example, [took] precedence over being Chinese or Japanese. Being Christian [took] precedence over being German or British.

"... The third, ["global"], level of culture began to emerge with the coming of modernity during the last three hundred years. ... In this level, attention becomes focused on the human condition itself, that which is common to all races of the globe. ... Global culture, although it originated in the West, has now spread round the world though in varying degrees of intensity. It may be regarded as a new mode of human consciousness." (Geering, 1993:67-8). The source of authority at this level of culture is personal experience and one's own inner wisdom. "We are much freer to think for ourselves, to make our own decisions, without having our beliefs and behaviour patterns imposed on us by some external authority" (ibid:66).

Table 3: An Interpretation of Geering’s Evolutionary Pattern of Culture

| Approximate timespan | At least 50,000 years ago to present day | 1000 years before the Christian era to present day | 300 years ago to present day |
|---------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|
| Cultural Phase in History | Ethnic | Transethnic | Global (or Secular) |
| Authority | Forbears and previous generations | A transcendent source | Humans |
| Manifestation | Ethnic cultures | Mainly Buddhist, Christian and Islamic cultures | Human consciousness |

The current trend to pay more credence to one’s inner wisdom than to religious messengers can perhaps be seen in the declining membership of some institutional religions. Perhaps in an effort to remain relevant in the changing times, some contemporary churches are becoming more liberal and accepting of variations in belief; it is increasingly acceptable to the church authorities for members to live by their own interpretations of the religious dogma.

3.2.2 Defining ‘spiritual understanding’ in the global era

In the transethnic era, the defining characteristics of *spiritual* understandings, as distinct from non-spiritual ones, were relatively easily identified as those that the transcendent source indicated were important. In the present global era when sources of authority are more often personal experience and inner wisdom, however, the task of defining *spiritual understandings* is more difficult because people’s ideas about what counts as *spiritual* are very diverse.

That personal experience and one's own 'inner wisdom' are common contemporary sources of authority begs the questions: how does one discern spiritual understandings and experiences from 'ordinary', or 'non-spiritual' ones? Indeed, is there a difference? An examination of people's personal stories of spiritual experiences provides insight into the nature of what they consider to be spiritual, and is a starting point for developing a conceptual framework for 'spirituality' and 'spiritual growth' for the research.

Personal stories of spiritual experiences are commonly used in the spirituality and education literature to exemplify spiritual understandings. In the stories, several human experiences are commonly identified as 'spiritual' in nature:

- Experiencing profound understanding about 'the order of things'. The experiences often influence one's cosmological and/or existential understandings. Characterised by thoughts such as "Ah - that's how it all fits together", the experiences typically include understanding of one's self as a small part of a large complex whole, and a profound sense of how one 'fits into' the scheme of things.
- Experiencing a profoundly felt connection, or relationship, with something or someone. Examples include feeling profoundly connected with a god or omnipotent transcendent, falling in love with another person or identifying a 'soulmate', feeling profoundly connected with some other sort of living thing like an animal or a plant, feeling profoundly connected with some other aspect of the physical world like the land or the sea, and experiencing a profound sense of identity or insight into one's self. During grounded theory research into children's spirituality, David Hay and Rebecca Nye named one's awareness of important connections to one's self as "relational consciousness" (Hay with Nye, 1998:113).
- Experiencing profound wonder or awe. Often characterised by feeling unbelieving of complexity, beauty, perfection, infiniteness.
- Experiencing a profound sense of joy.
- Experiencing a profound sense of the existence of a spiritual realm.
- Experiencing a profound sense of value for something or someone.

The common elements of these reported experiences suggest what people might recognise as characteristics of *spiritual* experiences as distinct from *ordinary* or *non-spiritual* ones. In all of the stories, the experiences are *profound*, (that is to say, intensely felt as deeply meaningful), *memorable*, and *life-changing*.

William James, a leading American philosopher who made contributions to studies of religion in each of his roles as psychologist, philosopher, psychical researcher, literary critic and public orator (Levinson, 1981), came up with similar common elements at the turn of the Twentieth Century when he proposed characteristics of “mystical experience”:

- (i) *ineffability* (inability to describe the experience in words - one must experience it directly);
- (ii) *noetic quality* (the sense of the significance of the experience as insight into, or illumination and revelation of, greater truth);
- (iii) *transiency* (the short duration of the experience - although experiences can build upon others); and
- (iv) *passivity* (the feeling of being “held” or “grasped” by a superior power during the experience).

(James, 1902/1952:371-372)

People who perceive they have spiritual experiences typically associate them with times of profound growth in understanding, i.e., times when something important to them is learned. In the stories, the subjects of the understanding are diverse but all the stories have the common element of being about learning that is profoundly felt to be personally relevant. This suggests that, rather than *what is learned*, (that is to say, the *subject-matter* of the understanding), defining the nature of the learning as spiritual, it is the *learning itself* that is recognised as being spiritual in nature.

3.3 Ontological framework: learning as spiritual growth

3.3.1 Foundational belief: Human life is a spiritual journey during which the spirit grows

That learning is spiritual in nature can also be argued from an ontological perspective. *Human life is a spiritual journey during which the spirit grows* is a belief upon which the doctorate is founded. Because learning is recognised by the researcher as the means to progress in life, it is proposed that *all learning constitutes spiritual growth*.

From this perspective, defined by the belief that *human life is a spiritual journey during which the spirit grows*, a human being's spiritual purpose is to *be* human. The everyday tasks involved with tending to life are one's spiritual tasks; to toil, to look after one's physical body, to nurture those for whom one is responsible, to relate to those with whom one comes into contact, to live, to deal with whatever challenges come up, to search for meaning and purpose in life, to care, to love.

Life as a human being, that is to say, with a mind, body and soul, involves: (i) physically being in the physical universe; (ii) mentally being in our human experience; and (iii) spiritually being. It is proposed that emotions, commonly recognised by contemporary theorists (e.g. Goleman, 1995) as another elemental constituent of a human being, are not elemental but, rather, constitute a *message system* between the spiritual, physical and mental dimensions.

The human body provides a physical response to all three elements of one's human life, physical, mental and spiritual. It responds to information from the physical world through the senses (of sight, hearing, physical feeling, smell and taste), by a multitude of actions. It also responds to one's mental thoughts with feelings and emotions, that is to say, chemical reactions in the body which are, in turn, received by the nervous system and then interpreted, again, mentally.

Within this ontological framework, it is further proposed that the difference between what one recognises (and self-identifies) as a spiritual experience and an ordinary experience is a difference of relative measure of spiritual growth at the time of the

experience. That is to say, personal experiences that people *recognise* as *spiritual* can be explained by means of a continuum of soul growth: low growth of soul, at one end, is not typically noticed by people because it evokes neutral emotions, while high growth of soul, at the other end, is often recognised as spiritual in nature, or at least important in one’s life, because it evokes profound emotions and is intensely felt.

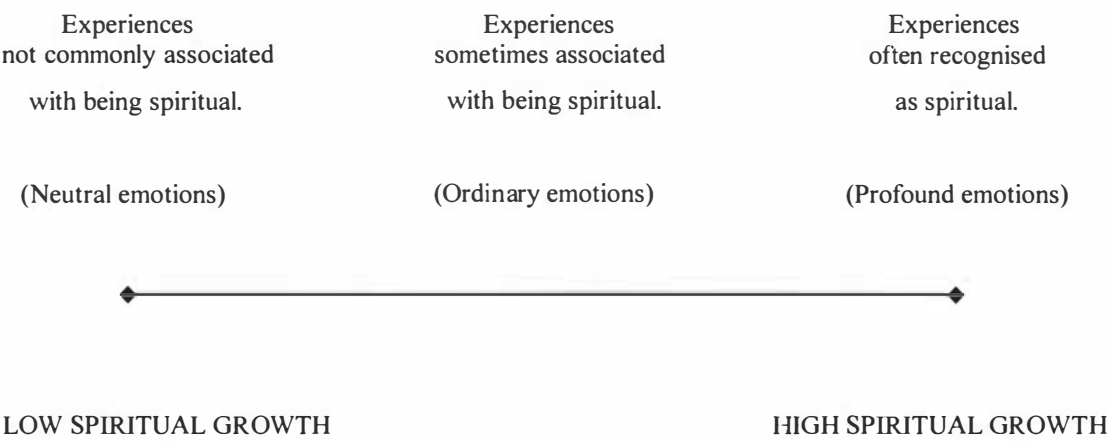


Figure 2: Continuum of Experiences as Spiritual Growth

Hay concurs with the concept of a continuum to delimit understandings of spiritual experience: “In my judgement there is at the very least an extremely permeable boundary lying between the kinds of vivid spontaneous spiritual experience which people tend to remember for the rest of their lives, and the low key spiritual awareness someone aspires to as a permanent personal life stance. Having undertaken research in this field for more than 20 years, I have come to believe that these are parts of a continuum rather than distinct kinds of human experience. The feature which varies along the continuum is one of intensity of awareness” (Hay with Nye, 1998:89).

3.3.2 Ethical rationale: collective spirit of humanity and the transcendent's agenda

Living human life is part of one's spiritual destiny which ultimately lies beyond human life. The soul is the part of us that transcends our physical and mental existence and is the connection between the spiritual world and one's human-ness. The transcendent realm has its own agenda which is ultimately good, but that agenda may be beyond the comprehension of a human's intellect at any given point in time. What humanists recognise as the *collective spirit of humanity*, is the sum total of humanity's spiritual growth towards fulfilling the transcendent's agenda.

The ontological framework gives substance to the ideal of *equity of value of each and every human being* by recognising two valid levels at which 'valuing' occurs; the human concern level and the transcendent agenda level. The ideal challenges one to value the Queen of England as equally important to the vagrant lying on the street in Las Vegas; the Dalai Lama as equally important to the Ku Klux Klan member who anonymously kills his black neighbour; the terrorist who flew into New York's World Trade Center as equally important to the baby feeding at one's breast. At the human concern level, other individuals one encounters are judged according to their value to one's personal tasks throughout life, and the equal value of the dichotomous examples is difficult to accept. At the transcendent level, all individuals are equally important to the 'grand scheme of things'. The effect of recognising equality of value at the transcendent agenda level is to dictate an ethical and moral foundation, rather than a personal self-serving one, to human endeavour.

State schooling in New Zealand is founded on the value of equality of all students, by virtue of the democratic society it serves, and as evidenced by the sixth principle of *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework*:

The New Zealand Curriculum provides all students with equal educational opportunities. The school curriculum will recognise, respect, and respond to the educational needs, experiences, interests, and values of all students: both female and male students; students of all ethnic groups; students with different abilities and disabilities; and students of different

social and religious backgrounds. Inequalities will be recognised and addressed. All programmes will be gender-inclusive, non-racist, and non-discriminatory, to help ensure that learning opportunities are not restricted.

(Ministry of Education, 1993b:7)

3.3.3 Human manifestation of spirituality

Spirituality is manifest in humans as human concerns. To live life as a human is every human being's spiritual purpose. Life, itself, is a spiritual journey and, therefore, the progression of life constitutes spiritual development. Kirkland (in Best, 1996:261) cites others who concur: "Fromme (1986) refers to spirituality as 'to be' rather than 'to have'. Assagioli (1975) claims that all activity which drives the human being forwards towards some form of development - physical, emotional, mental, intuitional, social - if it is in advance of his or her present state, is essentially spiritual in nature."

The means by which people progress in life is *learning*, and therefore *learning constitutes spiritual growth*. Collins English Dictionary gives four contemporary definitions of the verb *learn*: 1. to gain knowledge of (something) or acquire skill in (some art or practice). 2. to commit to memory. 3. to gain by experience, example, etc. 4. to become informed; know. In the doctoral research, the concept of *learning* embodies all four definitions, and is about the mental and behavioural changes that occur to/in one as one progresses through life.

Learning includes, but is not limited to, 'acquiring knowledge' and 'developing understanding', both of which lead to a state of 'knowing'. Learning is understood to always be preceded with experience. The meaning of *experience* in this context differs from that in common usage in contemporary education literature that talks about the importance of direct experience to deep learning. In the thesis, *experience* refers to having contact with what is learned *in some form*, and it is the medium through which people learn. Experience leads to learning.

All learning constitutes spiritual growth because it advances one on one's spiritual journey and, therefore, all experience is spiritually valuable, even painful experience

and suffering. This 'shadow side' of spirituality is not commonly acknowledged by educationists (Earl, 2001).

New information or knowledge that is learned can come from three possible sources: one's own experience and ideas; other people's experiences and ideas; and the teachings of transcendent others. Learning, i.e., new understanding, occurs when new information from any of the three sources is subconsciously checked against existing knowledge and understandings and is deemed to fit acceptably with one's existing conceptual frameworks. However, one can know without being conscious of, or aware of, knowing.

Knowing has mental, affective and evaluative properties, i.e., it involves intellect, emotion and value. Being conscious of knowing something involves not only *possessing the knowledge* (the mental property), but also a *feeling of conviction that one 'has it right'* (the affective property). The conviction is profoundly felt, i.e., deeply felt, not surface felt. Some knowing is taken for granted. In these cases, the profound quality of the knowing eludes the knower until such time as the knowledge is challenged. For example, knowing the basic multiplication facts, (i.e., times tables), does not ordinarily involve a feeling of profound conviction, because the information known is relegated to a quick recall part of the memory. When challenged, however, with the proposition that 2 multiplied by 3 did not equal 6, for example, the knower would be propelled into feeling profoundly convinced that he or she was right and the challenger was wrong.

Knowing involves *an assumption on the part of the knower that what one 'knows' is truth* (the evaluative property). Even though another's knowing can be judged incorrect, the knowing is still an important part of the knower's and others' spiritual journeys, and the growth of the collective spirit of humanity which progresses towards the Transcendent's agenda.

Knowing invokes various feelings. When the feelings are profound, one becomes conscious of the knowing or understanding. When intellect rationalises that the knowledge or understanding is important to one's life, then the individual sometimes

interprets the knowledge as spiritual understanding, and the incident that invoked the spiritual understanding as a spiritual experience.

3.3.3.1 Spirituality as relational consciousness

In a 3-year research project at the University of Nottingham, Hay and Nye (1998) conducted grounded theory research to generate theory about children's spirituality. Nye found that when she talked to children about what was important to them, spirituality presented itself in the form of *consciousness of the importance of particular relationships*. She recognised four categories of relational consciousness in the children's talk, each pertaining to a different category of 'object' that the children had encountered. The four categories are I-Others, I-Self, I-World and I-God.

By *consciousness*, Nye meant a deep, and often reflective, awareness; a profound knowing that she likened to the developmental psychology concept of *metacognition*. It follows that by *relational consciousness* she meant the child's profound awareness of being in relationship with something or someone, i.e., how the something or someone related *to him*. *Relationships* were thus what came out of the children's talking as being important to them; the thing they were emotionally sensitive to, and on which they reflected philosophically.

The relational consciousness categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, the people with whom one builds relationships (I-Others) can be seen as part of the world around one (I-World). The categories' inter-relatedness, however, does not detract from their utility as a conceptual framework when analysing learning in human life. They are ultimately useful as a conceptual framework because they are exhaustive of all learning. What Nye detected in the children she worked with was particular learnings that the children recognised as important to themselves.

3.3.3.2 An integral connection between spirituality and consciousness

Human life is relational. *Being* comprises *knowing* and *relating*. Learning, i.e., spiritual growth, requires (is in response to) contact and therefore involves relating. Everything in life is understood by the individual in relation to him- or her-self. Being *conscious* of

something involves knowing that “this is important and real”, i.e., having a conviction of truth (in so far as reality is perceived to be true) and, by implication, value to one’s self (in so far as reality has consequences for one’s self). Notions of *consciousness* are thus integrally connected to the concepts of *learning* and *knowing*, and therefore to spirituality and spiritual growth.

In the introductory chapter of *The Spirit of the Child* (Hay with Nye, 1998), Hay rationalises ideas in the literature to arrive at a *connection between spirituality and consciousness* by a different route. He gathers together three traditional connotations of the word *spiritual* to see what they represent in totality; to attempt to see and name the thing that they all are. The first connotation is religious devotion to God. Hay writes that it infers “human beings’ awareness of their relationship with God and points towards the dramatic goal of mystical union with the Godhead” (ibid.:8).

The second connotation of the word *spiritual* is being fully aware of one’s human-ness, of having a profound sense of one’s place and role in the human collective and in the Universe, and of feeling connected with all other human beings. Hay identifies Karl Marx as an example of an influential modern atheist who significantly contributed to this understanding of *spiritual*. Marx talked about discovering oneself as *species-being*. “Species being ... is Marx’s term for the deepest center or spirit of humankind as a collective. The term asserts that there is no division between individual and society: “Human” means precisely social. In Marx’s view, we complete our individual and species character only by social interaction and over time.” (Bancroft cited in ibid.:176).

The third connotation is having heightened aesthetic sensibilities. Hay explains it as referring “to a person who demonstrates a refined aesthetic awareness of poetry, music or the other arts, or perhaps is sensitive to the needs of other people” (ibid.:8), i.e., “being aesthetically or ethically aware” (ibid.:9).

Hay recognises “heightening of awareness or attentiveness” as common to all three connotations of the word ‘spiritual’, and thereby develops a holistic notion of spirituality as *raised awareness*. He writes: “Apparently widely disparate in meaning, they express a fundamental insight. Each of us has the potential to be much more

deeply aware both of ourselves and of our intimate relationship with everything that is not ourselves. ... From such a perspective, raised awareness itself constitutes spirituality” (ibid.:9).

3.3.4 The significant role of the teacher in spiritual growth

If one mentally learns something, one becomes newly conscious of connections in one’s world. Raised consciousness is learning. Learning is spiritual growth.

Although one can learn something without being conscious of it, what is learned becomes useful and therefore potentially powerful in one’s life when one *is* conscious of it. At school, the teacher is ultimately in charge of raising the student’s consciousness of the world, i.e., in charge of the student’s learning. If all learning constitutes spiritual growth because it advances one on one’s spiritual journey, then a teacher’s role can be seen as contributing significantly to the spirituality of the student.

Arguably, a teacher who successfully tends to a student’s learning is spiritually nurturing that student, and it is recognised that many teachers exist who are good at tending to students’ learning. There are reported incidents of teachers having played major roles in the sort of profound learning that is commonly recognised as spiritual experience, and that lies at the high spiritual growth end of the continuum in Figure 2 on page 40. However, teachers good at bringing students to learning experiences that lie *anywhere* on the continuum are arguably being spiritually nurturing, and there are many such teachers employed in New Zealand state schools. Almost everyone can recall a teacher who made some sort of significant positive impact on their learning, recognised as significant because it left a lasting impact upon their lives.

It is proposed that a grounded theory research study of teachers teaching students, conducted from a perspective that recognises “learning as spiritual growth”, would generate useful theory about the teacher’s role in students’ spiritual growth and contribute to understandings of what it means to nurture students’ spirituality. Such a theory would help address the shortage of theory useful to New Zealand educationists concerned with state school education and students’ spirituality.

3.4 The research inquiry and appropriate methodology

Grounded theory is a general research methodology that utilizes data gathered in uncontrived situations to generate theory about how people do things.

The grounded theory research process generates understandings all around the subject of the participants' main concern. Such a theory based on real teachers in real life situations would be a very good base for further developing the researcher's ontological ideas and for answering a question underpinning the research: "What is it that leads to, or triggers, the 'hunch' that people have that a teacher is doing a good job of getting through to the students?"

Chapter 4 Grounded Theory

A theory means an elaborate, dynamic model of very complex patterns in our lives.

James W. Fowler (1987:xiii)

4.1 Introduction to grounded theory

4.1.1 Background

Grounded theory research generates theory from data gathered in uncontrived settings. The doctoral research is guided by the philosophy and ideas of Barney Glaser who is one of the two originators of grounded theory research methodology.

In 1967, Glaser and Strauss published their seminal work, “The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research”, to report their success in using an approach to developing theories from systematically gathered and analysed data. The new approach challenged both positivist research principles and the (at the time) contemporary simplistic views of qualitative methods as only useful for descriptive, and not explanatory, purposes. The new approach assumed the existence of a social science but, in the vein of Dilthey (1894 cited Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992⁷), rejected the canons of traditional scientific research, namely reliability, validity and objectivity, for the purposes of studying people. In the ensuing years, grounded theory has developed as a research methodology that encompasses a hermeneutic philosophy and a simple, yet rigorous, generic method of conducting research. Its simple tenets have rendered it useful for generating theory about a wide range of human concerns.

Glaser and Strauss have since separately published further works on grounded theory. Apparently following different philosophical and research traditions, their respective developing approaches to grounded theory differed, serving to further enrich the methodology. Glaser has remained with an arguably ‘pure’ notion of grounded theory which puts ultimate trust in the researcher, while others have developed variations by

⁷ Succinct accounts of ground theory methodology are rare. Henwood and Pidgeon’s (1992) paper includes a good description of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research, and a good discussion of theory generation using grounded theory.

integrating elements from a scientific paradigm. Notably, Strauss has re-introduced an “emphasis on ... retaining ‘canons of good science’ such as replicability, generalisability, precision, significance, and verification” (Babchuk, 1997). Arguably, the points of difference in the methods Glaser and Strauss respectively advocate, and the underlying philosophies evident in their writings, reflect differing epistemological positions (ibid.). This ‘parting of the ways’ of the two originators of grounded theory has benefited the field because the would-be grounded theorist is provoked into clarifying his or her own epistemological and ontological understandings in order to rationally utilise Glaser and Strauss’s respective teachings.

4.1.2 Purposes of grounded theory

While Strauss teamed up with Corbin to develop a pragmatic “how-to” approach that allows the researcher considerable flexibility in the research ends they choose to pursue (provided they use the methods and techniques faithfully, Strauss and Corbin say), Glaser advocates the use of grounded theory *only for the generation of theory pertaining to the research participants’ concerns*.

Assuming this purpose, Glaser identifies two tasks of grounded theory research:

- (i) *To identify the main concern of the participants (or of the group of people being represented by the participants).* Glaser identified grounded theory as a research method that supported the identification of concerns of the group being studied. He advocated that grounded theorists ask two formal questions: “[Firstly], what is the chief concern or problem of the people in the substantive area, and what accounts for most of the variation in processing the problem? And secondly, what category or property of what category does this incident indicate?” (Glaser, 1992:4).
- (ii) *To generate theory about how the participants process the main problem.* Glaser writes: “The importance of the main concern of the people in the substantive area cannot be [overestimated]. Continually resolving it is the prime mover of their behaviour. A theory of how it is

processed will help them tremendously by giving them conceptual power” (Glaser, 1998:116).

The defining procedures of grounded theory are systematic gathering and analysis of data about people in uncontrived situations in order to identify concepts and generate theories that are ultimately compatible with the real world. The resulting concepts and theories, because they have been generated from what is already happening, are immediately relevant to the people being studied. Glaser says such theory is important to the participants. “They need the empowerment that grounded theory gives for change, resolution and maintaining their stability and vested fictions” (Glaser, 1998:117). Given the contemporary context of today’s teachers trying to maintain what is important to them in their work with students in classrooms, against the political trends of economic drive like competition between schools, standardised testing, and accountability of teachers in terms of student academic achievement, (Smyth, 2001), grounded theory research about teachers in New Zealand state schools seems imperative.

4.1.3 Grounded theory methods

Broadly speaking, grounded theory research-according-to-Glaser involves gathering data from the participants, examining the data to identify the participants’ main concern, and then identifying and studying the main behaviour used by the participants to resolve that concern, i.e, what Glaser calls the *core variable*. The resultant theory is theory about the participants’ resolution of their main concern (Glaser, 1998).

Formal analysis begins with the researcher systematically inspecting the data, (e.g., interview transcripts), and labeling (i.e., *coding*) concepts and the more abstract features that emerge. A concept or feature may have been recognised prior to the research and therefore already have a name, or it may be new and necessitate the researcher creating a name. The expectation that new language will be created makes the data inspection in grounded theory different from traditional content analysis “where the researcher’s task is to allocate instances to a set of predefined, mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories” (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992:103).

The coded concepts are sorted to identify what Glaser classifies as *categories* (and *sub-categories*), *properties* of the categories, and *dimensions* of the properties. Relationships between the concepts suggest the structure of the conceptual framework of the theory. As the theory takes shape, more data is systematically sought via a process of *theoretical sampling* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), to strengthen and broaden it. The relationship of the new data to the emerging theory is considered and, if it fits easily, it becomes a further example to strengthen the case for the theory. New data that does not fit easily suggests new concepts or relationships within the theory and is thereby used to broaden, or hone the accuracy of, the theory. The process whereby data is systematically compared with the emerging concepts and with emerging understandings of the relationships between the concepts is called *constant comparison*. Constant comparison is a defining analytical method of grounded theory.

Glaser specifies that coding of the original data should continue until no more concepts can be found, and that theoretical sampling to strengthen concepts and relationships should continue until all new data fits the theory. He calls the point when no more concepts emerge from a given group of data *theoretical saturation*.

The theory is thus always considered the theorist's best approximation of the participants' 'reality' that the available data can render.

Glaser insists that "all is data" (Glaser, 1998:8). By this he is alluding to the researcher's intellect being a key tool in the analysis stage of theory generation, and all information at the researcher's hand, throughout the research, potentially influencing the emerging theory. Data may be qualitative or quantitative and, although the initial data is usually purposefully gathered, once the theory starts emerging, further data may come to the researcher by any means and be added to the data corpus yet to be analysed. Glaser warns: "preconceiving what data will be used for a study severely restricts the generative aspect of the study and consequently the theory" (Glaser, 1998:8-9).

In order to process the large amounts of data and to remain open to their inherent meanings and relationships that will eventually emerge as the theory, the researcher begins the fieldwork with no preconceived view of the participants' main concern

(Glaser, 1998), and retains *theoretical sensitivity* throughout the analysis and theory generation process. Retaining *theoretical sensitivity* means the researcher has to try to suspend all prior interpretations and theories about the data and the situation from which the data is gathered, and conduct analysis as much as possible with an ‘open mind’ and ‘seeing eyes’.

Because it is a relatively new research methodology⁸, many researchers who use grounded theory methods do so without training or advice. Glaser (ibid.) acknowledges the label of *minus mentor*, generated by Phyllis N. Stern⁹, to denote the unique status of such a researcher. The *minus mentor* researcher is faced with gleaning the requisite research procedures from books and, because the grounded theory literature is written in a language of newly identified concepts and ideas, the procedures are often difficult to comprehend. As a consequence, the ‘minus mentor’ researcher inevitably begins the fieldwork stage without a complete knowledge of the whole, complex procedure, but with a conviction, nevertheless, that a thorough understanding of the process will develop in the course of the research.

In his book *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions*, Glaser (1998) acknowledges the hesitancy felt by researchers choosing to work within a relatively new methodology that is slow to be accepted in some academic circles. He uses the last chapter of the book to discuss the trustworthiness of the method that is inherent in the evaluative criteria for grounded theory, and concludes the book:

Trust grounded theory, it works! Just do it, use it and publish!

(Glaser, 1998:254)

The doctoral research was conducted *minus mentor* in the respect that the researcher’s two supervisors had limited or no previous personal experience with grounded theory. The fieldwork stage of the research was embarked upon with minimal understanding of the analysis process and a good deal of trust in Glaser’s and others’ claims that the process would generate a relevant and useful theory.

⁸ Glaser and Strauss first published their “discovery” of grounded theory research in 1967, and its popularity has grown only since the early 1980’s (Glaser, 1998).

In Chapters 5 and 6 what actually happened in the doctoral research is described. Further details of Glaser's procedural 'instructions' for doing grounded theory, as well as the researcher's response to the instructions, are integrated into the descriptions of what happened, in much the same way as Glaser's words became understood gradually by the researcher during the research. The on-going development of the researcher's understanding of grounded theory methods was via interplay between actioning the research and consulting the methodology literature.

4.1.4 Grounded theory evaluative criteria

The research is designed and written up to promote the *trustworthiness* of the research and the *authenticity* of the resultant theory (Guba & Lincoln, 1981 cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994). Ely writes:

The quest is to make the research project credible, produce results that can be trusted and establish findings that are, to use Lincoln and Guba's phrase, 'worth paying attention to' (1985:290).
(Ely, 1991:156)

The following two lists of criteria for judging grounded theory research and the resultant theory, respectively, represent the researcher's synthesis of ideas from several literature sources including Glaser and Strauss's original book, Glaser's later works, and criteria suggested by Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) for judging the quality of research in psychology.

Criteria for judging the quality of the research

- *Evidentiary documentation.* One of the main analysis 'tools' in grounded theory research is the researcher's intellect. In order to record progress and effect transparency in moving from the data through successive levels of abstraction, to the complex and rich theory, the researcher should write extensive notes and memos. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992:106) write, "The exercise provides a means of tracking the progress of (and stimulating) creative thought, and acts as a useful

⁹ Glaser provides no further reference for Stern.

vehicle for increasing researcher reflexivity”. While every grounded theorist will work out his or her own way of recording thoughts throughout the research, documentation behind the presented theory will likely include a reflexive journal, memos and definitions of concepts and categories, memos about procedural considerations and decisions, memos about the context of the research, and memos about the quality of the data. Because much evidentiary documentation behind a presented theory (e.g., the raw data and journals of memos) is unlikely to be included in reports of the research, the reports should include a faithful description of what was actually done.

- *Fit between emerging concepts and the data.* In their seminal work, Glaser and Strauss (1967) identified that *the emergent theory should fit the data*. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992:105) write, “a basic requirement of good qualitative research is that the categories constituting the building blocks of emergent theory should fit the data well. One way of working towards this, recommended by Barry Turner (1981), is to write comprehensive definitions summarising why phenomena have been labelled in a certain way. This exercise produces a public product which makes explicit the initially tacit conceptual classifications perceived by the individual researcher. As such, it allows both the researcher and peers to evaluate fit.”
- *Theoretical sampling.* An important aspect of the grounded theory definitive method of constant comparison, theoretical sampling ensures data is purposefully chosen to strengthen targeted parts of the theory. The research report should recount the procedures and rationale for theoretical sampling.
- *Transparency about reflexivity.* Naturalistic research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) is a social process in which the researcher and the researched are interdependent. The research activity shapes all involved with the research, and also the product of the research, in this case the theory. Reports of the research should demonstrate an awareness of the principle at work by including critical accounts of reflexivity that the researcher has encountered.

Criteria for judging the quality of the theory

- *Integration of theory at diverse levels of abstraction.* An extension of Glaser's concepts of *fitness* and *workability*, the term *integration* here refers to the relationship between the concepts in the theory and the patterns in the data that they purport to represent. "The goal here is to ensure that the theory at all levels of abstraction is meaningfully related to the problem domain. Glaser and Strauss describe theory that exhibits this property as theory that 'works'" (ibid.:105).
- *Conceptual richness and denseness.* Conceptually rich theory is achieved by theoretical coding and constant comparisons of data with theory. Henwood and Pidgeon write: "In our view, rich and dense grounded theory, which is contextually sensitive at diverse levels of abstraction, will itself suggest its own sphere of relevance and application" (ibid:108).
- *Transferability of the theory.* Lincoln and Guba, (1985 cited ibid) suggest researchers working within the naturalistic paradigm talk in terms of *transferability* of the products of their research, rather than *generalizability* which is important in scientific research. Henwood and Pidgeon warn that this infers much more than simply considering transferability between similar contexts. Feyerabend (1975 cited ibid) suggests that the outcomes of the research will be evaluated in terms of their *persuasiveness* and *power to inspire an audience*. Extrapolating this notion for the doctoral research: the generated theory should be evaluated in terms of its *persuasiveness* and *power to inspire educationists*.
- *Modifiability of the theory.* Modifiability is a central methodological tenet of grounded theory as context-bound, hermeneutically analysed, interpretive inquiry. It refers to an expectation of the researcher that the presented theory will be subsequently modified by data encountered once the theory is applied. The presented theory should portray the researcher's belief that the theory represents the best approximation of reality that the available data can render.

4.2 Rationale for choosing grounded theory

4.2.1 Lack of specific research questions

The doctoral research is in response to the lack of research-based information for teachers about spirituality in New Zealand school education. “Spiritual well-being” (or *taha wairua*) is an *integral aspect* of an *underlying concept* (i.e., well-being or *hauora*) of the Health and Physical Education curriculum. This rather obscure inclusion of spirituality in the New Zealand core curriculum implies that teachers are being mandated to tend to their students’ spiritual well-being at school. However, there is a lack of clear guidelines about how to go about addressing the curriculum expectations and how to assess that it is being done effectively. Practicing teachers are left with more questions than answers about including spirituality in school education. Their concerns are underpinned by the broad question of what *tending to students’ spiritual well-being* actually means.

Grounded theory offers a methodology for addressing research questions that are not sufficiently specific to suggest an experimental design. It allows the identification of the teachers’ concerns, issues and problems *during the course of the research* rather than requiring the identification of a specific problem prior to commencement of the research.

4.2.2 Lack of foundational theory and language

Attempts to talk to teachers about their questions regarding their role in students’ spirituality, expose a notable lack of a broadly accepted language to discuss spirituality in education. Grounded theory research leaves open the possibilities for definitions and meanings of spirituality, and for development of language to name newly recognised concepts and understandings.

The researcher began the doctorate on spirituality in education from a position of strong experience in the field of education, no academic experience in spirituality or theology, and with a hunch that learning is essentially a spiritual pursuit. With a personal scientific bent (perhaps borne of having a father who was a microbiologist), the

researcher's initial inclination for the doctoral research was towards a scientific, empirical inquiry to test hypotheses regarding the effectiveness of specific curriculum design practices on students' spiritual development. Because no scientific measure of *spirituality* or *spiritual development* is (yet) possible, however, there is great difficulty in investigating the topic using traditional scientific research methods of hypothesis-testing, measurement and deduction.

Even if scientific research could be employed to attempt to answer the teachers' questions by testing hypotheses, the hypotheses themselves would be like single grains of sand on a beach unless they were derived from some cohesive theory that bound them together into some larger concept or understanding. Theory regarding spirituality in education is scarce and what little does exist tends to, both, lack a research foundation, and assume a pre-determined definition of spirituality that is too confining to be of use in New Zealand's multicultural and multi-faith state schools.

Grounded theory research offers a rigorous procedure while still allowing pursuit of an open-ended topic.

4.2.3 Desire for the research to be useful to practitioners

A central aim of the doctorate is to contribute to educationists' theoretical understandings and practical knowledge of spirituality in education. It is important to the researcher that the products of the research be useful to teachers in New Zealand schools. Because grounded theory is generated from data gathered from participants in their natural settings, the resulting concepts and theories have a high likelihood of being relevant to the participants. Glaser's methods focus the researcher on identifying the teachers' preoccupying concerns and main resolving behaviours, and on creating theory that is ultimately useful to the teachers. This is arguably a better approach to theorising than purely literature-based approaches which assume the academic researchers know more than the teachers, and which risk producing a theory that the teachers then have to be educated about and trained to apply.

4.2.4 Researcher strengths and humility, and acknowledgement of practitioner expertise

The research aims to theorise teaching from a spirituality perspective. The research is pre-empted by recognition and acknowledgement that ‘good’ teachers exist in the present system who are effective at bringing students to meaningful learning, and a belief that such teachers have a lot to offer present-day understandings of what it means to tend to students’ spirituality at school.

The researcher did not presume to know the problems and concerns facing practicing teachers, and she wanted to learn from the teachers. Grounded theory is an appropriate methodology when one is acknowledging the participants’ expertise over and above the researcher’s in the inquiry.

When the aim of teaching is to have students really learn, the job of teaching can be counted as a profession. Grounding theory on the experiences and ideas of teachers inherently values the wisdom of the practitioners. Grounded theory methods give teachers more voice in the research process, and allow the researcher to respect their good professional practice and credit them for it. They allow the researcher to practice humility as a researcher.

Grounded theory research methods make the most of the researcher’s own strengths of classification, analysis and conceptual development, and of synthesizing the ideas of others.

4.3 The preliminary research design

The plan for the grounded theory research was founded on the belief that teachers who are doing a good job of bringing their students to some sort of real learning have a lot to offer present-day understandings of what it means to tend to students’ spirituality at school.

The proposed research was intended to theorise teaching by applying grounded theory research methods to data gathered from a small group (5 – 10) of teachers of pre-secondary school children, (i.e., the participants may be early childhood, primary or intermediate level teachers), each of whom had touched *somebody* in his or her capacity as teacher.

Because the research was being conducted minus mentor, the original research design consisted of a set of basic grounded theory procedures to get started, and the expectation that the researcher would develop further understandings of the research methods and how to proceed as the research progressed.

After gaining consent from the university ethics committee, the basic processes were participant selection and enrolment, data gathering, and analysis. The basic processes constituted a cycle that was anticipated to be repeated as the emerging theory suggested and until theoretical saturation was reached. The number of times each process would be repeated was thus undetermined at the outset of the fieldwork.

Original planned procedures for the basic processes:

1. *Participant selection and enrolment.* Identify a ‘good teacher’ who might be a potential participant by obtaining recommendations from other people with whom the researcher discusses the proposed research. Approach the teacher and solicit her willingness to participate in the research, following ethical protocols (refer Section 5.4 for further discussion about ethics). Collaborate with the teacher to decide upon sources of data to be gathered, and obtain ethical consent from any others whom the data gathering involves, e.g., students, and parents or caregivers of students.
2. *Data gathering.* Gather the primary data by interviewing the participant teacher about what is important to her regarding her teaching. Other data could be anything else the participant teacher suggests as helpful for enriching the researcher’s understanding of her teaching, e.g., classroom observations, curriculum documentation, talking to students. The data may be qualitative or quantitative.

3. *Analysis.* Examine the data for concepts and categories, remaining open to the teacher's intent in her talk. Develop a conceptual framework that portrays the relationships between the concepts. Use constant comparison techniques to 'incorporate' further data into the emerging theory. Analysis will involve the researcher in coding, sorting, comparing, abstracting, articulating and writing.

The product of analysis will be a theory about the participant teachers' main concern and how they go about resolving that concern.

At the planning stage of the fieldwork, it was anticipated that sources of data would be decided upon after discussion with each teacher. A data set for each teacher would likely include:

- the teacher's talk about what was important in her own teaching, including her thoughts, feelings and anecdotes. This data would be gathered by interview and would constitute interview transcripts.
- observations of the teacher interacting with the students. This data would be gathered by the researcher and would constitute hand-written fieldnotes.
- documentation supplied by the teacher to augment understanding of what she talked about in the interviews, or demonstrated in the observation sessions.
- students' talk about their schooling and about their teacher. This data would be gathered by interview and would constitute interview transcripts.

It was anticipated that analysis would begin after interviewing the first participant. Identification of subsequent participant teachers may be influenced by the emerging categories and theory.

The movement between analysis and participant selection and data gathering activities was deliberately unspecified at the early planning stage. More specific procedures were expected to be identified as the research progressed and the researcher's understanding of the methodology developed, concepts emerged and the theory took shape.

Chapter 5 Original Impetus, Fieldwork and Preliminary Analysis

Individual [grounded theory] researchers invent different specific procedures. Almost always too, in handling the difficult problem of conceptual integration they learn that advice given in the methodological writing and/or the grounded theory seminar requires adaptation to the circumstances of their own thought processes.

Strauss and Corbin (1998:164)

5.1 The phases of the doctoral research

With hindsight, four phases of the research were discernible; original impetus, fieldwork, preliminary analysis and analysis. Each was recognisable by characteristic states of mind and activities. The phases occurred sequentially, although their boundaries overlapped.

5.1.1 The original impetus phase

The *original impetus* phase was characterised by high motivation to get the research underway, a steep learning curve, and enthusiasm and passion for the research topic. Activities in the *original impetus* phase set up the research and included:

- finding research supervisors and other support people, and establishing working relationships with them;
- meeting administrative requirements of the university (as the governing research body) for research approval and candidature, funding, supervision and ethical approval;
- reading extensively in the research methodology and research topic areas; and
- developing ideas about the research by discussing ideas with professional and academic colleagues and others.

Subject reading in the *original impetus* phase of the research was primarily in the areas of *spirituality* and *spirituality and education* because the researcher had no academic experience in this field and felt a need to ‘catch up’ with the research and literature.

The original impetus phase was not considered a ‘planning’ phase, as might be expected of an initial phase of research, because, although a tentative plan for the research was

required for submissions for research approval and funding, that initial plan represented only a seed of the research that eventuated. Plans for the actual research activities were developed *throughout the research* as the researcher's understandings of grounded theory developed with experience, understandings of the substantive areas grew over time, and the research questions emerged to shape the formal theory. The methodology literature both acknowledges the expectation that the definitive methods will be adapted to accommodate the uniqueness of every research situation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), and identifies continual development of purpose as a characteristic of grounded theory (Glaser, 1998). The on-going occurrence of planning was, furthermore, a natural consequence of conducting the research “minus mentor” (refer Section 4.1.3).

5.1.2 Introduction to the fieldwork, preliminary analysis and analysis phases

The *fieldwork*, reported in Sections 5.2 and 5.3, came to be understood as a phase of the research that encompassed everything to do with *interacting with the participants to gather data*. Its processes included participant selection and enrolment, and data gathering.

The *analysis phase* came to be broadly understood as encompassing everything to do with *changing data, including both the field data gathered from participants and the data gathered from other sources, into a comprehensive theory*. The analysis phase of the doctoral research is reported in Chapter 1.

Glaser and other grounded theory proponents report that the use of constant comparison and theoretical sampling procedures means that the data gathering and analysis activities all continue for the duration of the research. While this could be said to be true for the doctoral research, actually *interacting with the participants* to gather data happened within a finite time-frame defined as *fieldwork*. Thereafter, *theoretical sampling* constituted repeatedly re-examining the field data ‘wearing different hats’ (during both substantive theory generation and formal theory generation), and tapping other sources of data such as existing research and literature (during formal theory generation). The process of re-examining the field data ‘wearing different hats’, that is to say, with different questions in mind, is explained further in Section 6.2.1.

Although presented in a systematic manner in Chapter 1 and Chapter 7, the analysis and theory generation processes were not orderly in reality. As with every phase of the research, the analysis phase incorporated much growth and learning for the researcher, both in knowledge about effective methods and systems, and in personal attitudes and virtues necessary for a ‘good’ qualitative researcher, e.g., humility, respect for participants, and theoretical sensitivity. Wrong routes taken served to sharpen the travelling instincts of the journeyer. Mistakes were not rued but counted as lessons learned.

Section 5.5 describes the researcher’s initial attempts at analysis, later identified as a *preliminary analysis* phase, in which the ‘minus mentor’ researcher was developing her analysis capabilities. *Preliminary analysis* was recognised as an important phase in the doctoral research that is not identified in the literature. It acknowledges the unique status of the ‘minus mentor’ researcher in this day and age of rapidly developing new research methodologies. Often assistance and advice about the technicalities of new methods are unavailable to the researcher, and the recognition of a phase in which the minus mentor researcher is ‘learning the ropes’ acknowledges that there may be insights (about both research and the substantive content) to be gleaned from such researchers’ experiences.

5.2 Fieldwork: participant selection and enrolment

5.2.1 The participant selection and enrolment processes

The researcher scheduled meetings with teachers to fit within the teachers’ time regimes which were, typically, set well ahead. The duration of the enrolment and data gathering phase of the fieldwork was, therefore, difficult to predict. The process of selecting and enrolling participants ended up occurring over about a 15 month period, bounded by networking meetings that led the researcher to the first participant teachers, and the first meeting with the final participant teacher. Nine teachers were enrolled.

All the participant teachers were recommended to the researcher by other people (see Section 5.2.2 for the rationale behind selection), and the researcher’s contact with the

“other people” was, therefore, counted as part of the selection process. To the researcher, immersed in the busy-ness of data gathering, transcription and analysis, the processes of following up recommendations and setting about enrolling participants seemed nebulous and erratic. In an effort to bring some order to the task of recording all incidents of contact, a classification system of meetings was developed. Meetings were classified as *networking*, *participant courtship*, or *research administration*.

Networking involved the researcher taking opportunities to discuss the research with contacts whom she thought might be interested. Conversations happened in both work time and personal time, and frequently led to the contacts informing the researcher of others who they thought would be interested or useful to the research.

Written records were kept of details of networking meetings. The records included the names and available contact information about people who were recommended to the researcher by others. The records also noted the already established contact who did the recommending, and the reason given for the recommendation. Keeping such detailed information assisted the researcher to be selective about who she next approached (refer to Section 5.2.2 for more information about selection). It was also important from an ethical point of view, when calling on strangers, to be able to accurately say who led the researcher to them. In some instances, the researcher asked an established contact to liaise with their recommended person(s) to obtain consent for her to approach them.

Participant courtship typically took the form of: (i) contacting the teacher or teachers to arrange a face-to-face meeting at a time and place of their convenience; (ii) telling them, at the meeting, about the research; and (iii) inviting them to play a part in it. Sometimes, if a teacher expressed interest in being part of the research, a *networking* meeting became re-classified as a *participant courtship* meeting.

In this way, all the teachers who eventually became participants in the research were initially recommended to the researcher by personal contacts. The personal contacts gave the researcher informal verbal reports of practicing teachers they considered to be good teachers who possessed some attribute that would be of interest to the researcher’s inquiry.

Research administration meetings were ones in which activity between the researcher and teacher was primarily setting up the data gathering sessions. They included meetings that were mainly focused on informing the teacher and students about the research and obtaining their written consent. The teacher was consulted about the best way to go about soliciting the students' and their parents agreement to participate in the research. *Research administration* meetings sometimes included working with the students; talking to the students in the class about the proposed research, seeking their consent to the researcher observing the teacher teaching them, and informing them about the required parental consent.

5.2.2 Rationale for participant selection

The research was founded on the belief that the uniqueness of every teacher made him or her a valuable potential contributor to the research and theory. In this respect, all teachers were potential participants. However, to ensure the generated theory was relevant to as wide a population as possible within the limited scope of the research, it was deemed desirable, when the opportunity arose, to select for *diversity* with respect to teacher gender, school decile ratings¹⁰ and ethnicity of students.

Although it was originally thought that *theoretical sampling* would be a major component of participant selection, it ended up playing only a very minor part. This was because, after beginning to code the first and second teachers' interview transcripts, it was decided to look at several data sets at the same time and to code the commonalities, as well as look at them individually to code unique instances. All 9 participant teachers were interviewed and the transcripts completed before intensive coding began. The preliminary analysis, too, resulted in delayed commencement of analysis. Thus, teachers were purposefully selected using criteria that were rationalised prior to analysis rather than as suggested by on-going analysis.

¹⁰ Every school's *decile rating* is calculated by the Ministry of Education, primarily for funding purposes. The variables used in the calculations render the decile rating a useful categorisation of the socio-economic rating of the area a school serves. The decile rating scale ranges between 1 and 10, 1 representing the lowest socio-economic rating.

Because the researcher's understandings of spirituality were expected to develop during the course of the research and the researcher wanted to remain open to learning from the research, she was reluctant at the outset to define what was spiritual and what was not, and to permit such premature definitions to influence her selection of participants. It was sufficient to know that teachers were chosen for the study because they had impressed someone as being a "good" teacher and therefore, it was argued, they had at least the potential to be spiritually nurturing.

Selection of teachers was rationalised on the basis of two purposes pertaining to *quality of the generated theory* and *relevance of the generated theory*, respectively:

- to maximise the likelihood of the field-data capturing information about teachers doing a good job of bringing students to learning; and
- to maximise the relevance of the generated theory to teachers in diverse types of state schooling situations.

In order to serve the first purpose, teachers were selected who had been a 'good teacher' to *somebody*. It was reasoned that a teacher whom a contact considered a good teacher was almost certainly capable of positively affecting students' learning, even though contacts' *reasons* for their recommendations varied. The contacts' descriptions of teachers' merits included: admirable personal qualities; successful actioning of programmes of learning, e.g., developing the class as a community of enquiry (i.e., teaching philosophy); notable ability to engage with children; notable ability to have children learn in a particular topic or subject area; and a particularly child-centred philosophy or approach towards teaching.

Although initially considered, in the end teachers from schools that espoused a particular religious philosophy were avoided. This was because, as preliminary analysis progressed, it was realised that it would be problematic distinguishing between inherent concepts of the emerging theory and those that were direct products of the schools' declared philosophy. The generated theory was expected to *fit* these schools, however,

and the information from them might be incorporated as data at a later stage, to refine the theory via *constant comparison*.

In order to serve the second purpose, teachers of different aged students and in different levels of the school were selected from schools in diverse geographical locations within New Zealand. A range of decile ratings was considered desirable, as was a range of student ethnicities. Both males and females were present in the participant teacher group.

Sometimes the researcher's impression of a targeted teacher did not correspond with the contact's description, and the original recommendation seemed unfounded to the researcher. Once approached, however, no teacher who wanted to participate in the research was refused. This practice was justified on ethical grounds, even though it could be argued that it contradicted the principle of *selectivity*. From the researcher's journal at the time: "Who was I to tell the teacher she was not suitable for my research on nurturing spirituality? To tell her, after courting her interest in the research, that she was not wanted as a participant was like saying I thought she was not sufficiently spiritually nurturing to warrant studying. That would have gone against all my personal principles of relating to others and valuing every teacher's unique potential contribution." It was reasoned that *selective practices* had been employed at the point of targeting teachers to court, and that *inclusivity* was an equally important principle because it contributed to the *richness* of the theory.

The resultant group of participant teachers was not intended to be representative of all teachers, but it was believed to have the potential to contribute to developing understandings of spiritually nurturing teaching by virtue of the fact that each teacher in the group had had success at bringing one or more students to some sort of notable learning.

5.2.3 The participant teachers

In order to promote anonymity, pseudonyms are used, below and thereafter in the thesis, to refer to the participant teachers, students and schools. (See Section 5.4 on ethics for more discussion on anonymity.)

Ms Sally was a teacher of an intermediate level class (Years 7 and 8) in a Decile 10 full primary¹¹ school called “A” School in the thesis. She thought that getting the best out of the students in her class was important.

Ms Sally relied more on individual connection with her students than on school-wide support for her methods and philosophies. She experienced conflicting philosophies with a teacher in her syndicate of whom she was in charge in her capacity as syndicate leader. Nevertheless, she had an excellent professional relationship with the school principal and, through that, a promise of institute support for her way of doing things because he openly acknowledged that he valued her ideas and gave her responsibilities in school-wide developmental change within the school.

Ms Cath was a teacher of a class of students in Years 2 to 8 in a Decile 1 full primary school called “B” School in the thesis. Ms Cath thought that developing students’ sense of belonging, i.e., *turangawaewae*, to the group (whanau) and the place, was important.

She was well supported by school-wide policies and practices in that she was working within school structures such as timetables and groupings of children that were rationalised on the grounds of aiding the students’ well-being and learning.

Ms Robyn was a teacher of an intermediate level class (Years 7 and 8) in a full primary school in an affluent community. The school is called “N” School in the thesis.

¹¹ A *full primary school* caters for Years 1 to 8. It is distinct from a *contributing primary school* which caters for Years 1 to 6.

The principal of the school was the contact who recommended Ms Robyn to the researcher, and did so on the basis that she was a “good teacher”. Ms Robyn’s teaching was thus supported in principle by her principal.

Ms Yolanda was a 4th year teacher teaching Year 2 and 3 students in an affluent community. The Decile 10 full primary school was called “W” School in the thesis. Ms Yolanda had almost completed a degree in another profession when she acknowledged her “passion for children” and decided to be a primary school teacher instead.

She was active on a school-wide basis promoting and organising other teachers to teach students about Virtues¹² within their curriculum programmes.

Mr Josh was an experienced teacher who was new to his class of Year 7 and 8 students at the commencement of the final quarterly school term. He taught at “W” School (Decile 10 full primary) with Ms Yolanda.

Mr Josh thought of himself as a ‘school’ teacher rather than a ‘classroom’ teacher and deliberately interacted with (and worked on relating to) students in the school other than the ones in his own class. His data set revealed him working closely with other teachers in the senior syndicate to effect a smooth transition between teachers for the students in his new class.

Ms Kelly taught Year 1 students in a Decile 10 suburban full primary school called “N” School in the thesis. She saw her job as working with the parents of her New Entrant students as much as with the students themselves. She loved teaching art. Ms Kelly thought that developing students’ positive attitude towards school, reading and maths at this early stage of their compulsory schooling, was important.

¹² The Virtues Project is an initiative to support parents, families, teachers and caregivers in the process of helping children acquire virtues and values. It is supported in New Zealand by NZ Virtues Trust, 60 Kano Street, Karori, Wellington, New Zealand.

Many of her teaching practices were supported by other teachers in her junior syndicate and by school-wide structures.

Ms Greta was a teacher of Year 3 students in a Decile 1 contributing primary school with predominantly Maori students. The school was called “D” School in the thesis. Her passion was teaching the students literacy because she saw it as a way of helping them get on in life. Ms Greta also thought it was important to teach the students emotional and behavioural skills as well as intellectual ones.

Ms Greta reported working well with other teachers in her syndicate, but sometimes feeling at odds with her principal.

Ms Frida and Ms Amy were supervisors at an innovative early childhood learning centre in a working class town. The centre provided learning sessions for children aged from 3½ to 6 years. Ms Frida was a trained early childhood supervisor and the owner and creator of the centre. Ms Amy had a lot of experience working as an early childhood educator and loved working at the centre. Both women were very proud of the education they provided the centre’s children and their families.

5.3 Fieldwork: data gathering

5.3.1 Delineating data gathering

Attempts to report the data gathering were initially harried by the question: If “all is data” (Glaser, 1998:8), when does *data gathering* actually start? If data includes the prior understandings that the researcher brings to the research, then it could be reasoned that these should be elucidated in full and backed up with references to the relevant literature before the field-data gathering begins. Because of her background academic experience in curriculum design, the researcher began the introduction to the thesis by writing about her understandings of teaching-as-curriculum design. It was reasoned, at the time, that this was necessary in order to declare a sort of *data baseline* which she brought to the analysis task of coding the data gathered from the teachers.

Such development of one's own position early in grounded theory research, however, is at odds with Glaser's (1998) imperative to safeguard one's *theoretical sensitivity* by avoiding literature reviews and deep thinking about the topic prior to engagement with the participants. Glaser warns of the dangers of *forcing* the participant data into pre-conceived conceptual frameworks. Realisation that her first attempts at analysing the participant data were forcing the data into a view of teaching-as-curriculum-design caused the researcher to restart analysis with a more open mind. This development of the researcher's *theoretical sensitivity* is reported more fully in Section 5.5, and the infracting curriculum design treatise that was originally to serve as an introduction to the thesis can be found in Appendix I (albeit in draft form).

While *all is understood to be data* within a broad conception of grounded theory as hermeneutic and interpretive inquiry, for theoretical sensitivity purposes, the first data to be analysed must be that gathered from the participants, and for reporting purposes it is useful to think of *data gathering* as beginning with the first field-data.

5.3.2 Summary of the field-data

Field-data gathering was done over eight months, from May to December 2001, with very little formal analysis done before the interviewing was complete. Throughout data gathering, sound recordings of the interviews were being transcribed and the content of the interviews was, therefore, kept current in the researcher's consciousness. The researcher having thoughts about coding was a natural part of the transcription process, but formal, systematic coding did not begin until the last interview had been transcribed.

Table 4 shows a summary of the data gathered with the nine participant teachers and their students. The field data constituted 11 teacher interview transcripts, fieldnotes of 13 class observations and 2 student interview transcripts.

Table 4: Information about Participant Data

| <i>Participant (Pseudonym)</i> | <i>School (Pseudonym)</i> | 2001 Class (Schooling Level) | Research Data Collected in 2001 |
|---|---|---|--|
| Ms Sally | “A” School | Years 7-8 | 3 teacher interviews 4 observations |
| Ms Frida | “T” Pre-school | Early Childhood | 1 teacher interview 1 observation |
| Ms Amy | | | |
| Ms Robyn | “N” School | Year 8 | 1 teacher interview 1 observation |
| Ms Kelly | “N” School | Year 1 | 1 teacher interview 2 observations |
| Ms Cath | “B” School | Years 3-8 | 1 teacher interview 2 observations |
| Ms Greta | “D” School | Years 2-3 | 1 teacher interview |
| Ms Yolanda | “W” School | Years 2-3 | 1 teacher interview 1 observation |
| Mr Josh | “W” School | Years 7-8 | 1 teacher interview 1 observation |
| Total no. teacher participants = 9 | Total no. education institutions = 6 | | Composition of data: 10 teacher interviews, 12 class observations |

5.3.3 Interviews with participant teachers

Open-ended interviews were conducted in which the participant teachers were asked to talk about what they consider important in their teaching. The venues for the interviews were chosen and arranged by the participant teachers. The researcher wanted the participants to feel comfortable and was prepared to put up with the possibility of difficult interviewing and recording conditions if it meant the participants were more likely to feel relaxed because they were in their own environment. The interviews lasted as long as was comfortable for both researcher and teacher. This varied between 40 and 90 minutes.

5.3.3.1 Recording interview data

Every interview was digitally sound recorded in order to secure verifiable evidence of raw field data. The recording procedure was contrary to what Glaser advocates. Glaser specifies that interviews and observation sessions should be recorded with hand-written fieldnotes and not sound-recorders, because transcriptions of sound recordings constitute more data than can realistically be managed at the analysis stage (Glaser, 1998). Furthermore, he strongly recommends that notes of the interviews and observation sessions be theoretically coded on the day they are initially recorded, to enhance the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher. Sound recording interviews does not permit this because of the time lag created by the lengthy transcription process.

Although the subsequent transcription and analysis processes did turn out to be very time-consuming, the decision to sound record the interviews proved valuable for several reasons. Firstly, the transcription procedures provided the opportunity to pick up so much more in the data than was possible during the interview. This had the effect of minimizing some of the inherent shortcomings of the interview process, for example, making up for lapses in concentration of the interviewer.

Secondly, transcription facilitated identification of incidents of *reflexivity* and thereby aided transparency in the research. *Reflexivity* is one of the evaluative criteria identified in Section 4.1.4 and refers to the way the research activity shapes all involved with the research via the interdependent relationship between the researcher and the researched. Strauss & Corbin talk about “the **interplay** that takes place between the data and researcher in both gathering and analysing data. ... Interplay, by its very nature, means that the researcher is actively reacting to and working with data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:58). In one example during the doctoral fieldwork, the researcher was struggling with an instinctive dislike of the teaching style of a participant, and was distracted during the interview by a compulsion to hide her negative reaction from the teacher. The distraction caused the researcher to miss a lot of what the teacher was saying, and her negative feelings very likely had an influence on the direction of the interview. Later, when she transcribed the interview, the researcher ‘heard’ for the first time the *intent* of what the teacher was saying.

Herein lies a third advantage of sound recording the interviews. In the example, *interplay* during the interview had the effect of stymying the participant's intent. The sound recording and transcription of the interview provided a good opportunity to capture that intent.

5.3.3.2 Transcription of sound-recorded interviews

Interviewing commenced before a decision had been made about whether or not to employ a transcriber to produce written versions of the sound-recordings. Personally transcribing the first interview provided the researcher with the opportunity to learn what the transcription process entailed, and thereby make a more informed decision.

Although that first experience of transcribing illustrated the extensive effort and time commitment that the task required, three main areas of positive outcomes were also recognised, and the decision was made to personally transcribe all the data and to not employ a transcriber. The three main factors that were enhanced by the interviewer doing the transcriptions were; accuracy of the transcripts, the researcher's interviewing skills, and the analyst-data interface. The factors are elaborated below.

- (i) *More accurate transcripts.* The venues chosen by participants posed several difficulties with sound recordings. For example, in a staffroom after school where teachers, the principal, and other school people including students wandered through, the recording picked up a lot of background noise and sometimes other people joined the conversation. Caretakers' vacuum cleaners posed another obstacle to an audible recording; the sound recorder seemed particularly efficient at picking up the tone of a vacuum cleaner even if it was quite a distance away. The acoustics of a private home used for one of the interviews proved echoey and difficult, too. In one classroom interview, the quiet voice of the participant teacher coupled with the noise of wind through a seemingly paper-thin wall, made transcribing almost impossible. In another instance, the participant's and interviewer's voices sounded almost identical on tape.

Because the transcriber had been present at the interviews and could remember the gist of what was said, she was in a good position to decipher those parts of the sound recording that were, for various reasons, difficult to hear. Undoubtedly, someone other than the interviewer transcribing the sound recordings would have resulted in less accurate written versions.

- (ii) *Development of interviewing skills.* The researcher felt uncomfortable listening to herself on the sound recording. However, being forced to do so in the name of transcribing the interviews, resulted in her interview skills and overall interview technique developing quickly. She learned not to talk over the participant. She learned to let a topic flow and to not fill silences with comments and questions. She learned to be more courteous and more appropriately emotional, and to not tell her own stories, no matter how relevant they seemed at the time. She learned to concentrate on probing the intent of the participant and to ask open-ended questions that facilitated that probing.

Personally transcribing the interviews during the fieldwork phase of the research meant that the insights and learning as a researcher which resulted directly from the transcription process, could be put to immediate use in the continuing interviews.

- (iii) *Enhanced analyst-data interface.* Successful data analysis in grounded theory research requires the researcher to establish a close relationship with the data-as-representation-of-the-participant's-experience. For each of the data sets, this relationship started at the first meeting as the researcher became more acquainted with the participant, absorbed information about the environment in which the participant worked, observed him/her interacting with others, and interacted with him/her conversationally. The substantive understandings that the researcher later brought to the analysis of the hard data started with the first meeting. Personally transcribing the sound recording of an interview afforded continuity and enhancement of that researcher-data relationship. Verbatim transcription created the opportunities to notice things that had been missed at the time of the interview, think about what was being said, recognise concepts

and relationships between concepts in the data, and to better ‘hear’ the intent of the participant.

Oppositely, sending the sound recordings to someone else for transcribing and having to wait for hard copies to be returned would have interrupted the researcher’s flow of thought about the participant and what he/she had said. Although time may have been saved in the transcribing phase, ultimately the analysis phase would have taken a lot longer.

5.3.3.3 Interviewing and the integrity of the interview process

The researcher, with no formal experience conducting open-ended interviews at the outset of the fieldwork, approached the initial teachers with the simple intention of getting them to talk about their teaching and the education they provided for their students. She wanted to gather data that would enable her to explore the connection between what the teachers were doing in their teaching and the students’ engagement and psychological response. As the fieldwork progressed and the researcher’s interviewing skills developed, the interview questions changed from probing the curriculum design practices behind what the teachers were saying to probing the point the teacher was trying to make. In the early interviews, the researcher had no expectations that the teachers would necessarily be conscious of what was special and effective about their teaching, although she believed she would be able to glean those understandings given sufficient data about their teaching practice. She had the attitude: “You talk and I’ll work out the significance of what you’re saying later.” By the end of the fieldwork, the researcher’s arrogant attitude had been humbled and interview questions genuinely sought the experiences, opinions and ideas of the teacher. The attitude was more: “Please help me understand the significance of what you’re saying”.

Glaser identifies “face sheet variables” (Glaser, 1998:84) as factors that are *assumed* to be influential on the people being studied, and he cautions against allowing *face sheet variables* to unduly influence analysis of the data. *Face sheet variables* are commonly the subjects of issues that are part of current normative models for thought, feeling and behaviour (ibid.), for example gender, ethnicity and age. In the doctoral research, the curriculum design concepts that formed the researcher’s understandings of teaching

constituted *face sheet variables*, and they threatened to compromise the integrity of the data as representation of the participant teachers' experiences.

Examination of the interview transcripts revealed, however, that the evolving interview procedure (to avoid the influence of *face sheet variables*) and the researcher's developing interviewing skills did not compromise the quality of the data. An example from the final interview with Ms Sally, who was one of three initial participants, showed her discussing the socio-economic and ethnic make-up of her class dutifully at some length, as prompted by the researcher, and then declaring that: actually all that wasn't important and didn't come in to her way of thinking at all. She started talking about the students' personalities and sense of identity instead. This exemplifies how, given an opportunity to talk, the teachers eventually talked about what was relevant and important to them at the time, regardless of how the researcher tried to direct the interview. Thus, the quality of the data gathered throughout the field-work was no less for the researcher's inexperience.

An important researcher attitude that promoted the teacher's opportunity to talk was reluctance to interrupt or direct the teacher's talk. Early in the fieldwork, reluctance to interrupt was borne of the researcher's inexperience and lack of confidence, but it was soon recognised as an important strategy and actively adopted. The teachers all instinctively thought that what was important to them would be valuable to the researcher.

The time of year that each interview was conducted was originally believed to be a *face sheet variable* that might negatively influence the data. The interviews were held later in the school year, and it was very obvious that every teacher had already set a lot of behavioural expectations with students. The concern was that the data gathered from the everyday context of an up-and-running classroom with well established routines would not capture teacher-student interactions that might be important to understanding a teacher's effect on students. Even Mr Josh, who was in with a new class at the beginning of Term IV, was not doing what he would normally do with a new class of students because he was trying to fit in with already established expectations and routines of an unfamiliar syndicate.

The concern abated when it was recognised that any event that was out of the ordinary and even slightly challenging for the teacher usually caused the teacher to reiterate to the researcher what she had already set up with the students. A new student joining the class provided such examples in three of the data sets. In each case, the teacher settling the new student into the class created the context for her to talk to the researcher about things she had already established with the other students. Not only did the data capture the interactions around establishing routines and behavioural expectations, but it also captured the teacher's analysis of the new student's difficult situation and what she planned to do to help.

For practical reasons, conducting more than one interview was not feasible with most of the teachers. The interview transcripts and observation notes gathered during the fieldwork phase constituted an ample quantity of rich data. Instead of re-interviewing teachers, theoretical sampling was by way of revisiting the interview transcripts and observation notes wearing different hats. This is explained more in Section 6.2.1.

5.3.4 Observations of participant teachers

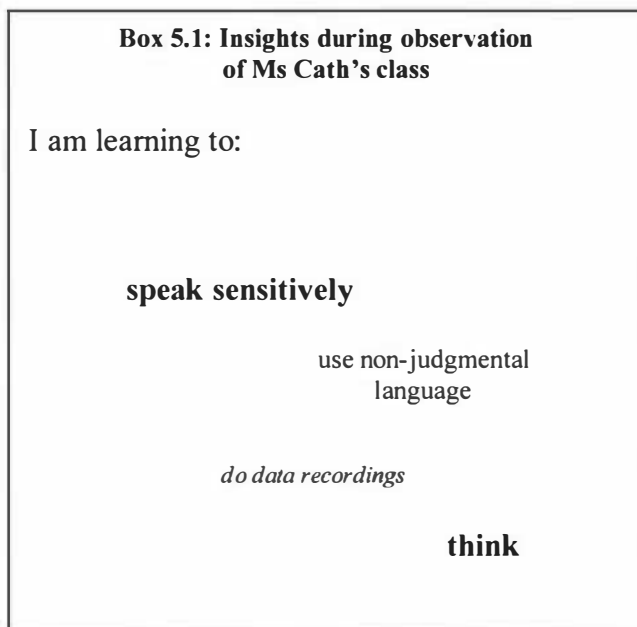
The timing of the observation session and, therefore, the part of the school day observed was at the discretion of the teacher. Each teacher's choice was considered interesting and informative in itself. Because the research had been described to the teachers as a study of "good" teaching and children's spirituality, what they chose to show the researcher was assumed to be a part of their teaching they felt confident in, and that they thought would add to the researcher's ideas about spirituality. One teacher wanted the researcher to see her interacting with the students in a formal lesson, others wanted the researcher to observe what the *students* did best, and some invited the researcher to come anytime during the school day.

What the teachers instructed the researcher *not to observe* was also informative. Some were of the opinion that the researcher would not be interested in the mundane, "housekeeping" parts of the day, which suggested that those teachers thought the routines were not pertinent to the research.

Observing a teacher's interaction with the students before school started in the morning, however, was just as informative as sitting in on an intensive teaching session. In reality, the researcher was interested in gathering data on everything about the teachers.

There was an acknowledgement on the part of the researcher that it was impossible to comprehensively record every thing of the dynamics of a class in action. The acknowledgement was tempered, however, with the belief that whatever *was* noticed and recorded would be useful. Observation notes were recorded as a complex combination of mind maps and flow charts in an attempt to capture both the continuity and connections of the multiple interactions observed. Recording 'conventions' were developed as the observations proceeded, e.g., the researcher consistently tried to capture a picture of the physical environment, including desk arrangement, light, orderliness and displays of each classroom.

The observation notes were largely descriptive, although sometimes the researcher had analytical thoughts as she was observing and she jotted these down too, usually in separate boxes in order to flag them as distinct from descriptions. For example, during one observation, the researcher experienced insights into her own personal; growth as a researcher and scribbled a box within her notes:



5.3.5 Field-data storage

Notes from all contacts with school personnel were filed to facilitate future retrieval and referencing. Systematic information storage procedures are important for providing documentary evidence of the research and of the data. Table 5 shows an example of a record at the front of a school file. Each record served as a table of contents for the school's file. Notes from each contact with personnel at the school were filed according to the Contact No., and were, thus, readily retrievable and referenced.

Table 5: Record of Contact with “W” School

| Contact No. | Networking Meeting | Participant Courtship Meeting | Research Administration Meeting | Research Data Interview | Research Data Observation |
|-------------|--------------------|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | | 5/10/01, 1pm Visit with Mr Josh, teacher | 15/10/01, 3:30pm Phone-call to principal for permission to work with Mr Josh in school | | |
| 2 | | | | 1/11/01, 3.30pm Mr Josh 7.3.2.2.1 | |
| 3 | | | | | 16/11/01, 9am Mr Josh’s class |
| 4 | | | 16/11/01, 11am Ms Yolanda’s class to talk about research | | |
| 5 | | | | 13/12/01, 3:45pm Ms Yolanda 7.3.2.2.2 | |
| 6 | | | | | 16/12/01, 9am Ms Yolanda’s class |

5.4 Ethics

The proposed doctoral research presented many ethical considerations. The intention to research *people* automatically put ethical considerations in the university ethics committee's serious category. Working with *children* carried its own set of issues to do with their diminished power and rights, and that the children were *young* compounded the intensity of those issues. Working with *spirituality* carried issues to do with privacy.

Throughout the on-going design of the research procedures, consideration was given to various groups of people likely to be affected by the research:

- the children participating in the study;
- other children in the classroom who were not participating in the study;
- the teachers participating in the study;
- the teachers and other personnel in the school (or educational setting) who were not participating in the study;
- the parents or caregivers and families of the children participating in the study;
- the parents or caregivers and families of the children in the classroom who are not participating in the study;
- the researcher; and
- the religious groups affiliated with the adults and children participating in the study.

Because a considerable proportion of the data gathering was to take place in school classrooms, the main ethical concerns were to protect the children from harm and to respect their rights. The children's own consent to participate was considered not sufficient to include them, because they may have been unable to comprehend, or have had sufficient experience to appreciate, the issues. A responsible adult advocate who acted to protect them and who could consent on their behalf was thus deemed necessary.

The appended ethics protocol (Appendix II) was agreed between the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) and the researcher before fieldwork began. The protocol's broad range of identified data-gathering methods reflected that the protocol was negotiated prior to many of the decisions about procedures that eventuated as part of the evolving research design. The approved protocol manifested policies of *informed, active consent* of the participant teachers, the students, and the students' parents before data gathering commenced.

Despite the researcher's attempt to cover all possible eventualities with the ethics application, tensions that were not easily addressed or resolved nevertheless arose between the realities of conducting the research and the requirements of the protocol. MUHEC was re-approached for approval of a *passive consent* approach in one economically poor school community in which the majority of the parents of the class in question spoke almost no English and were illiterate. The researcher argued that the parents and teachers in the school had a strong relationship of trust and that the parents believed they had handed over the responsibility for the safety of their children when they sent them to the school. While parents and caregivers are usually given the role of the protective adult advocate who consents on their child's behalf, in this situation, and because only an observation of the teacher teaching was intended and not an interview with the students, it was appropriate for the teacher to be accorded the responsibility for granting consent.

Another dilemma was posed by a student who's parent refused consent for her participation in the research, and who turned out to be the subject of extensive talk by the teacher because of her troublesome behaviour and challenging personality. The teacher believed the student's challenging way-of-being stemmed from a detrimental family situation, and the teacher's talk constituted rich and valuable data. The researcher had to be very careful about writing up the rich understandings that emerged from the data; careful to focus on the teacher and to not mention the student *at all*. This illustration exemplifies the Catch 22 that was sometimes created by the imperative for active parental consent. Troublesome students provided some of the richest data, and yet were the least likely ones to gain parental consent to participate because their parents were often uncooperative or not in communication with the school.

A safety issue not addressed by the MUHEC protocol, and yet of critical ethical importance, is not what the children will say to the researcher, but rather what the researcher will go on to do with the information (Erricker, Erricker, Ota, Sullivan, and Fletcher, 1997:39); it is important that the researcher does not use it against the children, nor misrepresent their point of view.

Throughout the thesis, the privacy of the participant teachers and the students was protected by the use of pseudonyms to effect anonymity of the participants and their schools.

5.5 Preliminary analysis

The preliminary analysis phase was recognised as the period of time between the researcher starting to examine and manipulate the data, and starting to code the data for the participants' main concerns and their resolving behaviours, i.e., the time it took after starting analysis to work out the real purpose of grounded theory analysis. During this period, the researcher was simultaneously reflecting on her attempts at analysis and the methodological literature. The results of that reflection were a deeper understanding of the grounded theory methods Glaser advocates, Glaser's point of difference from other grounded theory advocates, and heightened theoretical sensitivity.

When beginning grounded theory data analysis, the best of intentions not to 'force the data' will be thwarted until the analyst understands that the *purpose* of participant data analysis at that early stage is to find out what is going on for the participants. Thus, part of developing theoretical sensitivity involves learning to focus on the participants' concerns, rather than on manipulating the data into researcher-designed conceptual frameworks that bear no relationship with the data.

Reporting the (theoretically *insensitive*) attempts at analysis is worthwhile because they illustrate the sorts of tendencies a beginning grounded theorist must overcome before he or she can progress.

5.5.1 Preliminary analysis in the doctoral research

Glaser (1998) advocates starting to *code* data as soon as it has been gathered from participants. In the doctoral research, the researcher found initial attempts to code the first field-data overwhelming. The researcher read over the lengthy transcripts and attempted to note any thoughts that came to mind (i.e., *memos*) in an adjacent column, as instructed by Glaser. Having just spent 12 months reading and engulfed in others' ideas about spirituality and education (in the *original impetus* phase of the research), meanings and pathways in the data were rife. A direction for proceeding was elusive.

Glaser warns against reading the literature before commencing grounded theory, in order to avoid this very scenario. Suspension of one's existing conceptual frameworks, necessary for a theoretically sensitive examination of the data, is a difficult task and recent reflection on academic literature makes the task even more challenging.

Searching for a prevalent line of conceptual reasoning that would indicate a direction for analysis, the researcher reasoned that collecting similar data from a teacher in a different teaching situation might illuminate commonalities about key teaching concepts that were not context-dependent. Eventually, gathering data (resulting in interview transcripts, and observation and field notes) from all participants was completed before the substantive analysis got underway.

Assuming the teachers' main concern was 'to educate the students', the researcher initially bypassed Glaser's process of identifying the main concern of the teachers. She reasoned that Hay and Nye's (1998) four relational consciousness categories as a conceptualisation of spirituality could be used as lenses through which to examine the data. The data was searched for anything to do with the relational consciousness categories. For each teacher, a page was designed with a relational conscious category in a cell at the centre, and the relevant teacher's ideas from the transcripts were mind-mapped around the cell.

The researcher found the identification of categories, and conceptualisation of relationships between them was fast and exciting. The process of analysis, however, soon proved to have several shortcomings.

Even though every entry on the mindmaps was inspired by something a teacher said at an interview and was thus *apparently* grounded in the data, it was difficult to track the researcher's reasoning. Her thinking was random, rather than systematic, and left no reasoning indicators that could be followed by someone later assessing the analysis process. The researcher soon reached a point of insight overload. The researcher saw, not only numerous exciting concepts, but also relationships evident between all of them, and had no reasons to run with one over another for the focus of the theory. She realised she was engaged in an elaborate classification process that related everything to everything else with no purpose to the classification act other than the classification itself.

Furthermore, to present the 'theory' to the participant teachers would have involved first explaining to the teachers the structure of Hay and Nye's conceptual framework. This started to look like forcing the data and coercing the teachers into collaborating with the forcing. The researcher realised she was promoting her own 'clever' ideas at the expense of the teachers' important contributions to the research. This did not sit well, and Glaser was re-read for advice.

5.5.2 The beginning of analysis

The researcher read the transcripts over again and listed foci of participants' talk, i.e., lists were generated of the things the teachers *talked about*. The researcher not only resisted the tendency to *analyse* the data, but also undertook to continually examine and expose her pre-conceptions, and to strive to remain open-minded to the participants' intent. From the researcher's journal:

I tried to keep the ideas/ intent of the teachers as pure and untainted with my interpretation as possible. The main influence from me, at this point in the analysis, came from the way I saw fit to group the ideas – so my own classification framework for considering teaching had influence on the analysis at this early stage. At the same time, I remained

constantly open to the possibility of new ways of grouping, to the possibility that the teacher might be talking about something that didn't yet fit into my classification, and to things I hadn't previously considered to be part of the teacher's job.

(The researcher's journal)

5.5.3 The products of preliminary analysis

Preliminary analysis reflected the researcher's struggle to move from being the scientific hypothesis-tester that she was used to being, to the open-minded grounded theorist that she aspired to be. It reflected the researcher's personal development in *theoretical sensitivity*; a humbling of attitude, from being 'the expert' to according credit for expertise to the teachers and being open to everything they had to offer.

Although later it seemed like a 'false start' to the analysis, the time spent in this preliminary analysis phase was not wasted because the product was useful in other ways. The resultant mindmaps graphically verified the researcher's hunch that the participant teachers *were* nurturing *some aspect* of spirituality. Furthermore, they illustrated the emphasis placed by the teacher on each of the four aspects of spirituality identified by Hay and Nye (ibid.), and were subsequently useful in the second stage of the analysis phase of the research, generating the formal theory.

The self-indulgent personal theorising exemplified by the preliminary analysis in the doctoral research is a real risk of grounded theory research without purpose. Any deep examination of data that is conducted without a purpose will reveal the *inherent connectedness of all things* that renders a focus for the theory elusive. The researcher is forced to impose a focus and inevitably serves his or her own interest. Glaser's confinement of the purpose to theorising participant's concerns and their resolving behaviours gives the research an altruistic purpose and sets it apart from other grounded theory proponents' versions.

Grounded theory-according-to-Glaser proved to be self-correcting. Attempts to force the data lead to dead-ends in conceptual pathways because there was no supporting data to grow the theory.

Chapter 6 Analysis

6.1 Overview of analysis

Analysis in quantitative, scientific research is easy to identify because it employs statistical tools in finite procedures of data manipulation, and the start and finish of the analysis activities are therefore easy to define. In contrast, the primary analysis ‘tool’ in grounded theory research is the researcher’s intellect. Because it is difficult to pinpoint the boundaries of one’s thinking about something, e.g., when the thinking started and when it ceased, analysis in grounded theory research is consequently difficult to delimit.

6.1.1 Glaser’s representation of analysis

Glaser (1998) sees “conceptualisation” and “perspectivisation” as flexible analytic tools by which the researcher generates the theory. By *perspectivisation* he means taking different levels of abstraction¹³. He identifies “levels of conceptual perspective analysis” (ibid.:136). By this he means the basic levels of analysis typically undertaken:

Level 1 Perspective. “The data”

Level 2 Perspective. “Conceptualisation of the data into categories and their properties”

Level 3 Perspective. “Overall integration through sorting into a theory”

Level 4 Perspective. “Formalization of a substantive theory to a more general conceptual level by constantly comparing substantive theory articles”

(ibid.:136)

Each level represents a further abstraction of the level before. The theory is thus systematically generated from the raw data, using the researcher’s intellect as a tool to lift the emerging understandings from one level of abstraction to the next.

¹³ ‘Abstraction’ is defined in *Collins English Dictionary* as “the process of formulating generalized ideas or concepts by extracting common qualities from specific examples”.

6.1.2 Two analysis stages in the doctoral research

Although the grounded theory literature espouses “highly structured, systematic and rigorous” analytical procedures (Glaser, 1998:13), the reality of the research was that the actual processes undertaken were not prescribed or predictable, often seemed illogical, and sometimes defied explanation. Nevertheless, they did prove to be effective and productive, and the researcher’s understandings of what constituted analysis grew throughout the research. Ultimately, a rhythm of analytical processes was discernible, that might be reported as procedure, but it was not recognised as such until the final stages of the research.

The analysis phase came to be broadly understood as encompassing everything to do with changing data, including both the field data gathered from participants and the data gathered from other sources, into a comprehensive theory. Although the definitive analysis method, i.e., constant comparison, is the same throughout the theory generation process, varying *purposes* of analysis can be seen to define two main procedural stages; generation of substantive theory about the participant teachers, and generation of formal theory about teaching to enhance spiritual growth.

The first analysis stage, generation of substantive theory, consisted of searching, manipulating and conceptualising the participant data in order to answer two questions: *In their professional striving for student learning, (i) on what, exactly, do the participant teachers’ concerns focus; and (ii) how do they go about addressing those concerns?* The processes involved in generating the substantive theory are described in Section 6.2 and the substantive theory itself is developed in Chapter 7.

The second discernible analysis stage was generation of formal theory about teachers in general, and it consisted of further conceptualising the substantive theory in light of more participant data and data from other sources. The effect of the formal theory generation processes was to take another step back from the substantive theory to a yet higher level of abstraction, in order to answer the question: *What constitutes spiritually nurturing teaching?* The processes involved in generating the formal theory are described in Section 6.3 and the formal theory itself is developed in Chapter 8.

Within each of the two analysis stages, various analytical processes were employed to complete given tasks, and each successive task lifted emerging theoretical understandings to a higher level of abstraction.

6.1.3 The use of participant data

In order to illuminate the differences and similarities *between* teachers, data sets gathered from each teacher were *analysed as entities* in their own right at every phase of the substantive theory analysis, *as well as being pooled* to facilitate understandings about the collective.

All but one of the data sets were used in the generation of the substantive theory. The early childhood centre data set was left out of the analysis until the second analysis stage, when it was compared with the substantive theory in order to enrich the emerging formal theory. The main reason for omitting it at the substantive theory stage was that, during data gathering the researcher realised that the early childhood centre ran on an established philosophy that was openly religious in origin. As noted in Section 5.2.2, data gathered from teachers in such schools were avoided at the substantive theory generation stage because of possible problems distinguishing between inherent concepts of the emerging theory and those that were direct products of the school's declared philosophy.

6.2 Generation of the substantive theory

Generation of substantive theory involved two main tasks:

- (i) identification of the focus of the theory by sorting, manipulating and conceptualising raw data (interview transcripts and observation notes) to answering the questions: *What is the main concern that the participant teachers' actions are continually aimed at resolving? and What is the teachers' main resolving action?* (described further in Section 6.2.1);
- (ii) writing of the theory by further conceptualising and articulating relationships between the variables to answer the questions: *How do the*

categories and concepts identified fit together? and *What are the natures of the relationships between them, e.g., causative?* (described further in Section 6.2.2, and presented in Chapter 7).

6.2.1 Identification of the teacher's main concern and main resolving action

Glaser (1998:116) writes:

It is [the participants'] main concern and their continual processing of it that is the focus of grounded theory. This problem and its processing will emerge in the initial stages of the research.

Glaser's assertive tone belies the uncertainty experienced by the researcher beginning analysis. In the doctoral research, the process by which the teacher's 'main concern' was identified was complex and problematic.

Glaser describes the *main concern* as, both, the "prevalent problem" of the people in the substantive area under study (Glaser, 1998:116), and the "prime mover (i.e., the main motivation) of most of the behaviour seen and talked about in the substantive area" (ibid.:115). His two-pronged description of *main concern*, i.e., in terms of both the main problem and behaviours, calls for a two-pronged approach to analysis. Ultimately, identifying the teacher's main concern involved marrying the process of *prioritising the teacher's concerns* with the more complex analytical process of *categorising the teacher's behaviours* in order to determine the focus of both.

Focal points of the teachers' talk were identified in the transcripts and grouped to successive levels of abstraction. The teachers' concerns were prioritised, and the teachers' behaviours categorised and organised into a conceptual framework for the theory. Tasks were worked on concurrently, and not in sequence as suggested by the systematic descriptions in the following sections. (Sections 6.2.1.1, 6.2.1.2 and 6.2.1.3 describe the processes in more detail).

6.2.1.1 Identification of the teacher's foci using open and axial coding

The first data set was selected for analysis on the basis that it was the largest and would provide the largest list of categories with which to begin.

The interview transcripts were studied in conjunction with the observation fieldnotes to identify foci of the teacher's talk because the foci of a teacher's talk was assumed to represent things with which the teacher was concerned. The questions guiding the search were: *About what is the teacher talking? What topics seem to be important to the teacher? On what is the teacher's talk focusing?*

The researcher was mindful of being *theoretically sensitive*. In the initial stages of analysis, coding requires the researcher to restrict abstracting brain activity to its most basic level and name what is being seen in a phenomenological manner that simply describes what is.

The foci were recorded using low level abstraction, or *open coding*, aimed at preserving the teacher's intent. Refer to Boxes 6.1 and 6.2 for an example. Box 6.1 shows an excerpt from an interview, and Box 6.2 shows a list of teacher's foci generated from the excerpt after open coding.

**Box 6.1: Excerpt from page 1 of transcription of
first interview with Ms Sally**

Transcription of Interview P1

page 1

Paragraph E

-
-
-
1 Interviewer: So you're interested in individual achievement?

Paragraph F

1 Ms Sally: Oh, definitely - ...well, um, yea - I'm interested in achievement on several
2 levels... - but basically, I mean, ...the whole of my classroom functions in
3 that kids are free to be themselves and that they feel very safe in being
4 themselves as people and as learners, and that they know that, that in
5 the classroom, ...there is an atmosphere where they know that my philosophy is,
6 and I make it very clear to them that our aim is to find the good in everybody
7 and to value everybody for who they are - and ...I work hard at ... achieving
8 that in several ways - one way is to set the environment up in practice so that
9 they can't help but see kids' strengths and that sort of comes by how you
10 respond to kids - how you give them feedback - and what the other kids are
11 hearing and the quality of your feedback and what you're emphasising in your
12 feedback ...to individual kids - so they're getting that, sort of, indirect
13 message ...oh, Mrs S is valuing this - or oh, you know, this is
14 important in this room - and two, I'll actually directly challenge people ...who
15 are putting other kids down - no, I don't challenge the kids, I challenge the
16 behaviour - like I'll say, you know, with a sense of humour, always with a
17 sense of humour ..."Hey mate, don't you realise that in this classroom we're
18 not actually looking for those negative things? There may be some, however,
19 what we're looking for is the positive things in that person" - you know, that
20 sort of attitude? - and so gradually it gets through to them that ...you know,
21 it's a way of thinking that I'm sort of modeling and sort of promoting, really
22 ...but I don't ever impose it on the kids without explaining why

**Box 6.2: Example of the list of teacher's foci generated
from the excerpt in Box 6.1 after open coding**

Ungrouped list of focal points in Ms Sally's talk (Open Coding)

.
. .
.

The teacher wants the students to feel free and safe to be themselves as people and as learners, and to feel that everyone is valued for who they are, so she sets up the classroom environment to that end P1-1F2

The teacher works towards the students knowing her philosophy of aiming to find the good in everybody and valuing everybody P1-1F5

Teacher works hard to set up classroom psychological environment P1-1F7

Strategies to set up classroom psychological environment P1-1F7

One factor in setting up desired classroom environment is the way the teacher responds to the students – how she gives *feedback* P1-1F9

Students get indirect messages about the teacher's philosophy, from hearing the teacher respond to other individuals – the quality of the feedback, and what the teacher is emphasising in the feedback are important P1-1F10

Teacher sets up the classroom environment so that the students' strengths are obvious P1-1F9

Teacher will pull students up for not respecting other students P1-1F14

When they have done something the teacher disagrees with, the teacher challenges the students' *behaviour* rather than the *students personally* P1-1F15

Teacher likes to portray a sense of humour when picking students up on sensitive issues P1-1F16

Teacher believes that having a sense of humour with the students is important P1-1F16

The teacher "models" and "promotes" a way of thinking – doesn't impose it without explaining why P1-1F21

Students learning the teacher's philosophy of valuing everyone is gradual and takes time P1-1F20

The enormous number of foci produced by open coding were then grouped into categories and sub-categories to indicate familial and subservient relationships. This was done using a higher level of abstraction, or *axial coding*, that involved the researcher synthesizing ideas, and produced a working list of each teacher's focal points *in categories*. Refer to Box 6.3 to follow the example.

**Box 6.3: Example of the list of teacher's foci generated from
the excerpt in Box 6.1 after axial coding**

Grouped list of things Ms Sally talked about in interviews (Axial Coding)

-
-
-

Classroom Environment

Classroom environment is such that students feel free and safe to be themselves as people and as learners, and everyone is valued for who they are P1-1F3

One factor in setting up desired classroom environment is the way the teacher responds to the students – how she gives *feedback* P1-1F9

Classroom environment set up so that the students' strengths are obvious P1-1F9

Teacher works hard to set up classroom psychological environment P1-1F7

Strategies to set up classroom psychological environment P1-1F7

Things about what the students end up learning or experiencing or what the students enjoy or dislike

The classroom functions so that students feel free and safe to be themselves as people and as learners P1-1F3

Teacher-student relationship

Students know the teacher's philosophy of aiming to find the good in everybody and valuing everybody P1-1F5

Students get indirect messages about the teacher's philosophy of valuing everybody, from hearing the teacher respond to other individuals – the quality of the feedback, and what the teacher is emphasising in the feedback are important P1-1F10

Strategies for controlling students

Teacher will pull students up for not respecting other students P1-1F14

When they have done something the teacher disagrees with, the teacher challenges the students' *behaviour* rather than the *students personally* P1-1F15

Humour

Teacher likes to portray a sense humour when picking students up on sensitive issues P1-1F16

Teacher believes that having a sense of humour with the students is important P1-1F16

Actioning the curriculum - bringing students to learning

Students learning the teacher's philosophy of valuing everyone is gradual and takes time P1-1F20

The teacher "models" and "promotes" a way of thinking – doesn't impose it without explaining why P1-1F21

The categories were recorded on a *master list of emergent categories* which worked to, both, keep track of all the emerging categories as subsequent data sets were analysed, and organise the (axial coded) grouped lists of subsequent data sets.

Further data sets were selected for analysis on the basis that the teacher appeared to focus on either similar or dissimilar topics, that is to say, the teacher's foci appeared to either provide further example of, extend, or not fit the emerging categories. The data selection process thus constituted a form of *theoretical sampling*. Data gathered from teachers with a suspected similar focus were selected if a category was emerging and being developed, but once saturation of a category was suspected, a teacher's data that did *not* seem to fit the emerging patterns was selected.

Regardless of why it was selected, each teacher's data was approached with an open mind. Open coding of the raw data always preceded grouping into categories in the order of the current master list. Open coded foci that did not easily fit into the master list of categories caused the master list to be adjusted to accommodate them. Sometimes a category was rejected because it was identified as too broad in focus, in which case its sub-categories assumed the status of categories. At other times a category was recognised as a subcategory and subsumed by a new category. The reasoning that led to changes in the categories was invariably complex and usually accumulated after lengthy consideration of where to place 'incoming' data. When the master list was changed, all previously analysed data sets were revisited and studied, again, in light of the new categories. The vignette in Box 6.4 illustrates the complexity of the coding process.

Box 6.4: Example of the complexity of the coding process

Vignette: The Rise and Demise of *Curriculum Design Processes* as a Category

‘Curriculum Design Processes’ (*CDP*) is an example of a broad category with sub-categories, that was used early in the axial coding phase but then abandoned, upon reflection, in favour of the sub-categories.

The researcher came from an academic curriculum design background and, prior to the research, had developed understandings of curriculum design processes as curriculum determinant identification, curriculum planning, curriculum actioning, curriculum evaluation and curriculum policy formation. These were the researcher’s terms for the broad groups of activities that constituted every teacher’s teaching role. The researcher had developed her understanding of curriculum design from study of the literature and from interaction with practicing education professionals who were also post-graduate students enrolled in masterate courses on curriculum design in which she was lecturing.

While the researcher expected the participant teachers’ talk to fit into these broad subcategories, she nevertheless remained ‘theoretically sensitive’ and mindful of not ‘forcing the data’. She eventually found that the teachers’ talk did *not*, in fact, fit neatly into these subcategories, and this threw the categories themselves, as concepts useful to practicing teachers, into question. Furthermore, some of the processes which other academics had identified and which the researcher had questioned and discarded on the grounds of lack of credibility in the face of scrutiny by her students, did, indeed, go unmentioned by the teachers, thereby confirming the researcher’s rejection of them.

When the characteristics of the curriculum design subcategories, i.e. the criteria used to categorise them, were examined, the researcher realised that, by including *curriculum determinants* as an aspect of the field of curriculum design, the field was opened up to include just about everything to do with the teacher and his/her role of bringing the students to learning. A lot of the other categories could come under the heading *CDP* too. The decision was made to abandon *CDP* as a category on the grounds that it was too broad. The subcategories originally placed under the *CDP* category assumed the status of full categories. (Subsequently, these also developed and changed.)

The decision to abandon the category of *CDP* was reinforced when the teachers’ foci were further examined under the newly upgraded categories. When referring to what the researcher thought of as curriculum design processes, the teachers’ talk was always in terms of people’s actions, and never in terms of the processes themselves. The participant teachers didn’t appear to think in terms of ‘processes’ – they thought in terms of people. They didn’t say, “The curriculum is being developed” – they said, “We are developing the curriculum”. This seemed to be an important point.

At all levels of abstraction, the grouping into categories sometimes seemed to speak more of the researcher’s classification faculties than it did the participants’ intentions. The analytic process was tempered, nevertheless, by the researcher’s commitment to remain open-minded, and willingness to be flexible, to continually examine rationale for

grouping in light of the research aim, and to rework groupings until insights emerged. Sometimes deliberation on the categories and how they related to each other raised questions that led to completely new ways of looking at the data.

Box 6.5 is a snapshot of the Master List of Teachers’ Foci at the point in time when the teachers’ main concerns were identified and main concepts of the theory started to become clear. The list was always considered as a working document and never viewed as a final and ‘complete’ picture of the things the teachers talked about.

| Box 6.5 Master List of Teachers’ Foci during Interviews | |
|---|--|
| The research About the interview Teacher’s perception of the research | Assessing students’ learning Teacher’s awareness of where students are at in the school system and their (the teacher’s) role/responsibilities in progressing students to the next stage Teacher’s understanding of learning and teaching |
| Personal things about the teacher, eg, knowledge, understandings, skills, beliefs Understandings about spirituality | Actioning the curriculum and planning actioning the curriculum – bringing the students to learning The teacher’s way of being |
| Teacher’s professional identity and confidence in his/her role as teacher | What the students end up learning or experiencing or what the students enjoy or dislike |
| The job of teaching Teacher’s activities/ responsibilities within the school, not directly related to teaching his/her students Being a syndicate leader Being ‘on duty’ | Teacher’s perceptions about the students and the school’s community |
| Classroom environment Elements Strategies to set up classroom psychological environment | Positive collegial relationships |
| Teacher-student relationships Elements Strategies What the teacher gets out of it What the students get out of it Issues Rationale | The principal |
| Discipline – students behaviour within the school rules and teacher bringing them to that | Institutional characteristics and happenings |
| Developing the curriculum | Constraints and problems experienced by the teacher Not enough time timetabled for teacher to do what he/she wants to do Things about other (problem) teacher(s) in the school Stories about students whose parents did not like teacher’s teaching |
| Curriculum content – both planned and actioned | |

6.2.1.2 Clarification of the concept, *concern*

Attempts to identify and prioritise the teacher's *concerns* found in the data led to scrutiny of the varying usage and meanings of the term 'concern'. Used as a verb, e.g., *the teacher is concerned with...*, 'concern' means interested in, involved with or related to. As a noun, 'concern' varies in meaning from something that is of interest or importance, to something that is a problem. Glaser (1998) makes it clear that by 'concern' he means 'problem', and he uses the two terms 'concern' and 'problem' interchangeably. In the data, however, a teacher's interest-concerns and problem-concerns were not easily differentiated. The foci of a teacher's talk in interviews represented things the teacher was concerned with, but the data often did not directly indicate the *extent* of the concern. Analysis thus raised the question: at what point does a concern of interest become a problem? The decision was made to examine all the teachers' concerns, whether or not they were obviously problematic, in an effort to better understand the semantics and to answer the question.

Three categories of concerns subsequently emerged: (i) action concerns; (ii) achievement concerns; and (iii) philosophical concerns.

(i) *Action concerns*: All of the teacher's intentional actions could be interpreted as concerns; e.g., the teacher was concerned *to write a group of words on the board, talk to the students, or read students' written work*. Concerns *to do something* were labeled *action concerns*.

(ii) *Achievement concerns*: Action concerns were invariably motivated by concerns for particular results, e.g., the teacher wrote a group of words on the board because she was concerned for *the students to learn a spelling strategy*. Concerns for *intended outcomes* of intended actions were labeled *achievement concerns*.

(iii) *Philosophical concerns*: Underlying the decisions a teacher made to act in a certain way and to aim for an intended outcome were concerns *about some thing*, e.g., the teacher's concern for *the students' well-being* led her to choose to use a quiet, controlled voice to reprimand the students' unruly behaviour. Concerns *about some thing* were labeled *philosophical concerns*, not because they necessarily reflected the teacher's

philosophy (although they likely did), but because they were more to do with *the state of things*.

To summarise, at any given point in time (as captured by the data), teachers were (i) concerned *to do things*; (ii) concerned that their actions would *achieve things*; or (iii) concerned *about things*.

The *main concern* that Glaser advocates as the focus of the theory is the *main achievement concern*.

6.2.1.3 Development of the conceptual framework

The processes of naming, classifying and considering the relationships between concepts inherent in the data began at the onset of data gathering and continued throughout the generation of the theory. Although analysis initially seemed chaotic with tentative memos and disorganised diagrams, by the time lists of foci in the teacher's talk had been classified and teacher's concerns identified, key organising categories and relationships between them were becoming apparent.

Glaser (1998) calls the pattern of behaviour that the people use to resolve their main concern, the "core category" or "core variable", and says it is recognisable during analysis as the concept to which all other concepts relate. He talks of continuing to search the data for the core category, which will be evident because all the other categories will appear subservient but still related to it.

The researcher was continually conscious of identifying the category to which all others related. Although the main concern was slow to emerge in the scheme of the research, the researcher felt confident that a focus for the theory would ultimately come to light. Nevertheless, when interacting with the data, generalising about the most important concern overall seemed to deny the importance of the concern on which the teacher was focussing at a given point in time. Several 'main concerns' were apparent and relationships flowed in many directions between them. The teachers were multi-tasking and any attempt on the part of the researcher to reduce the complexity to a single concern with subservient concerns seemed to detract from that.

With time, a conceptual framework emerged from the analysis processes by a sort of distilling process. The emerging conceptual framework eventually had three main concerns towards which all the teachers' other concerns and actions could be seen to be directed; developing and maintaining a working relationship with each student, developing each student as a learner, and having each student achieve in the formal curriculum. The three concerns had a definite order in the minds of the teachers, and the data showed that, a lot of the time, concern for *relating to the students* was at the forefront of teachers' behaviour. The researcher experienced an increasingly persistent feeling that *relating to the students* was the *main concern*. The strength of the category was backed up with concrete evidence of high frequency of occurrence in the 'teacher's talk' data, and also because it preoccupied the *teachers' behaviours* during observation sessions. With continued writing of the theory and interaction with the data, *relating to the students* was recognised as the core variable.

Identification of *relating to the students* as the core variable raised further questions: How are the different teachers wanting to relate to their students? What are the things that each teacher wants to promote in her relationship with the students? How does each teacher promote them? What effects does each teacher's actions have? The raw data was explored again.

Throughout analysis, the raw and conceptualised data was thus re-visited time and again, by the researcher 'wearing different hats'. The repeated visits, each motivated by a different inquiry, constituted *theoretical sampling*. The theory was generated via the continuous interplay between constant comparison analysis and theoretical sampling of data.

6.2.2 Writing the substantive theory

The time to begin the process of writing the theory suggested itself. Connections between the emerging conceptual framework and the wider context seemed to suddenly crystallize, instilling a hitherto not-experienced confidence in the researcher that she was on the right track. At the point this happened in the doctoral research, *three* main concerns of the participant teachers seemed to be equally important and the core

variable had not yet emerged. Beginning writing at this seemingly vague point in the analysis was not problematic, however, as the writing process, itself, was an important part of the continued analysis. Grounded theories are never considered complete but, rather, a set of hypotheses at a given point in time. Systematically presenting and explaining the emerging theory required articulation of new concepts, and the complex and sometimes nebulous relationships between them. Throughout writing, the theory continued to be generated through ongoing theoretical sampling and constant comparison. The core category, *relating to the students*, presently emerged.

The resultant theory is presented in Chapter 7.

During much of analysis, the researcher felt concerned that the main concerns did not logically fall out of the data, but that they were more a reflection of her understanding and patterns of meaning making than something that was discovered by steering a mechanical course through the data. This concern was alleviated, however, when it was realised that the grounded theory research processes of constant comparison and theoretical sampling rendered the emerging theory self-correcting.

6.3 Generation of the formal theory

The process of developing the substantive theory about the participant teachers' teaching into theory about teaching that nurtures students' spiritual growth involved considering the descriptive grounded theory from a spirituality perspective, integrating it with existing understandings about teaching, and then comparing the emerging theory with more data.

Chapter 7 The Participant Teachers' Teaching

Our aim is to find the good in everybody
and to value everybody for who they are.

Ms Sally, Interview 1

7.1 The distinction between 'intentions' and 'goals'

By virtue of their roles as teachers, the participant teachers' energies were channeled, directly or indirectly, towards affecting some sort of change in students. The term 'intentions', rather than the conventional and popular term 'goals', is used to refer to the changes towards which teachers were working.

The underlying aim of a teacher's professional work is commonly understood to be *student learning*, and yet the data showed that the teachers' working understandings of what students need to learn and how they are to go about learning it were much broader than the achievement outcomes and methods associated with the formal curriculum. Furthermore, the data showed that the teachers often taught without an awareness of the relevance of their teaching to the formal mandated curriculum, suggesting that many intended outcomes were not *formally* acknowledged once they had been achieved. The term 'goals', commonly associated with linear, Taylor-style models of curriculum design, implies curriculum-mandated outcomes that are specified by the teacher prior to teaching, and 'ticked off' once it can be proved that the student has achieved them. It thus does not capture the breadth of the learning outcomes that the participant teachers were hoping to achieve in their day-to-day interactions with students. The intended outcomes of teachers' actions are better understood in terms of 'intentions'. The concept of 'intentions' subsumes that of 'goals'.

Groups of intentions were identified throughout the analysis. The compound term 'relationship intentions' refers to the intended outcomes teachers hold for students with regard to the teacher-student relationship. Similarly, 'learning intentions' refers to the intended outcomes teachers hold for students' learning, where the term 'learning'

assumes the definition explained in Chapter 3; raised consciousness of relationships to oneself.

In contrast to goals, some *learning intentions* remain unarticulated by the teachers. The research method provided an opportunity to carefully examine teachers’ talk and actions for their real, and not just spoken, intentions for their students. The data thus enabled the researcher to look beyond the teachers’ conditioned responses that they made to the interview question “What are you teaching the students?”

This was an important function of the research method because, as the exchange quoted in Box 7.1 exemplifies, New Zealand teachers are currently conditioned to present their teaching to the world in terms of the formal, mandated curriculum. In New Zealand, the current onus is on schools to provide evidence that students have achieved the objectives that are specified in the National Curriculum documents. Measurements of ‘academic achievement’ are the criteria by which students, teachers and schools are traditionally judged. This face of the accountability movement¹⁴ is further exemplified by the Ministry of Education’s schooling improvement initiatives which mandate participating schools to prioritise students’ academic achievement in their expected outcomes (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). ‘Learning’ at school has come to equate to ‘academic achievement’ in popular understanding. Educational goals are commonly understood to mean curriculum achievement goals, by the public and education professionals, alike.

Box 7.1: Example of teacher not articulating learning intentions

Researcher: “What are you teaching, this morning?”

Ms Sally: “We are doing “Children’s Rights and Responsibilities” at the moment. ... That is a Social Studies unit.”

In fact, Ms Sally was doing an introductory session to the unit. In the session, she wanted to find out the students’ existing ideas about children’s rights and responsibilities. Rather than have pre-set units of knowledge that she wanted the students to acquire by the end of the unit, she wanted to advance the students’ understandings from where they were at the beginning of the unit. Importantly, she also wanted to enhance their passions, reasoning faculties, and communication skills.

Most of this information was gleaned by the researcher throughout an observation session.

¹⁴ Refer to the Education Standards Act 2001

Given the popular understanding of learning as academic achievement, the researcher expected to readily identify curriculum achievement goals in the participant teachers' talk about what was important to them in their teaching. Every data set showed, however, that the participant teachers' hopes and intentions for their students encompassed *much more than* the curriculum achievements that they were expected to report to the school Board of Trustees and parents, and for which they were held to account. The teachers talked about intending to affect things like the students' socialisation skills, the students' feelings while they were at school, the students' attitudes towards learning and towards other people, the students' attitudes towards themselves, and the overall balance of students as individuals. (See Box 7.2.)

Box 7.2: Examples of teachers' talk that reveal their hopes and intentions encompassing more than curriculum achievements

Ms Robyn: "I think these kids get their academic needs met really easily because they come from families that really really value that – they come to school knowing the alphabet, knowing how to read, some of them, all those sort of [things] ... – they know how to sit tests, they know how to succeed on paper – but some of them are dysfunctional in terms of relationships, in terms of being able to work with others – and I think that kids need to be well rounded individuals – and I think that's my role, especially at the end of their primary school"

Ms Robyn: "Like, for me, [teaching] kids going on to Intermediate, I would expect the Intermediate want us to have children who are socialised and who ... have a myriad of other things so that they can get on with the academic – you know, all the foundations are there – and a lot of that foundational stuff is provided at home in terms of the academic side of things – a lot of the things that are more nebulous, a bit harder to, sort of ... or values-based, or whatever you'd like to call it – I think these kids don't often see [those things] necessarily modeled, or they don't get chances to test those sorts of things – they couldn't even give words to it, I don't think"

Mr Josh: "Often a lot of things that you're hoping the children will learn aren't the acquisition of particular skills or knowledge ... – you're looking at ... attitudinal changes and behavioural changes in terms of the way that they ... behave or how they respond to a situation or ... become involved ... – I suppose I see those as being just as important as their ability ... to improve their Maths from 80% to 90% – I mean, okay, that's ... sort of measurable in the mathematical side of things but ... a lot of its [an] informal and observational sort of thing that's taking place that ... is very hard to put in ... clear objective terms of 'the child has achieved ...' – there are no tick boxes"

Ms Sally: "Basically, ... the whole of my classroom functions in that kids are free to be themselves and that they feel very safe in being themselves as people and as learners, and that they know that, in the classroom, there is an atmosphere where they know that my philosophy is... , and I make it very clear to them, that our aim is to find the good in everybody and to value everybody for who they are"

Another unexpected finding in the data was that the teachers often seemed unaware that it was possible to couch their intentions for the students *in terms of* the mandated curriculum objectives. (See Box 7.3). The participant teachers described only some of their intentions in terms of goals or objectives, and yet invariably intended the students to learn specific things. Furthermore, although many of the teachers' intentions *were* explicated *somewhere* in the National Curriculum documents, the teachers often seemed unaware or not concerned about that. Consequently, often when the students had learned something, the teachers were not thinking of the learning in terms of 'achieved objectives'.

Box 7.3: Example of a teacher holding a learning goal and yet not being aware that it is mandated in the national curriculum

Ms Yolanda, having told the researcher all about teaching the students dance as an example of something she was good at and enjoyed, was not aware that it is one of four key disciplines in the Arts curriculum:

Researcher: "What gave you the ... idea to ... do the dancing with the kids? Did it just come out of the Phys-Ed programme – or drama – or...?"

Ms Yolanda: "I think it does – I think it came out of the Phys-Ed in that, um, lots of schools, for juniors and things, have aerobics as ... as part of a daily fitness routine and I, um, yeah – it just sort of went from there ..."

Ms Yolanda believed the dancing was an important part of the students' school day and also believed she taught it well, but was unaware that it was in the formal curriculum.

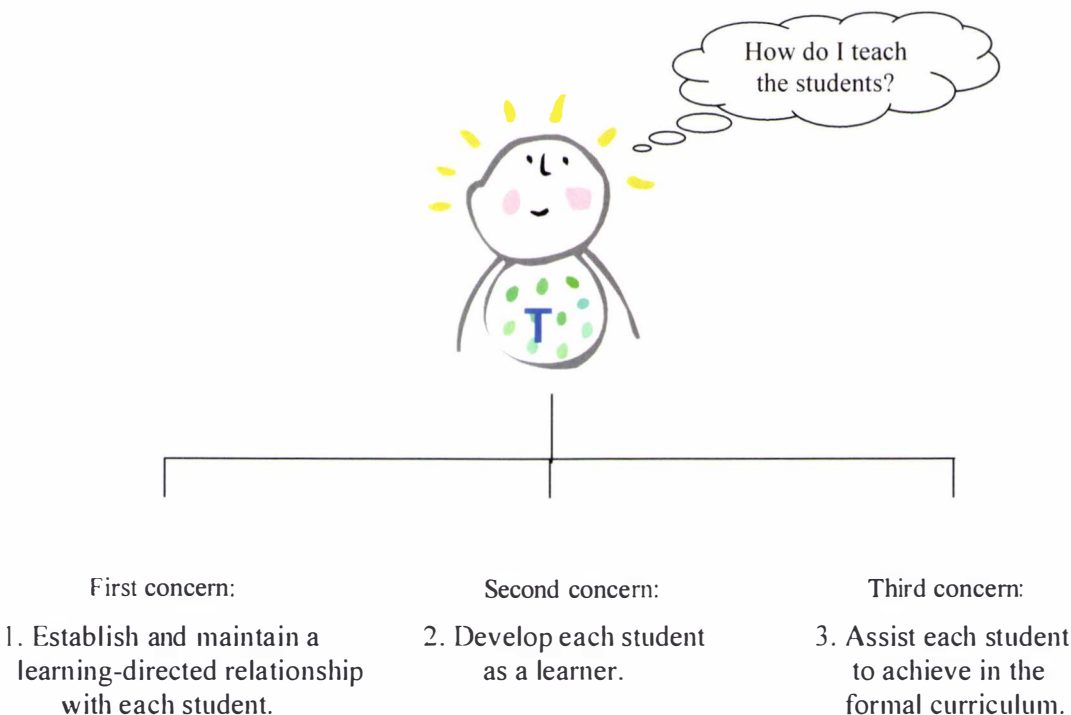
Clearly, teachers understand that there is more to learning at school than academic achievement and achieving curriculum objectives. The data showed a substantial portion of child-schooling is not perceived by the teachers as officially mandated, is not formally assessed, is never recorded anywhere and is sometimes not articulated outside the mind of the teacher. Teachers' working understandings of 'learning' are markedly different from what is currently being acknowledged and utilised in academic and school review circles.

It follows that thinking in terms of 'learning intentions' acknowledges the importance of a broader scope of teachers' concerns than is implied by the terms 'goals' and 'objectives'.

7.2 The teachers’ main concern: learning-directed relationships with students

The initial, open-minded examination of the data, described in Section 6.2.1, showed that most of what concerned the participant teachers regarding their students could be classified into one of three categories (see Figure 3). As expected in state schools funded on the condition that they deliver a government-mandated curriculum, *teaching students the formal curriculum* was a prevalent category of teachers’ concerns. The participant teachers demonstrated, however, that before they considered many of their students were ready to learn the formal curriculum, individual students needed to develop various skills, attitudes, and understandings. *Developing the student as a learner* was, thus, another prevalent category of teachers’ concerns. Finally, in order for the teachers to fulfil their intentions in the other two categories, all the participant teachers were concerned to *relate to the students* in a way that they believed would keep them in a position to assist the students to learn. That is to say, they were primarily concerned to develop and maintain a learning-directed relationship with each student.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework of Each Participant Teacher’s Concerns



The three categories, and the directional connection between them, were repeatedly confirmed throughout analysis. The data thus revealed that the participant teachers' actions had a discernible order of priority in the minds of the teachers:

- (1) relating to the students;
- (2) developing students as learners; and
- (3) teaching students the formal curriculum.

All the teachers (1) worked on their relationship with each student *as an important means to* (2) developing each student's capacity to learn and (3) assisting each student to learn (i.e., teaching) the formal curriculum. In other words, before students' learning of the formal curriculum could progress, the teachers perceived a need to attend to other tasks pertaining to their relationships with the students and to any issues or skill deficiencies that the teachers thought the students needed to address in order to be able to learn effectively. Furthermore, the relationships were seen as necessary pre-conditions to assisting the students to address their issues and skill deficiencies, as well as to assisting them learn the formal curriculum. The data thus showed that the teachers' intentions regarding their *relationships with the students* were at the forefront of most of their interactions with students.

Accordingly, *relating to students* was coded as the *first and main concern*, *developing students as learners* as the *second concern*, and *teaching students the formal curriculum* as the *third concern*. The ordinal terms, 'first', 'second' and 'third' denote the order and priority the teachers gave the concerns and not the respective values in relation to one another. That is to say, the teachers gave no indication that one concern was more important than another, but that there was a requisite order to make learning more likely.

The initial, open-minded examination of the data revealed that all of the participant teachers were primarily concerned to establish and/or maintain a relationship with the student that the teacher thought was necessary in order to assist the student to learn, that is to say, a *learning-directed relationship*. The teachers' intentions aimed at achieving the first concern, (coded as *relationship intentions*), clearly fell into two camps: those

intended for the student and those intended for the teacher, as indicated in the lists below.

Relationship intentions for the student:

- Student understands about the teacher's and student's respective roles in the relationship
- Student perceives teacher has particular attributes
- Student accepts personal, relationship-related responsibilities

Relationship intentions for the teacher:

- Teacher has professional knowledge and understandings
- Teacher has health and well-being
- Teacher is true to self

The primary *action* the teachers used to address their main concern was identified as *relating*. That is to say, in Glaser's language, the *main concern* was to establish and maintain a learning-directed relationship with students, and the *core variable* was relating.

In Section 7.3, the substantive theory about the participant teachers teaching is generated by exploring the teachers' primary resolving action (i.e., the core variable) of *relating*. The *sub-categories* of relating, and *properties* of the sub-categories, are conceptualised, and the *dimensions*¹⁵ of the properties are identified to the extent that they are evident in the data. The substantive theory about the participant teachers teaching is summarised in Section 7.6.

In Chapter 8, a formal theory about teaching to enhance children's spiritual growth is developed by synthesising the emerging substantive theory, understandings from contemporary research and literature, and further comparisons with the data.

¹⁵ *Properties* are attributes or distinctive features of a category (or sub-category) and *dimension* denotes a possible range of a property.

7.3 The teachers' primary resolving action: relating

Figure 4 shows the conceptual framework that is developed in Section 7.3.

The action that the teachers used to address the first concern was identified as *relating*, (i.e., relating is the core variable). In order to identify the sub-categories of *relating* (i.e., to explore the core variable) the researcher re-visited the observation and interview data wearing a 'relationships and relating' hat¹⁶. The developing understandings were consequently grounded in the data. Key interests that influenced the visit were:

- the actions the teachers took to promote their relationships with students, i.e., the teachers' behaviour, what they did;
- the teachers' understandings of, and ideas about, the relationships being promoted, i.e., what was important to the teachers; and
- the characteristics of the relationships the teacher actually had with students and how they affected students.

References to, and ideas about, *relating* occurred in the data whenever the teacher interacted with, or talked about interacting with, the students. '*Interacting with the students*' was thus identified as an important sub-category of relating, and is explored further in Section 7.3.1.

Also present in the data, and often inseparable from a teacher's understandings and talk of interacting with the students, were the teacher's ideas about, and a whole raft of actions directed towards maintaining: (i) her own beliefs about the world and how she saw herself functioning in it; and (ii) her own self-concept, self-esteem and sense of professional competence. The *teacher's self* was, thus, integrally connected to the teacher's interactions with students. '*Being*' was thus identified as another important sub-category of relating. The teacher *being*, and the related action of *tending to her self*, are explored further in Section 7.3.2.

¹⁶ See Section 6.2.1.3 for an explanation of the 'visiting hats' terminology.

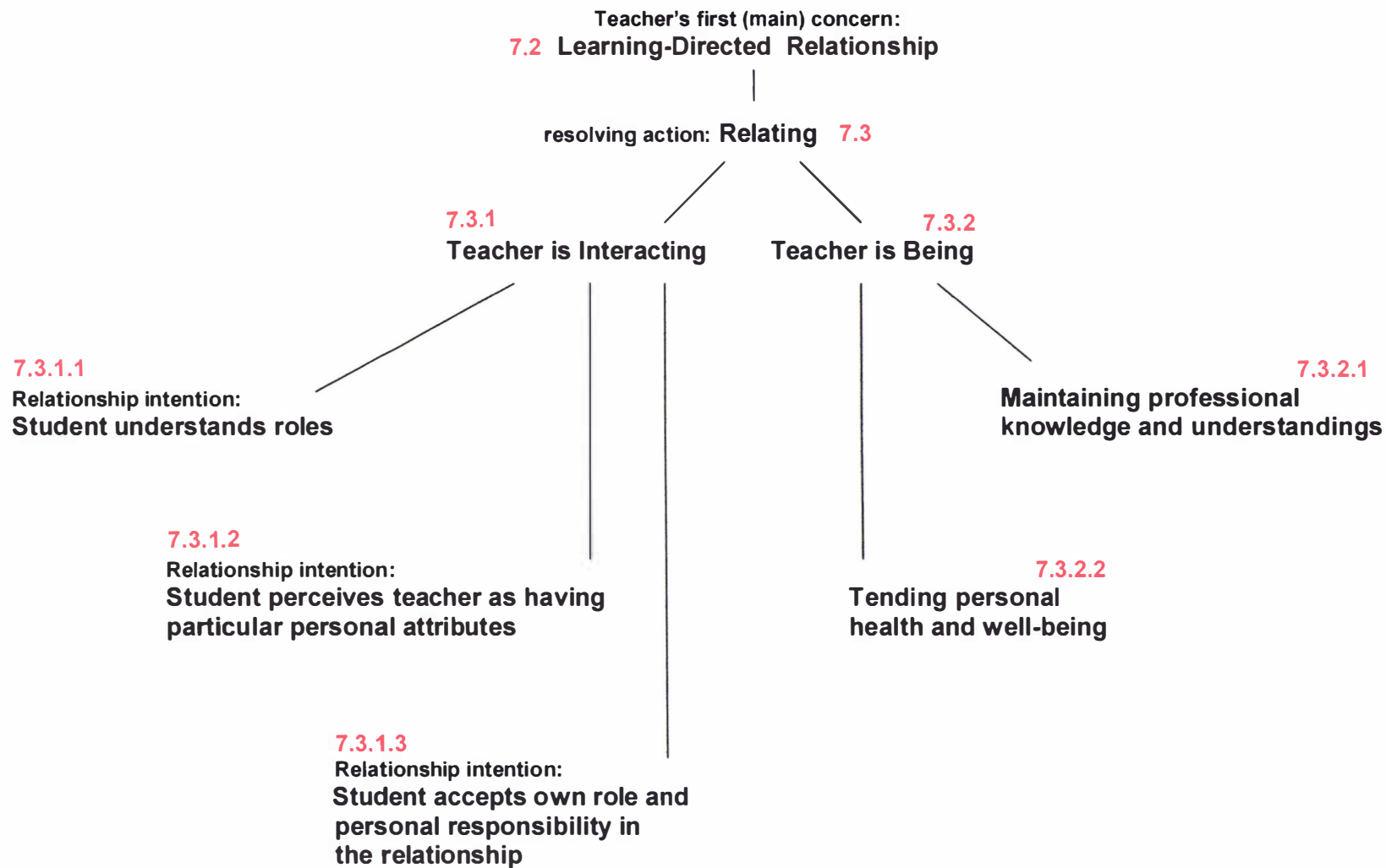


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework of Relating

7.3.1 Interacting with each student to promote a learning-directed relationship

The data was revisited wearing an *interacting with the students* hat. Key interests that influenced the visit were:

- the teacher's actions;
- the teacher's thoughts about, and motivation and learning intentions behind the interaction; and
- the effect of the teacher's actions on the student(s).

All of the teacher's interactions with students were directed towards establishing and/or maintaining a relationship with the student that the teacher thought was necessary in order to assist the student to learn. The researcher found that each teacher's understanding of what constitutes a productive, learning-directed relationship with students was often buried in the teacher's philosophical concerns about:

- discipline;
- social principles; and/or
- what works and what doesn't work when teaching children, i.e., pedagogy.

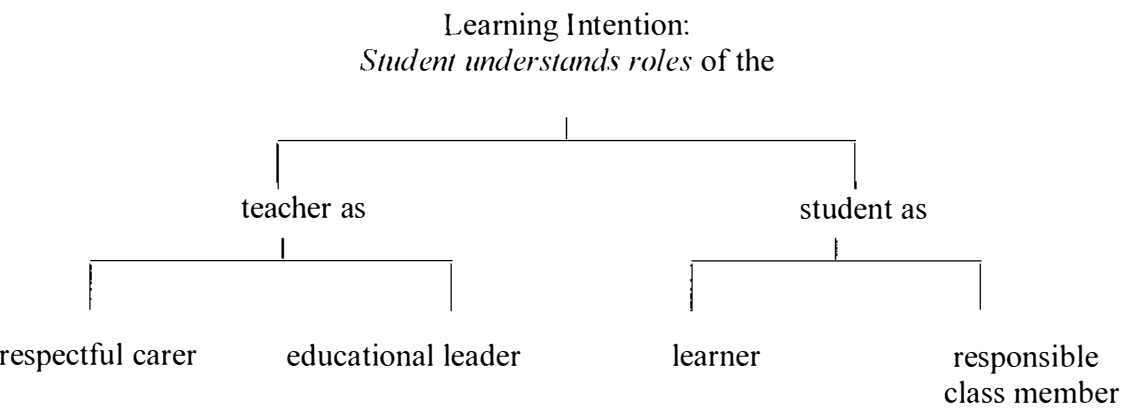
The dynamic interplay of these philosophical concerns with a teacher's knowledge of each individual student meant that the numerous teacher-student relationships were each unique and resisted generalisation. Nevertheless, the data suggested that the relationships had elements that every teacher was concerned to affect every time she interacted with a student. The elements suggested general *categories of relationship intentions* of primary school teachers:

- the student understands about the teacher's and the student's respective roles in the relationship (explored further in Section 7.3.1.1);
- the student perceives the teacher has particular personal attributes (explored further in Section 7.3.1.2); and
- the student accepts personal responsibility in the relationship (explored further in Section 7.3.1.3).

7.3.1.1 Relationship intention: Student understands about the teacher’s and student’s respective roles in the relationship

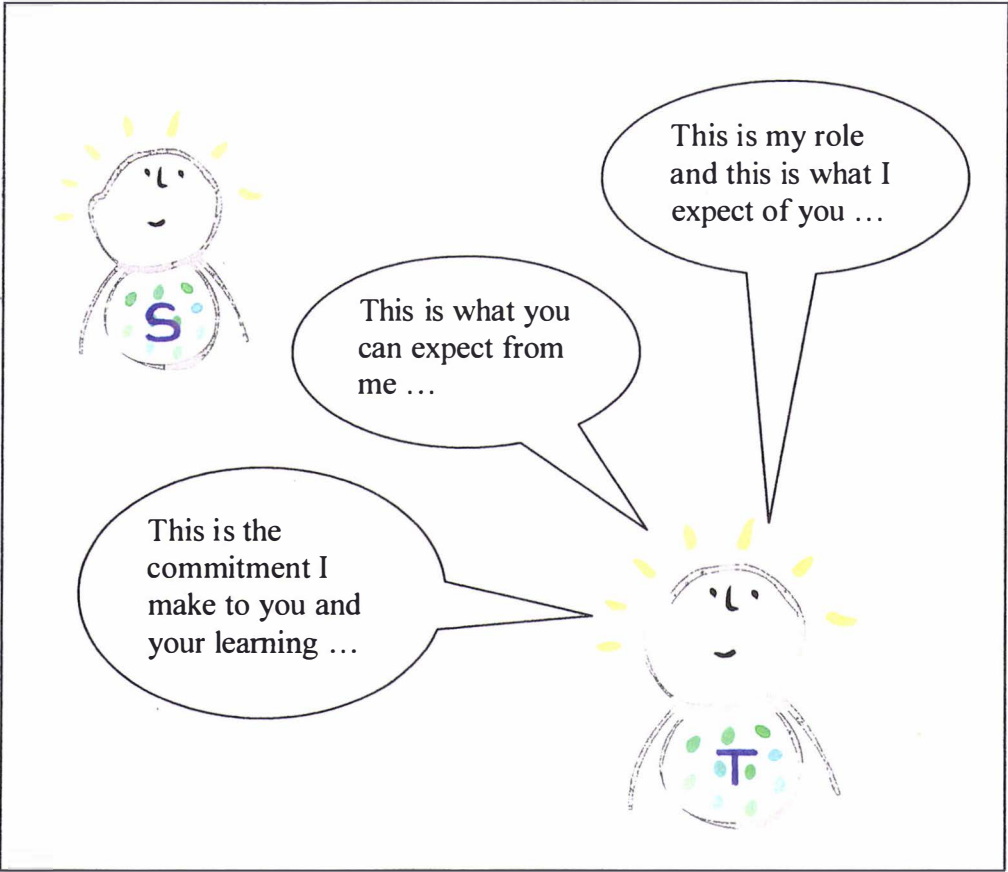
Figure 5 shows the conceptual framework that is developed in Section 7.3.1.1.

Figure 5: Conceptual Framework of the *Student understands roles Learning Intention*



Every participant teacher worked to influence each student’s perception of the relationship between them. Every time a teacher interacted with a student, the data showed the teacher directly or indirectly (i.e., overtly or covertly) communicating to the student, “This is my role and this is what I expect of you ...”, “This is what you can expect from me ...”, and “This is the commitment I make to you and your learning ...”. (See Figure 6.) Each teacher wanted the student *to share her (i.e., the teacher’s) understanding* of their respective roles, i.e., understanding of their respective responsibilities, what they can expect of one another, and the power dynamics in the relationship.

Figure 6: The Teacher Setting Up the Student's Understanding of the Student-Teacher Relationship



Vignettes from the data are presented in Boxes 7.4 to 7.23 to illustrate and exemplify the emerging concepts and ideas.

Box 7.4: Example of a teacher conveying a relationship intention in an overt manner

At the commencement of a Social Studies unit, Ms Sally had called the students to her so that she could talk to them in a group. Several students lingered and fussed at a desk and Ms Sally, slightly exasperated, inquired about the reason for the hold-up. Toby had spilled food (jelly) on the classroom carpet, and the lingering students were offering him advice about what to do. Ms Sally made it very clear that she was annoyed by his disruption and that eating food during class time was not acceptable. She verbally reprimanded Toby firmly in terms of him unreasonably stopping the rest of the class from learning. While she was talking sternly to him, most of the other students who were already gathered where Ms Sally wanted them watched in silence.

Toby was apologetic and quickly cleaned the mess and joined the class for the activity.

In the example in Box 7.4, the teacher's message regarding her relationship intentions was *overt*. The teacher made her expectation regarding classroom behaviour and rules very clear to the student by vocalising and rationalising her intentions, and expressing her emotions. The message was explicit, reasoned, direct and public. Because the message was overt and public, the teacher's expectations regarding behaviour were conveyed to the other students in the room at the same time.

Box 7.5 shows an example of a teacher conveying a relationship intention message in a *covert* manner.

Box 7.5: Example of a teacher conveying a relationship intention in a covert manner

Ms Sally had the group of students sitting in a large circle in the classroom to do a P4K (Philosophy for Kids) session. The students were well trained to be courteous and attentive, to think deeply before speaking, and to respect others' contributions to the unfolding discourse. They seemed to find the inquiry topic, which began with 'the nature of reality', enticing and inviting. The flow of ideas was fast-moving and there was a high degree of participation.

Elliot's face and body contorted silently throughout most of the session as he inwardly wrestled to articulate his response to the others' ideas and opinions. Then, towards the end, he offered a metaphysical analysis of the topic that would have undoubtedly left Einstein, himself, thoughtful (thought-full!). Several students, who probably didn't understand what he said, momentarily forgot their P4K manners and rolled their eyes in resigned disdain – they seemed to think it was okay to relax the courtesy rules for Elliot because even he acknowledged that he was so different from the others. Nevertheless, Elliot felt their disdain and quietly assumed a sulking, dejected hunch to his shoulders and head. The discussion continued, seemingly without anyone noticing his dejected demeanor.

Ms Sally, however, sitting next to Elliot, unceremoniously laid a gentle hand on his shoulder, while continuing to direct the inquiry amongst the class. With that touch she seemed to be gently reassuring him, saying privately to him, "I appreciated what you said. I empathise with your discomfort. Don't let those impolite kids get you down. I'm with you in this – you have a companion."

Elliot visibly relaxed and his attention returned to the discussion.

In the example in Box 7.5, although the teacher's gesture of touching the student's shoulder was not hidden, neither was it pointedly public. Many students sitting in the circle would not have noticed it. The gesture and the teacher's manner conveyed a private message to the student whom she touched. The message was not articulated but, instead, conveyed through the mediums of touch and proximity.

The teachers seemed acutely aware that every teacher-student interaction had the potential to influence the student's ideas about their relationship. At the same time, the teachers were ultimately concerned that each relationship keep the teacher in a position to influence the student's learning, i.e., they were concerned that each relationship develop or continue as a *learning-directed relationship*.

The *learning directed relationships* evident in all the data sets had discernible characteristics. All the participant teachers seemed to, in their teaching roles, juxtapose the complementary capacities of '*respectful carer*' and '*educational leader*', and they were all concerned to bring the students to an understanding that the teacher could be

trusted to fulfil those capacities. The teacher as *respectful carer* (explored further in Sections 7.3.1.1.1 and 7.3.1.1.2) demonstrated to students that she cared about them and for them, and that she respected each student as an individual with rights, feelings and needs. The teacher as *educational leader* (explored further in Sections 7.3.1.1.3 and 7.3.1.1.4) demonstrated to students that she was the education expert, and that she could lead them in their pursuit of learning, with all the virtues that being a ‘good leader’ implies.

The two capacities were complementary in the teaching role of every participant teacher, and most interactions with students constituted a juxtaposition of the two capacities.

Box 7.6: Example of a teacher being, both, respectful carer and educational leader

Ms Kelly, teaching Year 1 students, acknowledged the difficulty faced by the student adjusting to the discipline and routines of school. She explained at the interview that she understood one of her key tasks was to smooth the new entrant students’ transitions from home to school so that their experiences were positive. She felt compassion for the new students’ struggle to comply with the unfamiliar classroom expectations, (like sitting still and quietly on the mat), that restricted the freedom of physical body movement they had experienced prior to starting school. That compassion compelled her to be kind and sensitive whenever she interacted with a student. At the same time, Ms Kelly’s belief that it was educationally important for the young students to gain self-control and establish a willingness to comply to behavioural expectations motivated her disciplinary actions.

In Ms Kelly’s words, she thought it was important that she: “... not let them run willy nilly but, you know, understand when they do roll on the floor”.

7.3.1.1.1 The teacher as carer

The participant teachers demonstrated care for the students’ welfare and well-being in most interactions with them. It seemed to be important to the teachers, not only that they cared, but also that the students knew that they cared.

Demonstrating caring was not a professional strategy purposefully employed for educational reasons, that is to say, because the teacher believed it would result in better learning. The teachers *really did care* about the students. Most of the participant teachers voiced a *passion for the children and their role of teaching them*, and when

they did not voice it explicitly, they showed the passion in the way they talked. (See Box 7.7 for examples.)

**Box 7.7: Examples of teachers' talk about their passion for children
and their role of teaching them**

Ms Sally: "It's just, like, I love teaching – and I love kids ... I just love them – and I just love these little kids ... and I get so upset when [other teachers are negative about them]."

Ms Yolanda: "I love them when their faces light when they hear something new – and I love that ... **openness** to learning, its the same thing, that... , that **curiosity** and they **haven't heard it all before** and they have that attitude, like "Tell me what you know! **I want** to hear it!" and you're just... , there's so much **progress** with them and then... – especially in their reading and their Maths and its **very gratifying** in **that** way – and I love the affectionate side of it, I love the bonds they make with you – yeah, so its partly that they're so receptive to the learning and its partly their openness and their just being so young and... , and fresh and... , yeah, with very little attitude developed – I adore them."

Ms Kelly: "Because I'm a New Entrant, Year 1 teacher, ... the thing that I see as special is helping those children make that transition from Playcentre, kindy, into school ... - I think it's a leap for some and some are fine, but for me its ... bridging that gap and ... giving them that step into school as a positive one ... - and I see that interaction with the parents also, reassuring and helping them make that transition, as well, of letting go and letting their child begin their schooling ... - I think its quite exciting, I quite love teaching this age."

The data provided examples of teachers caring *about* the students; showing concern about their welfare, their home-life, their psychological and physical health, their interests and passions, and their development and learning. Most of the teachers also talked about caring *for* the students; they talked of feeling affection for them, and acknowledged that the students' welfare and well-being were personally important to the teacher.

The participant teachers each had different ways of conveying the message that they cared about and for the students. For some, like the teacher in the vignette in Box 7.8, touch was an important medium for conveying caring.

Box 7.8: Example of teacher for whom touch is an important medium for conveying caring

Ms Yolanda loved the children and encouraged them to love her. Touching was an acceptable part of her caring for the students.

“I have one wee affectionate girl - she’s taken to sitting on my knee at home time and just throwing her arms around my neck and “Good bye, good bye, good bye”, you know – and her mother will be there, chatting to another parent and then say “Oh, come on, off you get, leave her alone”, you know, that sort of thing, and I’m thinking “Oh, its alright, I don’t mind” – you know, its quite lovely.”

“I think everyone needs hugs and cuddles and, you know? ... I see it as a two-way street, the touch and things, they’re helping me and I’m helping them ... – I don’t think anyone would complain – I hope they wouldn’t. ... The children are with you six hours a day ... and I just think, its recognising people’s needs – children are people and they are whole people and they’re not just here for me to teach maths and science to – they are here for nurturing ... in as many ways as I can give, really.”

Most of the participant teachers communicated that they cared by actively listening when the students spoke to them, and taking an interest in the students’ concerns.

Box 7.9 gives two examples.

Box 7.9: Examples of teachers’ talk about concerning themselves with students’ concerns

Ms Sally: “I try to deal with issues and problems for kids, you know, I suppose that most teachers do - but I do give them a lot of time for, you know, unfolding.”

Interviewer: “How do you deal with that sort of thing, when it comes up?”

Ms Sally: “Well, you take it seriously. ... Oh, it **is** serious stuff, ... especially at this intermediate level, the kids are changing **so** rapidly. ... They need to know that they are understood - and I think that if they’re in the classroom and that they know that someone’s listening to them, not just hearing, you know, that they’re actually listening, and seeing the issues through and ... really developing their issues for them - if they know all that ... [then] if you say that its important for them to learn something [in the curriculum], they’ve got much more faith in you - they’ve actually transposed that knowledge of you and your caring.

~
In the context of Years 7 & 8 students starting adolescence and needing more attention, guidance and support from their teachers, Ms Cath talks about the importance of listening to their interests and concerns.

Ms Cath: “They seem to just really crave someone to talk to ... they’re wanting to just talk about a whole range of things.”

Interviewer: “And how do you cope with that in your class?”

Ms Cath: “Oh, not very well at all because it’s the **time** to talk to individuals – but, I mean, there’s **on duty** when you’re walking around, going on **school trips**, ... before school, after school, if..., you know, they quite often hang around, chat-chat-chat – and they’re really, more than just wanting a chat, they’re **looking for answers to a whole lot of questions** – you know, sometimes when I’m driving to sport they’ll have the **curliest** questions.”

Most of the participant teachers revealed that, as far as building learning-directed relationships was concerned, they felt that their responsibilities lay primarily with the students in their own class, although one teacher talked of a sense of responsibility towards, and duty to relate positively to, all the students in the school (see the vignette in Box 7.10).

Box 7.10: One teacher's sense of responsibility towards all students in the school

Mr Josh felt it was important to show an interest in all the students in the school, not just those in his own class. He made an effort to communicate his interest to the students by commenting to them about the things he observed them doing, e.g., while walking past a recreational cricket game during a lunchtime he was 'on duty', he affirmed one student's difficult catch of a cricket ball by calling out "Good catch".

Several of the participant teachers spoke of times when they acted as a student's advocate. There were also examples in the data of teachers acting like a buffer between the students and the world outside the classroom, including elsewhere in the school. In one example, the teacher explained to her students about another teacher's disciplinary behaviour that the students found unjust.

7.3.1.1.2 The teacher as *respectful carer*

The enriched concept, *respectful carer*, captures a further dimension of caring that all the participant teachers demonstrated; that of respecting every student as an individual. In some of the participant teachers, this manifest in an intention to achieve equality of treatment, that is to say, unbiased and unprejudiced treatment of all students. All the participant teachers talked of 'fairness' being important to the students, and most data sets contained examples of the teacher endeavouring to ensure that the *students perceived her as fair*. (See also Section 7.3.1.2 regarding the teacher working to impress certain personal attributes on students).

Box 7.11: Example of a teacher being a *respectful carer* while actioning the curriculum

When Lenny first arrived in Ms Sally's Year 7 & 8 class in the first quarter of the school year, he declared to her that she should not expect him to read anything other than sailing books because he was not going to! Although Ms Sally believed reading more widely than just sailing books was in the best interests of his learning, and she would have been quite justified in insisting he read other material, she showed Lenny that she respected his passion for sailing by telling him she was happy for him to pursue his learning tasks using reading material of his choice. She felt confident that the learning she planned and actioned with the class would capture his attention and, with gentle persuasion and careful management, he would want to read other material before the mandated curriculum actually required it.

By the time the researcher was observing in Ms Sally's classroom, (in the 2nd quarter of the school year), Lenny had forgotten his original ultimatum and was reading material Ms Sally set for the class, albeit sometimes begrudgingly. His passion for sailing was still intact and was well recognised and acknowledged by the other students in the class, but he had also developed a respect for Ms Sally's judgement about what was important for him to read and was willing to go along with that.

In the example in Box 7.11, the teacher was mindful of how she used the power and control accorded to her by her position as teacher, when responding to a student who felt that his passion was personally more important than obeying his new teacher. Instead of using her authority as teacher to *insist* that he do things that she believed were in his best interests educationally, she trusted her own ability to motivate him in ways that respected both his independence as a learner and his passionate interest.

Some of the participant teachers, like the one in the example in Box 7.12, worked in schools that had organisational structures in place that reflected a whole-school culture of respect. Those teachers spoke proudly of the school routines that celebrated the students' differences and dealt with students respectfully. It was clear that they felt supported in their attempts to honour each student's uniqueness.

Box 7.12: Example of a teacher in a school that supported the teacher's *respectful carer* role

Ms Cath respected every one of the students as a person in their own right. This was manifest in the way she communicated with them, (e.g., making time to listen when a student wanted to speak with her), and in the classroom routines she used, (e.g., grouping students of different abilities together so that they felt like equals, and allowing them to answer roll-call in a language of their choice, thereby promoting class-wide acceptance of every student's first language).

Her respect for the students as individuals was supported by school structures that she had helped to put in place. For example, classes were composed of a range of ages and abilities. Daily whanau (classes grouped together like a family) meetings celebrated each of the many different ethnicities and languages of the students. The school-wide discipline system dealt with the students' deviant behaviour respectfully and without anger and, because it was school-wide, Ms Cath could call upon other teachers to assist with a deviating student and still be sure of consistency of response.

7.3.1.1.3 The teacher as leader

The teacher's capacity of *leader* was manifest in two main categories of behaviour. Firstly, all the participant teachers assumed *authority for the power dynamics* in the class. Secondly, the participant teachers each talked about *guiding students* in many different aspects of their lives, e.g., learning, moral behaviour, social attitudes and behaviour at home.

Closer examination of the examples of 'guiding' in the data showed that, apart from guiding students in their *learning*, guiding students in the other areas of their lives was not recognised by teachers as an *intentional* part of the *educative* role. Rather, the teachers saw it as a part of their *respectful carer* role (see Sections 7.3.1.1.1 and 7.3.1.1.2) to respond to some students' askance, as well as unarticulated personal needs, for guidance in non-curriculum matters. The students, in seeking guidance from the teacher regarding their personal lives, looked to the teacher as a caring authority figure.

As part of assuming *authority for the power dynamics* in the class, the teachers all played the role of *head disciplinarian* of the class. This constituted gaining the students' trust that the teacher retained ultimate power to provide a secure environment, and to protect and organise class members, much like a benevolent ruler. The participant teachers guided and controlled the students' behaviour so that the students: (a) functioned within the school rules; and (b) fulfilled the teacher's expectations regarding how they would behave in the class, both towards other members of the class, and towards their learning.

The teachers all spoke of the importance of setting and policing behavioural boundaries, and following up with unpleasant consequences if the boundaries were overstepped. Although most of the teachers did not speak directly of the connection between discipline and a classroom environment that offered emotional and physical security, they inferred that the rules and expectations they set for the students' behaviour had important effects on students' ability to get on with curriculum learning. Three teachers who specifically mentioned the connection between discipline and security, all contextualised the observation within a story of a student coming to their class because of the student's problems in previous classes. The three teachers all believed making

the behavioural boundaries clear to the student and fairly policing them was a key strategy in establishing a successful learning-directed teacher-student relationship. (See Box 7.13 for an example.) Furthermore, the teachers believed that this, along with being a *respectful carer*, was a point of difference between the student's previous teacher and themselves.

Box 7.13: Example of a teacher dealing with a student with behaviour problems by explaining the rules

Mikie started in Ms Cath's class part way through the year after being stood down from his previous school for violence and unacceptably ill-disciplined behaviour. Ms Cath's class was situated within a school with an effective school-wide behaviour modification programme in place, with non-violent procedures for dealing with deviant behaviour that were well-known by the students and teachers in the school. The programme utilized teachers other than the deviant student's class teacher, and involved respectful procedures that invited the student to be self-disciplined and always left the door open for the student to make the right decision.

With the support of the school structures behind her, Ms Cath was able to explain in detail to Mikie what was expected of him in her classroom, and the consequences that would occur if he chose not to cooperate with the programme. After 'trying out' the programme in the first few days and finding out that the disciplinary structures were stringent and consistently applied, Mikie's behaviour became settled and cooperative.

Participant teachers reported preferring to use pre-set 'consequences' rather than spontaneous and unforewarned 'punishments' for errant behaviour, although many of the teachers spoke of 'blowing up' at the kids spontaneously if the students' behaviour irritated them when they were in an intolerant mood. In the main, the teachers were not regretful about expressing their anger but, rather, saw it as a means of signalling that they meant business about retaining the power in the classroom. The retention of the lead disciplinary role was seen as more important than controlled, 'educationally sound' responses to errant behaviour. One teacher suggested an element, too, of looking after her own sanity by 'letting off steam' when she felt the need. (See Section 7.3.2.2 for further exploration of the teachers tending to their own needs.)

An important emphasis of the teachers' actions as *disciplinarian* was the *students' learning as the important aim at school, for which certain behaviour is necessary*. In the example in Box 7.4, the teacher makes the principle clear to the whole class as she verbally reprimands a student for disruptive behaviour in the classroom. The principle

is an example of the inherent connection between the disciplinary and educational intentions of the teacher.

All the participant teachers placed the onus on students to take responsibility for their own behaviour. This was not only to facilitate control of the class and discipline of the large-group, but also constituted a learning intention for the students’ benefit. (See Section 7.4 for further exploration of the teachers’ second concern to develop each student as a learner.)

The participant teachers used various strategies to get students to accept and respect them in the *leader* role. The data showed the teachers tailoring the strategies to their own personal psychological and historical profile of each student, often taking into consideration the student’s age, maturity and temperament. All the strategies had the common element of making students feel valued by the teacher.

Sometimes working on improving the student’s self esteem was sufficient to effect positive changes in a student’s deviant behaviour, as in the example in Box 7.14.

Box 7.14: Example of a teacher dealing with a student with behaviour problems by working on self esteem

Ms Robyn worked with Peter who joined her class after exhibiting problematic behaviour in another school. The school from whence he came was renowned for old-fashioned punishment-oriented discipline and Ms Robyn suspected Peter’s unacceptable behaviour was fulfilling the prophecy of being labeled “naughty”.

When she welcomed him to her class, Ms Robyn was careful to not mention that she knew of his previous errant behaviour as she spelled out her expectations that he would achieve well in her class, and her commitment to helping him.

Peter was thus able to begin afresh with a new self-image. At the time of the interview, he had achieved well and had showed no further behaviour problems.

The use of humour to both relate to students and control them was a common feature of most of the participant teachers’ teaching styles. The intended and actual effects that humour had on the students were both subtle and complex. The vignette in Box 7.15 captures one teacher’s analysis of the complexity of acceptance and power messages in one of her uses of humour.

Box 7.15: One teacher's analysis of her use of humour with the students

During an interview, Ms Sally recounted a time when she had walked in on a group of students joking with each other with sexual overtones. The students were probably expecting her to disapprove of the banter but, instead, she cued in on their humour and contributed with comical comment of her own. That the students appreciated her approach was evidenced by two of the group later commenting to her, 'Do you know, Ms Sally, you're the only teacher with a sense of humour?'.

Analysing the encounter at the interview, Ms Sally explained: "You throw it back at them - there's no secrets - you sort of have an awareness of where they are at developmentally, and that they're joking, and what they're joking about and they don't actually see it as you invading their privacy. You can have a bit of teasing and fun with them." Ms Sally let them know that she accepted them and what they were finding funny, instead of getting cross with them for being rude.

Ms Sally continued her analysis: "However, its not just getting alongside them ... There's an undertone ... a little bit of subtlety, here, in that if you get in and sort of make them aware that you know what they're talking about, you actually stop it from going further. ... It was a controlling thing – it channels them, a wee bit, towards a healthier resolution of the joke".

All the participant teachers kindled shared decision-making, regardless of the age of students. As one would expect, the importance and impact of the decisions with which students were asked to assist varied according to the ages and maturity of the students.

Some of the participant teachers deliberately employed the strategy of admitting their own fallibility to the students, as a means of demonstrating equality with them. This was an aspect of the power dynamics in the class that was clearly connected with the teacher's own philosophies and way of being. (See Section 7.3.2 for exploration of the teacher being.)

Most of the participant teachers intimated that the overall effect of the disciplinary strategies that they employed was provision of emotional, psychological and physical security for the students in the teacher's class, in whatever form was appropriate for the age-group and individual student needs.

All the participant teachers expected that the teacher-student relationship would change and grow throughout the year, and it seemed important to the teachers to establish students' foundational understandings and expectations about authority and power dynamics, *early in the relationship*. Most of the participant teachers intimated that they had worked hard to do this at the beginning of the year when they first had contact with

their students. For the most part, the research interviews and observations did not capture these establishing activities because the interviews took place later in the year. One teacher, however, was in the throes of them because he had taken over a new class at a late stage in the year, just prior to the research interview. He spoke of the challenge of achieving a balance between being nice to the students so that his relationship with them was positive, and establishing the power and authority as head disciplinarian.

In some of the participant schools, the teachers were well supported in their disciplinary tasks by policies and school-wide disciplinary structures. See Box 7.13 for an example. Structural support made the teacher's job a lot easier and impacted on such factors as the effectiveness of discipline procedures and, ultimately, the teacher's job satisfaction.

7.3.1.1.4 The teacher as *educational leader*

Because the teachers' disciplinary and guiding activities as leaders were ultimately directed towards the students learning, the enriched concept, *educational leader*, was recognised as a capacity of the teachers' role. An important aspect of the learning-directed teacher-student relationship was that the students understood the teacher's role was to be the expert in, and decision-maker about, what to learn, the order in which to learn it, and how to go about learning it. Furthermore, all the participant teachers thought it was important that the students trusted them to fulfil that role.

Strategies that the teachers employed to gain that trust included:

- working with the students to effect their learning, i.e., planning with them, advising them while they learned, demonstrating their learning (bringing it to their attention), and celebrating their learning;
- modelling themselves as learners by demonstrating to students that they know what it's like, and they know what they're talking about. Important aspects of modelling learning that the participant teachers variously used included admitting lack of knowledge when the occasion arose and consulting others about solutions to problems; and
- working with students in a manner that portrayed the teacher as a respectful carer. This led the students to believe the teacher was acting in their best

interests. (See Sections 7.3.1.1.1 and 7.3.1.1.2 for exploration of the respectful carer capacity).

The vignette in Box 7.16 illustrates a dynamic interplay of many of these strategies.

Box 7.16 Example of a teacher modelling learning by consulting others

Ms Sally was having trouble settling her Y7 & 8 students into a poetry task. It was a large task but she thought she had provided a good incentive for them by suggesting the result of their work would be published in a journal. She could not figure out why were still “dithering around”. She stopped the lesson and postponed working on the task until the following day, giving herself time to consult a colleague about her problem.

That evening, she talked to a friend who was a psychologist about the issue. Ms Sally recounted, “When I came back [to the class] the next day I said “I’ve been thinking about it, I’ve spoken to a friend of mine, and she was explaining to me” - so I don’t pretend to be the big authority - “She said “Often, if a task is huge and daunting, that’s when people procrastinate” - so I was able to go back to the kids and say “I realise what I’d done is, I’d made this task far too big, ...you’re procrastinating, you didn’t want to do it because it was such a massive task, so ...isn’t that interesting to learn that?”, ... and “How can we do it so that we can overcome that? ... How would you prefer to do it? Perhaps we could break it down into blocks.” ”

Thus, the next lesson was spent working with the students to examine their own learning tendencies and develop a solution to their reluctance to get on with the task.

Ms Sally summarised, “I didn’t pretend that I was the authority ... The students have learned about themselves.”

In the example in Box 7.16, the teacher modelled a learning strategy by consulting someone else about a problem she encountered while teaching them. When she told the students what she had done, the students became aware that the teacher is concerned about the learning, is prepared to examine the tasks she sets them from the students’ perspective, and that she is prepared to learn, herself, about how to teach better.

The vignette shows the teacher communicating to the students both overt and covert messages about her role as educational leader:

- that she doesn’t think she knows everything, and expects to learn, herself;
- that she takes the students’ learning seriously, really cares about their learning and is prepared to help them learn; and
- that she expects the students to be metacognitive and take responsibility for solving problems to do with their learning.

The participant teachers' ways of interacting with students to assist them develop an understanding of the *educational leader* aspect of the teacher's role were integrally connected with the professional standards the teachers set for themselves, with their own personal sense of competence and with their own pedagogical beliefs. That is to say, each teacher's communications with the students about her role as *educational leader* were integrally connected with her own way of being (see Section 7.3.2 for exploration of the teacher being).

Box 7.17 Example of a teacher establishing the *educational leader* and *respectful carer* roles

Mr Josh became the teacher of a class of Year 8 students at the commencement of the fourth quarter of the school year because the students' original teacher left the school. He had been with his class for only 4 weeks when the research interview took place. He reported a struggle to get control of the students at a time of the year when the students felt they had finished all the academic work that counted towards their placement at secondary school the following year.

He speaks of working to get to know the students in two ways, personally and academically: "So that's basically what I've been doing – just ... getting to know them ... on two counts, really, getting to know them as **people**, as **individuals**, and then also looking at trying to find out academically how they are and the sort of things they're capable of and what their potential is and what they're capable of producing."

Even though he had been with his class for only 4 weeks, he had already developed ideas about how to meet the personal learning needs of some of the students in his class. He worked to control the behaviour of one difficult student by deliberately having a positive interaction with him first thing in the morning.

Mr Josh: "Often they come from a background that is not particularly ideal and ... what happens first thing in the morning with them, can impact upon their behaviour for the **entire day**. If you ... start off on the wrong foot with them, it ... just spirals downhill for the rest of the day. There's a boy in here who I work with who has learning problems and behaviour problems to do with self-control, so – whenever **possible** – my **first** interaction with him, I will try to **set it up** so that it is a **positive** one. Basically I do that with him every day – like, its becoming a natural reaction. When I first start off ... the morning, I try to find something ... to interact with positively."

Researcher: Right – does he respond to that?

Mr Josh: "Well, it seems to work. [Another teacher] mentioned that he certainly seems to be far more settled. He was unsettled towards the end of last term because they had had different relievers ... and he couldn't quite deal with that. How you handle the situation where he's not doing what he's supposed to be doing ... can influence his reaction. If you back him into a corner, he just loses it – he just lets out a string of abuse, foul abuse, and storms off, time out. I suppose I'm aware of that and I try to ensure that, in that situation, I can give him an out, give him an option."

In the vignette in Box 7.17, the teacher's concerns as he started to build a relationship with the new class included:

- finding a balance between being a teacher whom the students liked and having the students respect his authority in the classroom;
- finding out who they were as people and what their personal needs were; and
- finding out what they were capable of academically.

7.3.1.1.5 The student as learner

Part of the student understanding the complexities, subtleties and balance of the various properties of the *teacher's role* in the learning-directed teacher-student relationship, is also understanding that *his own role* is to be a learner.

All the participant teachers talked about the importance of the students understanding that their primary task at school and in the classroom was to learn. Although this seems like stating the obvious, some participant teachers reported having to work quite hard to bring students to, not only an understanding of their learner role in the relationship, but also to acceptance of the role. (See Section 7.3.1.3 for further exploration of the relationship intention of student acceptance of their role.)

Strategies teachers used to encourage students to think of themselves as learners, included:

- modelling being a learner;
- constantly reminding and encouraging students of their role as learners by talking about learning during everyday lessons;
- teaching students to be metacognitive, and praising individuals who demonstrate metacognitive skills without prompting.

7.3.1.1.6 The student as responsible class member

Most of the teachers spoke of wanting students to understand that one of their roles in the student-teacher relationship is to be a responsible class member.

Most teachers had regulated routines for chores, and included all students in cleaning duties in the classroom and the wider school. All the teachers expected their students, regardless of age, to keep their own things tidy and orderly at school.

One teacher spoke of the importance of every student understanding and accepting that they are part of the group. She worked very hard on developing students' understandings of what membership to a group entails.

Another teacher spoke of expecting and encouraging students in her class to care for each other and respect each other. She told of one occasion when she talked to them about being responsible for the effect of one's own behaviour on other members of the class who may have a different background or maturity.

Several schools routinely had teachers establish codes of conducts with their classes and within their syndicates. Students played a part in developing the codes early in the year, and then were reminded to live by them throughout the year.

7.3.1.1.7 The milieu

The teachers worked to achieve an effective balance between the firmness called for in the role as educational leader, and compassion in the role as respectful carer. Achieving the balance often required the teacher's patience and personalised judgement.

The teachers who spoke of intending to achieve *equality* with the students did not see also being a leader of them as a contradiction in terms. That is to say, they did not see a problem with simultaneously relating to students as equals and being their leader.

The vignette in Box 7.17 highlights teachers' imperative to establish students' understanding of the learning-directed relationship and the respective roles within it *early in the relationship*. The unusual timing of the teacher taking on a Year 8 class in the last term of the year created a tension between the teacher's imperative and the students' relaxed commitment to their roles as learners due to them thinking they had almost finished their time at that school.

The data showed how expressions of the two capacities, *respectful carer* and *educational leader*, and the balance between them, vary according to the age of the students. Compare the examples of teachers of students in Year 1 and Year 7/8, in Boxes 7.6 and 7.16 respectively. Generally speaking, the young students don't question the teacher's role as *educational leader*, and the teachers of young children seemed confident in their role as educational expert.

For the participant teachers of the older students, on the other hand, the 'respectful carer' presented as wanting students to think of the teacher as "alongside" them in their learning, at the same time as the teachers retained authority as the *education* experts in the classroom. The 'authority' at this senior level of the primary school did not constitute being the expert in all things, the purveyor of all knowledge worth knowing, but was rather akin to parental authority which accords a parent expertise in running the family. The participant teachers of older children wanted the students to understand them as *colleagues who were also the managers of the learning process*. The teachers wanted the students to trust them to know how to help them to learn, or to access the information if they didn't know. (See Box 7.16)

7.3.1.2 Relationship intention: Student perceives teacher has particular personal attributes

The participant teachers all spoke of (or intimated) important qualities of character that they possessed and wanted to bring to the attention of the students. The teachers wanted the students to recognise in them, particular virtues that they believed were important to the role of teaching. The teachers understood their promotion of these virtues as an important part of building a *student's trust* that the teacher *could and would* fulfil the roles of educational leader and respectful carer.

The attributes important to the participant teachers included honesty, fairness, integrity, professional competence, caring, a sense of humour (fun), personal attachment, willingness to stand behind a student and defend him or her in the face of others, and trustworthiness.

7.3.1.3 Relationship intention: Student accepts personal, relationship-related responsibilities

As well as students *understanding* the required roles in the student-teacher relationship, all the participant teachers wanted the students to *accept* the roles and to play their own parts as students. This intention was subtly different from intending students to *learn about* the necessary student-teacher relationship; the emphasis was on students *acting* rather than *knowing*. The teachers worked towards each student's commitment to *behave* in a certain way, rather than just *understand* how they are expected to behave.

One teacher talked of her objection to popular terminology for *students' acceptance of the learner role*, "taking responsibility for their own learning". She argued that the popular terminology denigrated the teacher's role in the student's learning. The distinction between taking responsibility for *playing one's role in the learning*, and taking responsibility for *the learning process* is an important one.

Examples in the data showed teachers working to affect students'

- emotional state to be open, honest and genuine rather than reserved and feeling controlled by someone else, and
- behaviour to be co-operative, responsibility-oriented and initiative-oriented rather than disobedient, discipline-oriented, rule-oriented or indifferent.

All the teachers expected every student to pull his weight with regard to classroom chores, to be orderly rather than untidy, and to show respect for others rather than act selfishly. One teacher talked about these things in terms of students assuming "responsibility to the collective". All the teachers saw these behaviours as necessary for working successfully in the large group that was the class.

The emotional state and behaviour of a student, together, manifest in what is commonly recognised today as 'attitude' towards the teacher. The teachers all worked to affect students' attitudes to be trusting and respectful rather than fearful and indignantly resistant.

Although this relationship intention was clearly indicated by the data, revisiting the data wearing the ‘teacher’s actions’ hat revealed few examples of the teachers actually working to get the students to accept their roles and the related responsibilities. In all of the classes, at the time of the data gathering, ‘learning’ seemed to be already instituted as their reason for being there. The teachers had apparently done a lot of work in this regard earlier in the year.

This was further evidenced by the teachers’ stories and the researcher’s observation of three students who were new to their respective classes at the time of the data gathering. The new students, two of whom had changed schools to address behavioural problems, did not have the understandings of the desired student-teacher relationship nor acceptance of their student role, that the other, longer-standing class members seemed to have.

The actions the teachers took to get the students to accept their roles as students were often inseparable from the tactics the teachers used to get them to understand the desired learning-directed student-teacher relationship explored in Section 7.3.1 above. That is to say, the teacher’s intentions for the students to understand and their expectations for the students to do things were conveyed at the same time, with the same action. The teachers often communicated the *reason* for doing something at the same time as the *expectation to do it*, but there were *two* intentions, nevertheless. Examples include telling the student about classroom behaviour expectations, class and school-wide rules, discipline procedures, expectations about completing and submitting work. Many things the teacher did were geared towards gaining cooperation from the students.

7.3.2 Tending to the Self

In the data, a teacher’s interactions with the students (identified as a sub-category of *relating*, and explored in Section 7.3.1 above) were influenced by the teacher’s ideas about, and connected with actions directed towards maintaining: (i) her own beliefs about the world and how she saw herself functioning in it; and (ii) her own self-concept, self-esteem and sense of professional competence. The *teacher’s self* was, thus, integrally connected to the teacher’s interactions with students, and ‘*being*’ was identified as another important sub-category of relating.

The general actions that the participant teachers took to fulfill their *self*-oriented intentions included:

- maintaining professional knowledge and understandings about pedagogy, dealing with students' behaviour, and social principles (elaborated in Section 7.3.2.1); and
- tending their personal 'health' and well-being, including emotional, physical, mental and spiritual (elaborated in Section 7.3.2.2).

7.3.2.1 Maintaining professional knowledge and understandings

All the participant teachers seemed to have a strong sense of competence, and it was evident in their talk that they all expected to continue learning about education.

The participant teachers all spoke of courses they had taken, and the data included examples of both education professional development courses and personal development courses that added to their pedagogical knowledge and understandings.

In some cases, school-wide decisions regarding behaviour management and teaching and learning policies, led to the participant teachers 'boning up' on the newly adopted philosophy. Some data sets showed the participant teacher had played a part in the school-wide decision-making that led to the professional development.

Often what the teachers were doing with the students (that they considered sufficiently worthwhile to talk about at the interview) was inspired by professional development they had undertaken.

Several participant teachers spoke of a personal policy of pro-actively finding out something they needed to know for their teaching. The teachers' actions and sources of information and understandings included:

- consulting the teachers' own personal professional friends (see Box 7.16 for an example);
- contacting official agencies;

- utilising library resources; and
- talking informally with colleagues.

7.3.2.2 Tending personal health and well-being

Several aspects of the participant teachers tending to their personal health and well-being were evident in the data:

- satisfying personal needs with the job;
- behaving in a manner at school and with students that was in keeping with personal beliefs and ideals; and
- following personal instincts, feelings and curiosities when interacting with students.

7.3.2.2.1 Satisfying personal needs with the job

Every data set had examples of the teacher's job fitting her own personal needs (see Box 7.18 for some examples).

Box 7.18 Examples of the job satisfying the teacher's personal needs

Ms Sally turned down more lucrative and prestigious teaching positions in other schools in order to retain the rewarding professional relationship she had with the principal of her present school. She felt her present position allowed her to follow her ideals and 'do things her way' as teacher.

Ms Cath was able to incorporate her family, which was very important to her, into her school life by several means. For example, her children attended the school at which she worked, and she was able to bring her very young baby to work with her.

Ms Greta worked in a school a long distance from her home in order to satisfy her own need to help underprivileged children.

Ms Yolanda's behaviour of cuddling her students, described in the vignette in Box 7.8, seemed to stem from her own need as much as her perception of her students' needs.

Several participant teachers explained their reason for being in the job of teaching in terms of their passion for working with children. One teacher switched professions from law to teaching in order to follow that passion, which she recognised in herself only after having completed a law degree.

All the participant teachers believed the job they were doing was important, and voiced a conviction that the agegroup of students they were teaching was important in the developmental scheme of each student's life. The feelings ranged from, at least, being happy with the agegroup of students they had been allocated within the school, to feeling convinced that their students' age was the most important point in the students' lives at which to influence them as a teacher.

7.3.2.2.2 Behaving in a manner at school and with the students that was in keeping with personal ideals and beliefs

Demonstrating the teachers' need to act with integrity, some of the data sets had examples of teachers rationalising their actions with students in terms of their own worldviews and religious beliefs. Refer to Box 7.19 for an example.

Box 7.19: Example of a teacher whose personal ideals and beliefs underpinned her behaviour with students

It was important to Ms Sally to be true to her own ideals when dealing with students. She identified that many of her ideals stemmed from her religious beliefs (Quakerism). For example, she talked about:

- being respectful of all persons as valuable contributors to the world;
- her need to know she had personally tried her hardest and done all she possibly could to help a student with a problem; and
- being honest and acting with integrity at all times, even if this meant going against parental or other authority values.

By actively bringing her family values into her school life, the teacher in the example in Box 7.20 used the principles she used to manage her family as the foundations for school policies. The example reflected a reciprocity between the teacher's way of being at school with the students and her way of being at home with her own children and family. Her learnings at school informed and affected her practices at home and similarly the values and understandings she developed at home bringing up her family influenced her decisions of how to work with students at school. This arguably demonstrated an *inherent integrity*, as the teacher worked from (her) foundational beliefs about working with children, at both home and school.

Box 7.20: Example of a teacher remaining true to her beliefs

Ms Cath was involved with collaboratively setting up the school policies and practices to do with daily focussing students attention on learning, taking personal responsibility for their own actions, and discipline. For example, teachers in the school had a catch phrase reminder to students to “make good choices”, and the teachers operated a school-wide behaviour modification programme.

Ms Cath reported using the school’s behaviour modification strategy with her children at home, and also incorporating the values which underpin her parenting into school policy that she helped develop.

All the participant teachers seemed to have a reverence for childhood and demonstrated a respect for the students as valuable individuals.

7.3.2.2.3 Following personal instincts, feelings and curiosities when interacting with students

Several of the participant teachers spoke of the importance to themselves of being true to their own feelings, instincts and curiosity about individual students. This is seen to be more than just an example of the teachers satisfying their own personal needs, as it suggests an underlying trust in their own personal wisdom.

7.4 The teachers’ second concern: students develop as learners

In Section 7.3, *relating* was explored as the primary action of the participant teachers, who saw *developing learning-directed relationships with students* as a pre-requisite to the other work they wanted to do in the name of having the students master the formal curriculum. All the participant teachers had pedagogical understandings of the skills, attitudes, values and personal attributes that students need in order to achieve the formal

curriculum. Their concerns regarding *influencing students' learning capabilities* to a greater or lesser degree, fall into the category of *developing the student as a learner*.

As well as teaching learning skills on a whole-class basis, sometimes as part of the formal curriculum, every participant teacher spoke of *developing the student as a learner* intentions that they held for individual students. Box 7.21 contains a list of examples and shows the wide range of aspects that this category embraces. The vignette in Box 7.22 illustrates one example in more detail.

Box 7.21: Examples of developing the student as a learner

Ms Greta and Ms Robyn both actively taught *cooperative learning skills* to their respective classes of students.

In **Ms Robyn's** class, Robert called out to the teacher in a loud voice when he wanted to interact with her. During the research observation session, Ms Robyn worked with Robert to get him to *raise his hand to signal when he wanted her attention*, rather than to call out.

Ms Cath worked with one student on changing his anti-social behaviour of losing his temper.

Ms Kelly worked with a small group of students on resolving issues in a non-violent manner.

Ms Sally worked with Lenny to develop his willingness to read a wider range of books than just sailing books, as described in Box 7.11.

Ms Sally worked with Rebecca to overcome her anxiety about talking to other adults in the school, and to thereby build Rebecca's confidence in herself.

The researcher observed **Ms Cath** constantly using strategies to ensure the students were: listening to her

- following instructions
- attempting to solve their own problems before asking others for assistance
- asking their peers for assistance before they asked the teacher
- helping their peers with their work if a peer requested assistance and they felt they were able to help
- thinking of themselves as 'clever' and able to complete the assigned work

Box 7.22 Example of developing the student as a learner

Elliot was a highly intelligent child who had a problematic habit of not completing tasks that he perceived as menial. Instead of working diligently on such tasks, as he did on other work that he perceived as challenging, he tended to be either inattentive or disruptive to other students. The habit also caused gaps in his assessment record which was in danger of not reflecting his exceptional ability.

Ms Sally worked with Elliot to bring his attention to his problematic habit and to work on completing all set tasks, regardless of their perceived importance to him. At the time the researcher observed Ms Sally and Elliot in the classroom, Ms Sally had established a regime of reinforcements for Elliot's on-task behaviour and task completion. The concerns motivating Ms Sally's learning intentions for Elliot went further than the accuracy of school assessment records; she believed that *ability to stick to and complete a task* as an important life skill and, because she was personally fond of Elliot, she was determined to help him learn the skill.

Elliot was aware of his problem and the significance of it to his life. He told the researcher about his joint endeavour with his teacher to change his habits, and about his efforts to develop his capacity to complete tasks. He was slightly embarrassed about his shortcoming, and spoke of his difficulty in changing his behaviour, and of his appreciation of Ms Sally's help to improve himself.

Two broad purposes were identified that encompassed all the instances of teachers working on developing the students as learners. The first was to have each student function well in the social group (or groups) that constituted the school, and the second was to have each student able to apply themselves to the work tasks required to master the curriculum. Furthermore, it was not sufficient to have the students able to function socially and to work effectively, but the students also *needed to know* that they were able to do these things. The teachers were thus concerned about two things: the students' *capabilities* and the students' *knowledge of self*. The participant teachers all spoke of the importance of students developing personal understandings of themselves as learners, and many advocated teaching the students metacognitive skills.

The data sets contained examples of the participant teachers taking various information into account as they set out to develop each student as a learner:

- *the student's background and lifestyle* including significant relationships and influential people in the student's life outside the classroom;
- *the history of the student* which the teacher received from the student's previous teachers, schools and/or caregivers;
- *the student's personality*;

- *the student's relating skills* including the degree of respect which the student accorded others; and
- *the student's academic situation*, including achievement level as assessed by teacher, and the demands of the next 'class' or level of schooling.

Student achievement of *developing the student as a learner* intentions often remained unrecorded by the teacher; the achievement was noted by the teacher, sometimes shared with the student, and sometimes with another teacher. Regardless of how it was acknowledged, the student's new development was invariably *utilised* in subsequent learning.

7.5 Teachers' third concern: students learn and achieve in the formal curriculum

7.5.1 Making learning of formal curriculum content meaningful

The participant teachers displayed a range of teaching styles but, regardless of their style, all talked, at some stage during the interviews, about the processes they went through to make some aspect of the curriculum meaningful to the students. The data sets thus contained examples of the actions that teachers take to encourage meaningful learning. The two main categories of actions captured by the data were *selecting and presenting the formal curriculum content* and *organising learning experiences*.

7.5.1.1 Selecting and presenting formal curriculum content

When they intended learning to be meaningful, the participant teachers either selected curriculum content that was relevant to the students' lives and experiences, (if they indeed got the opportunity to select it – sometimes the topics were dictated by curriculum planners elsewhere in the school system) or they worked to present the content in a manner that made its relevance clear to the students. Presentation, and all the planning that went on behind it, often involved a high degree of creativity on the teacher's part.

7.5.1.2 Organising learning experiences

When they intended learning to be meaningful, the participant teachers organised learning experiences that connected with and developed the students' existing understandings. (See Box 7.23 for an example.)

Box 7.23: Example of teacher organising learning experiences to connect with students' existing understandings

Ms Sally started a new social studies unit with a whole-class activity that showed her where all the students were in their thinking about the topic, and then designed learning experiences over the next few weeks to challenge and develop their understandings. She did not know at the beginning of the unit, what the teaching sessions were going to look like. In the first two lessons in the unit, Ms Sally developed lesson plans spontaneously in class as she took students' responses into account.

She reported to the researcher at a later visit that the unit had been very successful in raising the students' consciousness about the topic, that they had 'ended up' in a place she hadn't foreseen. Furthermore, she was currently designing the next topic to utilise the students' understandings at the end of that unit as the starting point.

7.5.2 Convincing students to learn formal curriculum content

All the data sets captured aspects of the curriculum that the teachers thought were important for the students to learn but that they did not think were necessary for the students to find meaningful. In these cases, some of the teachers appealed to the students to trust them to know what was important for them.

7.5.3 The role of the teacher-student relationship in teaching the formal curriculum

All the identified processes to bring the students to formal curriculum learning required the teachers to know various things about their students. Functioning, learning-directed relationships with the students enabled teachers to:

- get to know about the students' lives, lifestyles, experiences and interests so that they could tailor curriculum content to be relevant;
- get to know the students' personalities, prior knowledge, understandings, attitudes and skill-levels so that they could tailor learning experiences to be effective;

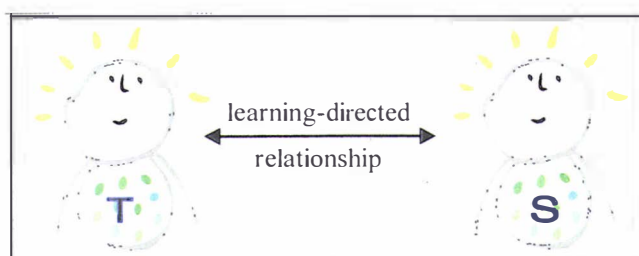
- assist the students to develop as learners so that the students were in a better position to achieve in the formal curriculum; and
- build trust in the students so that the students would agree to engage in formal curriculum learning even if it was unlikely to be meaningful to them.

The relationships the participant teachers developed with students were like joint partnerships in the learning process. The two-way interaction that such relationships involved made gaining the information required to effectively teach the students, more likely.

7.6 Summary of the substantive (descriptive) theory

Qualitative analysis of seven participant teachers' talk revealed that the participant teachers' learning intentions for their students were more far-reaching than just the expected intention for students to learn and achieve in the formal curriculum. The participant teachers perceived two important tasks prior to assisting students to learn and achieve the formal curriculum: firstly, *to establish and maintain a personalised learning-directed relationship with each student* (**Figure 7**); and secondly, *to develop each student as a learner*. The teacher-student relationship was seen as each teacher's main concern because, if it was effective, it facilitated achieving the other two intentions.

Figure 7: The Teacher-Student Relationship



The substantive theory identified and elaborated the actions the teachers took to *resolve* their concerns. Establishing and maintaining the relationship with a student (**Figure 7**) involved each teacher both (i) *tending to herself* to nurture her own professionalism, well-being and beliefs, and (ii) *interacting with the student* in accordance with her beliefs about how to best assist the student learn what is important.

Interacting involved the teachers working to develop each student's *understanding* and *acceptance* of their respective roles in the learning-directed relationship. Every participant teacher promoted herself in the roles of *educational leader* and *respectful carer*. The teacher's role as educational leader encompassed being the head disciplinarian and the educational expert. The teacher's role as respectful carer encompassed caring about the student, caring for the student, and respecting the student as an individual. The student, for his part, was expected to play the roles of learner and responsible class member.

The teachers seemed acutely aware that every teacher-student interaction had the potential to influence the student's ideas about their relationship. At the same time, the teachers were ultimately concerned that each relationship keep the teacher in a position to influence the student's learning, that is to say, they were concerned that each relationship develop or continue as a *learning-directed relationship*.

The picture of a working, learning-directed teacher-student relationship that the substantive theory painted was one of the student *trusting* the teacher as a capable educational leader, and *trusting* that the teacher respected and cared for the student. The student's trust, in turn, facilitated the teacher gaining the information and conditions required to effectively develop the student as a learner and assist the student to learn the formal curriculum.

Chapter 8 Teaching to Nurture Children's Spiritual Growth

When it comes to nurturing a child's spirituality at school,
the child's relationship with the teacher is what counts.

Entry in the researcher's journal, 4 April 2003

8.1 Emerging understandings as a function of the research method

8.1.1 The scope and limits of the substantive theory

Given that the substantive theory identifies and elaborates the actions the participant teachers took to resolve their main concerns, generation of the substantive theory goes only part of the way towards achieving the doctoral research aims of developing understandings of spirituality that are useful to New Zealand state school teachers and generating theory about teaching to nurture spirituality. Beginning from a perspective based on understandings of *learning as spiritual growth*, the selected research methods enabled in-depth study of what is important to the participant teachers as they teach their students, that is to say, as they endeavour to bring their students to learning. The teachers were chosen for the study because they had impressed someone as being a "good" teacher and therefore, it was argued, they had at least the potential to be spiritually nurturing. The group of participant teachers was not intended to be representative of all teachers, but it was believed to have the potential to contribute to developing understandings of spiritually nurturing teaching by virtue of the fact that each teacher in the group had had success at bringing one or more students to some sort of notable learning.

The substantive theory generated in Chapter 7 is *descriptive* theory about teaching, grounded in the ideas and practices of 7 primary school teachers. It provides a valid foundation on which to graft, shape and grow a formal *explanatory* theory about teaching to nurture spirituality. The theory development process is analogous to the practice of grafting roses or fruit trees, where scions are grafted onto strong root stock. The analogy illustrates the element of choosing and controlling, to a certain extent, the end product (as determined by the scion) while at the same time ensuring it has roots

that are known to be strong. The formal theory is developed by a process of grafting contemporary ideas and concepts that are fashionable onto the substantive theory which has a high likelihood of providing a strong and relevant base by virtue of being grounded in an uncontrived context.

The research is aiming for a theory of spiritually nurturing teaching. The substantive theory is a theory about *spiritually nurturing teaching*, only to the extent that the participant teachers *were actually* spiritually nurturing. Throughout the generation of the substantive theory, the researcher's understandings of *learning as spiritual growth* and what it means to *nurture spirituality* were developing. It was inappropriate during that stage, however, to articulate the researcher's developing understandings within the substantive theory because the emphasis was on the *teachers'* way of seeing things. Likewise, judgements about qualities and abilities that the teachers were perceived to have or not have, (e.g., whether or not they were spiritually nurturing), were rendered inappropriate by the phenomenological perspective from which the substantive theory was generated. The methods used to generate the substantive theory are, thus, good for developing understandings about *what is* but do not address *what is not*.

In Chapter 8, the substantive theory about the participant teachers is developed into theory about teaching to nurture students' spiritual growth. The formal theory generation processes work towards answering the questions: (i) "What is *spiritually nurturing teaching*?" (and, in doing so, also allows consideration of *what is not* spiritually nurturing teaching); and (ii) "How does a teacher do it?".

8.1.2 Developing perspectives

During the substantive theory generation, the researcher's perspective subtly changed from a functional interpretation of the focus of the inquiry in terms of *the job of the teacher*, to a human psychology interpretation in terms of *human endeavour*. Consequently, the progression from substantive theory about the participant teachers teaching to formal theory about teachers in general seemed a natural step.

8.1.3 The concepts *being* and *interacting*

Arguably, in-depth study of a human being, especially study of the person's *actions*, will always reveal the person *being*. Glaser advocates the use of grounded theory research to theorise the actions a person (or group of people) takes to resolve his or her (or their) main concern. The generated theory is about the *main resolving action*, i.e., the core variable.

Grounded-theory-according-to-Glaser is highly likely to generate *being* as a dimension of the core variable because *being* is a fundamental condition of a living person – a *human being*. This phenomenon could be interpreted variously as a limitation or a capacity of the research method. For the purposes of the doctoral research, which is aiming to explore and theorise human manifestation of a spiritual noumenon, it is unquestionably considered a capacity. *Being* is the human manifestation of the spirit and grounded theory offers a way to study *being*.

It is from the teacher's point of view that the interview data was gathered. For the most part, data on the students' experiences were second-hand, in the form of either the teacher's opinions, or the researcher's opinions formed during observation sessions. Only occasionally did the researcher converse with students directly, or have the opportunity to gather data on the students' thoughts.

Similarly to *being* (above), then, by using the teacher's talk as the primary source of data, *interacting* was a very likely category to be generated, because the teacher has experience only of *being* and *interacting with everything that is not herself*.

Furthermore, the same logic can be used to explain the emergence of the category *relating*. From the point of view of a third party to the student-teacher relationship, for example, the thesis reader, the relationship can be seen to have three elements: the student, the teacher, and the relationship between them (refer Figure 7). From the point of view of the teacher, however, within the relationship she has direct control only over herself and her attempts to reach out to, respond to, interact with, or otherwise affect the student. That is to say, she has experiences only of *being* and of *relating*.

8.2 Developing understandings about spiritually nurturing teaching

8.2.1 Contributions from the substantive theory to understanding *teaching*

Noddings (1984) recognises ‘relation’ as ontologically basic, and attributes this relational characteristic of self to the ethic of care (2003). Noddings’s writings in relational feminism¹⁷ were consulted by the researcher after the category of *teacher as respectful carer* was generated in the substantive theory. The similarities and connections of Noddings’s ideas with the doctoral research findings are remarkable and suggest the developing theory about spiritually nurturing teaching might also be situated within the theoretical category of relational feminism. Noddings writes:

... those of us who work from an ethic of care regard moral life as thoroughly relational. From this perspective, even the self is relational. We are, of course, individual physical organisms, but our selves are constructed through encounters with other bodies, objects, selves, conditions, ideas, and reflective moments with our own previous selves. A relational view weakens and blurs the distinction between egoism and altruism, because much of what we do for others strengthens the relations of which we are a part and, thus, our selves.

(Noddings, 2003:158)

Following on from the understanding of *learning as spiritual growth* (developed in Chapter 3) which underpinned the rationale for the research, *teaching* has come to be understood as *the act of intentionally assisting another human being’s spiritual growth*. (Situating the intention within an ethic of care is discussed further in Chapter 9.) By setting out to explore and theorise a teacher’s *teaching to assist a student’s learning*, the research aimed to explore and theorise a human being’s act of intentionally assisting another human being’s spiritual growth. From this perspective, the questions that initiated the analysis phase of the research¹⁸ can be rephrased: *What is the main concern*

¹⁷ Noddings (2003:) herself uses this term to describe the theoretical category into which her literature on caring fits.

¹⁸ The questions that initiated the analysis phase of the research were: *What is the main concern that the participant teachers’ actions are continually aimed at resolving?* and *What is the teachers’ main resolving action?* (Refer Section 6.2.)

of these human beings who aim to promote learning, or spiritual growth, in others? and How do they go about resolving those concerns?

The conceptual framework of participant teachers' concerns (Figure 3) identified three main intentions that motivated teachers' actions when they were teaching. The teachers were all concerned to: (1) *develop a learning-directed relationship with each student*; before they could (2) *develop each student as a learner*; and (3) *assist each student to learn the formal curriculum*.

Because teachers feel a need to establish a learning-directed relationship before they can meet the other two intentions, a teacher resolving her first concern by *relating with the students* is the focus of the substantive theory. In accepting the role as teacher, every teacher personally assumes responsibility for establishing and maintaining what she believes is a working (i.e., functioning and dynamic), learning-directed relationship with each student. The substantive theory specifically informs our understanding of the nature of learning-directed relationships that teachers foster, and what is involved for a teacher in fostering them. It has teased out the specific intentions that a teacher has for the students that directly influence the relationship she has with them.

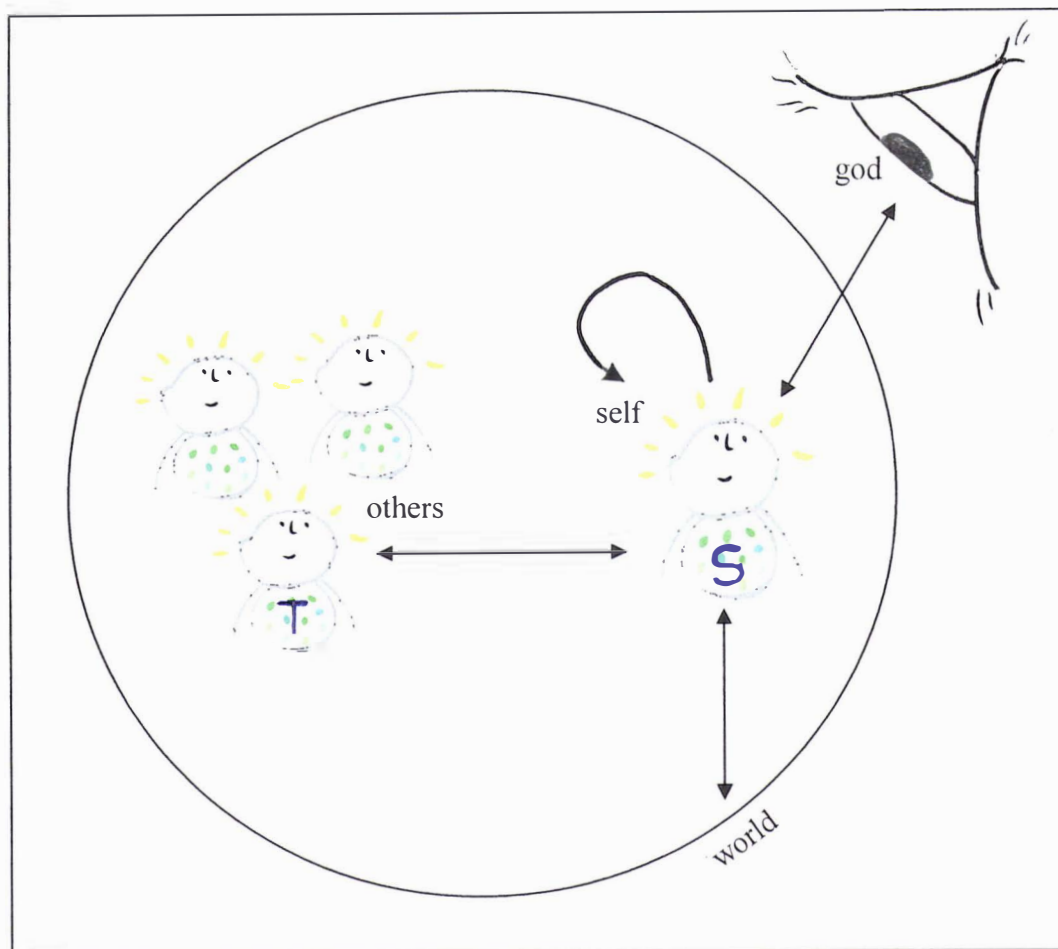
8.2.2 Establishing a spiritual perspective from which to examine *teaching*

To develop the theory further, it is useful to examine the substantive theory from a perspective that illuminates the spiritual aspects by allowing consideration of the implications of the relationship intentions for students' learning. The four categories of relationships that Nye, during grounded theory research about spirituality, found children recognised as important suggest a model of spiritual understanding that might serve that purpose. (Refer to Section 3.3.3.1 about Hay and Nyes' grounded theory research.)

8.2.2.1 A relational consciousness model to inform the perspective

The model of relational consciousness illustrated in Figure 8 was developed from Nye's I-god, I-self, I-others and I-world categories.

Figure 8: Diagram of a Student's Relational Consciousness



Throughout life, the student (depicted by the figure with 'S') is variously conscious of his own self, of others (as depicted by the group of figures including the one with 'T' which represents the teacher), of the physical world (as depicted by the large circle encompassing the student and the others) and of the omnipotent transcendent and associated realm (as depicted by the eye-like symbol in the top right corner). The relationships that such consciousness implies are denoted by the arrows on the diagram and the student will, of course, be variously conscious of the relationships throughout his lifetime, too, that is to say, conscious of his consciousness.

The relational consciousness model is valuable because: (i) it links consciousness to spirituality (see Section 3.3.3.2) and therefore to learning; and (ii) it can be seen to

categorize all learning and therefore it provides a perspective from which to study *any* learning. In Section 8.2.5, student learning associated with the teacher's main resolving action of *relating* (as represented by the conceptual framework of relating in Figure 4) is examined using the relational consciousness model.

8.2.2.2 Other possible models for comparison with the emerging theory

Comparison of the theory with understandings encompassed by stage theories of spiritual development such as, for example, Fowler's 'Stages of Faith' (Fowler, 1981) or Moody and Carroll's 'Stages of the Soul' (Moody and Carroll, 1998), might also provide opportunities to develop the theory. These stage theories offer identified pathways of understanding acquisition that could potentially enrich teachers' understanding of their students' learning. However, before an existing theory is selected for comparison with the emerging one, it must be thoroughly understood in order to permit: (i) verification of ontological compatibility; and (ii) identification of comparable concepts in both theories. Consequently, the doctorate timeframe relegates such in-depth examination of existing theories, and subsequent comparison with the new emerging theory, to post doctorate study.

Zohar and Marshall's model of spiritual intelligence (Zohar & Marshall, 2001) might also serve to enrich the emerging theory, but time allows only a pre-cursory consideration in the thesis. In Zohar and Marshall's understanding, spiritual intelligence is linked to one of three basic neural systems in the brain. (They see the other two systems being linked to intellectual intelligence and emotional intelligence.) They write:

By SQ [spiritual intelligence] I mean the intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and value, the intelligence with which we can place our actions and our lives in a wider, richer, meaning-giving context, the intelligence with which we can assess that one course of action or life-path is more meaningful than another.

(Zohar & Marshall, 2001: 3-4)

Defined in this way, spiritual intelligence might be seen as a brain-based mechanism by which an individual's experiences, including experiences of relating to a teacher, are

placed on the continuum of low to high spiritual growth in Figure 2. This seems to be an interesting concept that warrants careful comparison with the emerging theory, but time precludes the required in-depth study of Zohar and Marshall's psychological processes theory, at this point in time.

Similarly, Jungian psychology offers a potential model for comparison and possible integration with the emerging theory. June Singer, in her revised and updated edition of *Boundaries of the Soul: The Practice of Jung's Psychology* writes:

For what is psyche, if not soul? Soul is what makes us more than a pile of chemicals and a tangle of neurons; soul is that essence of consciousness that enables us to know ourselves and our world, to recognise what is unique in us as individuals and what each one of us shares with the immense totality of which we are a part.

(Singer, 1995:xi)

The nuances of *psyche*, *soul*, and *consciousness* strongly suggest links with the emerging theory, but Jung's psychology, too, will have to be considered post doctorate, as its complexity warrants a much fuller treatment of it than can be carried out in the thesis.

8.2.2.3 The concept of *spiritual face*

Exploration of a student's learning and the role that a learning-directed relationship with a teacher might play in that learning, requires consideration of what the teacher and student respectively bring to each particular learning situation, that might impinge upon the relationship and the new learning. The concept of a person's spiritual disposition at a given point in time, or '*spiritual face*', is thus an important one.

The concept of spiritual face was developed from Nye's concept of spiritual signature. When analysing what she recognised as talk that reflected the participant children's spirituality in her grounded theory research, Nye identified a person's spiritual signature as a sort of dominant expression, or style, of a person's spirituality; a phenomenon affected by, but not entirely the same as, a person's psychological profile. She writes:

Others have alluded to the role played by an individual's psychological make-up in their spirituality, but here I suggest it is given a central position. The practical implication is that one needs to enquire carefully about and attend to each child's personal style if one is to 'hear' their spirituality at all. At a theoretical level this implies that we cannot neatly distinguish the spiritual aspects from the psychological features of a child's life.

(Nye in Hay with Nye, 1998:99)

Building on Nye's concept, *spiritual face* has come to be understood in the doctoral research as the sum total effect of a person's relational consciousness on their capability¹⁹ to learn at a given time. The *time-dependent* characteristic of *spiritual face* is important to recognise. A person's *spiritual face* will be different at any two given instances and will always be a snapshot of a person's spiritual make-up at a given time. It represents everything that the person brings to a specific learning situation.

8.2.3 The constitutional element of effectiveness in spiritually nurturing teaching

All teachers have intentions about what their students will learn, and set about establishing a relationship with their students that they believe will put them in a position to facilitate that learning. The learning intentions can be seen to fall into one or more of three categories: relationship intentions, learning ability intentions and formal curriculum intentions; and the intended learning addresses one or more aspects of the student's relational consciousness. It is posited, however, that while the three categories of concerns in the conceptual framework are common to all primary school teachers, to be *spiritually nurturing* involves a teacher, both, *setting out to raise*, and *being successful at raising*, any aspect of a student's relational consciousness. That is to say, the concept of spiritual nurturance has a constitutional element of effectiveness. A teacher cannot *be* spiritually nurturing without somehow positively affecting the student's learning.

¹⁹ The term *capability* is chosen advisedly over the term *ability* in order to capture, both, the person's *ability*, and his or her *capacity for the ability* which is affected by the constraints experienced at a given time.

A teacher *intending* to assist a student to learn will not necessarily be successful at doing so. (See the vignette from the researcher's own childhood in Box 8.1 for an example.)

Box 8.1: Example of a teacher who *intended* to be spiritually nurturing but didn't connect with the student

My teacher, Mrs Woodhouse – I was frightened of her and, in the 3 long years that I had her as a primary school teacher, when I was 7, 8 and 9 years old, I didn't develop a sense of friendship or personal familiarity with her. I had no sense of her being personally interested in me. Rules were very important to her and I worried constantly that I might break a rule and have to suffer one of her punishments of which I was terrified; being belittled and embarrassed in front of the class, having to move to a desk 'more conducive to behaving', being 'sent to the Headmaster' and, heaven forbid, 'getting The Strap'.

I still have my school report cards from the 3 years I was her student. In them, Mrs Woodhouse repeatedly complained of her frustration at my average achievement when she sensed that I could "do a lot better if I tried".

11 years after I moved on from her class, I had the opportunity to assist Mrs Woodhouse at a school sports days. I was then 20. My younger sister was a pupil at the school and I had volunteered to "parent-help" as the big sister during my Teachers' College holidays. Watching Mrs Woodhouse interact with her class of 8 year old students surprised me – now that I was looking through young adult eyes, I could see that she very obviously loved the children and loved her job as teacher. She seemed to be a wonderful teacher who had firm but kindly control of her class.

And the students? It was very easy for me to see that many of them were frightened of her.

The point of difference between teachers who are successful at invoking learning in students and those who are not is not the intentions themselves, but rather the way the intentions manifest through the philosophies, personal beliefs and actions of individual teachers, and their effect on the student. The *extent* to which a teacher is spiritually nurturing towards a student at a given point in time is defined by the teacher's way of being with the student and the student's response. When identifying (or evaluating) the extent to which a teacher is *spiritually nurturing*, the focus is on the *quality of the educative connection between the teacher and the student*.

The *quality of the educative connection* is also contingent upon the environmental factors at the time of the interaction. The data showed all of the participant teachers continuously working to effect a classroom environment that they believed was conducive to the students learning. The quality of the connection is thus *time-*

dependent, as the learning environment for an individual can change from minute to minute in a classroom.

Thus it can be seen that whether or not a teacher is effective at invoking learning in a student depends on the *interface between the teacher's and student's spiritual faces*.

The likelihood of all the teaching strategies a teacher employs to develop the student as a learner and to teach the formal curriculum being effective, is enhanced by an effective learning-directed teacher-student relationship. The data gathered in the doctoral research strongly suggests that teachers know this. There is a connection or relationship between the teacher's *self* and the *decisions she makes in class*. A teacher's spiritual face and consequent way of being will determine whether or not she chooses teaching methods and ways of relating that will likely result in the student learning. Her abilities to 'read' the student, to assess the student's learning needs, and to assist the student to fulfil those learning needs are all important.

In the course of the research, the researcher's focus in the research changed subtly. Broadly speaking, the research focused on the teacher and students as a group of people who are together for the purposes of student education. At the start of the research, even though, by definition of being human, the teacher and the students were all assumed to be developing spiritually (refer Chapter 3), consideration of spirituality was focussed on that of *the student*. The research was initially intended to explore the nature and scope of the teacher's effect on *the student's spirituality*. What became clear in the course of the research was the importance of recognising: (i) *the teacher's spirituality*, too; and (ii) the teaching-learning picture as one of relating spiritual beings. Thus, even though the theory is about the teacher nurturing *the student's* spiritually, *the teacher's* spirituality is equally important.

This subtle change in emphasis could have arisen because the experiences and ideas of *the teacher* were selected as the primary source of data, and it was, therefore, the complex realities of *the teacher* that were conceptualised and explained by the generated theory. Nevertheless, the teacher's own way of being, which is understood to

be integrally related to his or her spirituality, emerged as an important factor in the teacher's effect on the student's learning.

8.2.4 Relational consciousness and teaching

Interpreting teachers' learning intentions in terms of the relational consciousness model (Figure 8) facilitates deeper consideration of the teachers' resolving action of *relating for learning*, and of the student learning that the teachers' intentions target.

Resolving each of the teachers' three main concerns can be seen to involve particular aspects of the students' relational consciousness. Interpreted in terms of the relational consciousness model, a teacher's concern to *develop a working, learning-directed relationship with students* can be seen as addressing a particular relationship within the I-others aspect of each student's relational consciousness, namely the teacher-student relationship. The teacher works to establish a relationship between themselves and each student, a relationship which she consciously or subconsciously recognises as prerequisite to her assisting the student to learn. The relationships have particular qualities that the teacher believes are necessary in order to successfully do her job as teacher and assist the student to learn. Building a learning-directed relationship with a student involves the teacher assessing each student's social skills, attitudes and ways of being, in other words, the I-others aspect of the student's spiritual face, and then working to move the student from where he is, to where she wants him to be. 'Where she wants him to be' is dependent on the teacher's own spiritual face.

A teacher's concern to *develop the student as a learner* can be seen to primarily address the I-self aspect of each student's relational consciousness. The teacher: (i) comes to teaching with professional and personal beliefs about what knowledge, skills, attitudes and values a student requires in order to learn; (ii) assesses each student's personality and behaviours, that is, the I-self aspect of the student's spiritual face; and (iii) works with each student to assist him to develop the required attributes. In assessing a student's 'personality and behaviours', the teacher tries to find out about the state of the student's I-self consciousness at the time. She then compares that with her professional knowledge and beliefs about what a student needs in order to learn, and makes plans to 'bring the student up to speed', so to speak.

A teacher's concern to *assist the student to achieve in the formal curriculum* constitutes the conventional face of teaching and addresses those aspects of each student's relational consciousness that the formal curriculum dictates. That is to say, the teacher works to bring each student to learning about those facets of life that are deemed important by two groups of people: (i) the contemporary society (as represented in New Zealand by the National Curriculum documents); and (ii) the school personnel responsible for selecting items from the curriculum documents and designing the actionable curriculum. Historically, the formal curriculum has been subject-oriented and primarily addressed students' I-world relational consciousness. More recently, however, social and personal aims and objectives have been included in the formal curriculum, and teachers are expected to have students grow their I-self and I-others relational consciousness.

Depending on the belief systems of the school and the teacher, the content in any part of the curriculum may or may not include religious teaching and learning, and thus may or may not address the I-god aspect of each student's relational consciousness.

As explained previously, the aspects of relational consciousness depicted in the conceptual framework are interconnected and their boundaries consequently blurred. It follows that the defining boundaries of the three categories of concerns are also blurred. For example, it can be seen that a part of 'developing a student as a learner' (I-self) is establishing a working relationship with the teacher (I-others). Similarly, some of the formal curriculum objectives (I-world) are about 'developing the student as a learner' (I-self). Although the three concerns are clear categories of intentions on which teachers focus their attention, the reality of the experience of *teaching to have the student learn* is thus hugely complex, with the teacher often assessing the I-self, I-others, I-world and, possibly, the I-god aspects of a student's spiritual face simultaneously in a given teacher-student interaction.

Relating to the students in order to establish and maintain working, learning-directed relationships is often at the forefront of their intentions because the success of the

teacher's effort to resolve the other two concerns depends on the effectiveness of the relationship.

8.2.5 The student learning inherent in teachers' relationship intentions

In Section 8.2.5, the relational consciousness model is used to further consider (analyse) the student learning inherent in the teachers' relationship intentions. (Refer to Figures 4 and 5.)

As indicated in Figure 5, one of a teacher's relationship intentions is to bring each student to an understanding of the teacher as a respectful carer and the educational leader. The student's I-others consciousness of these teacher's roles thus involves the student's *trust* that the teacher could and would fulfil those capacities. The teacher's actions directed towards this intention are aimed at instilling, developing, nurturing and reinforcing *trust* within the student. This intention, in turn, may mean the teacher is required to work on the student's I-self consciousness, particularly if the student does not have a pre-disposition to trust.

Another of the teacher's relationship intentions is to bring each student to an understanding of his own roles as learner and a member of the class group. Here, the student's I-others consciousness involves *knowledge* of others' expectations of his role, and the implication for the teacher is an imperative to actually *inform* the student about those roles. The information, itself, can be seen to be contributing to the student's I-world consciousness but as soon as the student perceives the knowledge in terms of his own relationship with the teacher or the class group, it becomes classified as I-others consciousness.

The student's I-others consciousness of a teacher's personal attributes involves *knowledge* of the teacher, *a willingness* to embrace the teacher in a relationship, and *generosity of spirit* to acknowledge another's virtues. The onus is on the teacher to demonstrate the valued teacher attributes. The teacher may also need to work on the student's I-self consciousness if he is disinclined to relate or to show generosity of spirit.

The student's I-others consciousness required in order for the student to accept his own role and personal responsibility in the relationship manifests in *affability towards* the student-teacher learning-directed relationship and *willingness* to play the roles and behave in the ways required or expected. Here, the onus is on the teacher to make participation in the learning-directed relationship desirable, and to work on the student's I-self consciousness if he is disinclined to participate.

Probing a little deeper than analysis of the raw data would allow, this analysis, although obviously cursory and incomplete, begins to show the complexity of the self-perceived tasks of a teacher who is concerned to establish and maintain learning-directed relationships with her students. This short analysis shows the teacher working on the student's trust, knowledge about roles, knowledge about herself, willingness to relate, willingness to acknowledge virtues in others, (i.e., generosity of spirit), affability towards the teaching-learning situation, and willingness to play his own part. These learnings on the part of the student can be seen as falling within particular relational consciousness categories, depending on the object of the learning.

Also important to the theory, however, are the patterns of relational consciousness categories in the *intentions of the teacher*. When setting out to fulfil relationship intentions for her students, the teacher is generally working on the I-others consciousness of each student. However, any difficulties the teacher faces in bringing individual students to the I-others consciousness will likely cause her to generate I-self consciousness intentions for those students, based on her analysis of and responsiveness to her perception of the individuals' spiritual faces. It is reasonable to expect the teacher would require different pedagogical knowledge and skills to address the different categories of relational consciousness.

8.3 Setting the theory in a school context

The institution within which a teacher works can play a big part in supporting the teacher to resolve her three concerns. The data showed some of the teachers working within schools that had cultures compatible with their own pedagogical philosophies

and these teachers expressed deep-felt appreciation of their teaching situation. In these schools, categorised *empathetic schools* by the researcher, the data also showed examples of teachers working together, discussing individual student’s learning within a holistic view of the student and focused on a collective approach to bringing the student to learning.

One such example of a teacher in an empathetic school is described in Box 8.2.

Box 8.2: Example of teacher in a school with institutionalised practices that were compatible with her own pedagogical approach

Ms Cath respected every one of the students as a person in their own right. The school supported Ms Cath’s care and respect for each student’s culture, first language and academic abilities with various institutionalised structures and practices.

For example, Ms Cath talked of the family group (whanau) class structure and the school-entry placement practices of her school:

We organise the children within the school into three family groups, or whanau. ... When the children are enrolled, they’re enrolled in a whanau with connections – so there might be brothers, might be cousins, there might be a next door neighbour ... and they stay in that whanau for the whole of their school life and teachers generally stay in the same whanau, too. ... Ngati Aroha is our one, so we’re thinking about aroha¹ a lot in what we do and what we say ... – that’s our name, that’s our game, that’s who we are.

Ms Cath, Interview

Ms Cath talked about the whanau policy of student grouping and placement as:

- giving the students a sense of belonging (turangawaewae);
- developing a mentality of sharing and caring (manaaki); and
- providing enhanced opportunities for generative learning (tuakaena/teina).

The participant teachers who were working in schools with philosophies antagonistic to their own (categorised *insensitive schools* by the researcher), expressed frustration. The data captured examples of teachers in this situation organising their students to attend curriculum sessions that the teachers did not believe would result in the students learning. In these example instances, the teachers seemed to temporarily personally detach from their students and any responsibility they might otherwise have felt for the students’ learning. They seemed to be “going through the motions” just to get through the teaching situation which had been forced on them by others in the school.

One of the empathetic school data sets showed the participant teacher in the staffroom during interval, informally discussing with several other teachers, a student about whom they were all concerned. Together they arrived at common understandings about the student and about how to behave with him. The value of teacher talk that is focussed on students' learning has been recently recognised by researchers conducting problem analysis research in New Zealand (Annan, Lai and Robinson, 2003). Annan et als' findings suggests that the type of 'teacher talk' amongst teachers in a school correlates with levels of student achievement. The *relating for learning* theory offers explanatory potential for the phenomenon.

The early childhood centre data was a prime example of how institutional philosophy that is in tune with the teachers' ways of thinking, supports a spiritually nurturing environment.

Box 8.3: Example of institutional philosophy being in tune with the teachers' educational philosophies

Ms Frida's early childhood centre was the fruition of her dream; she and her life partner had built it themselves. Ms Amy taught at Ms Frida's centre rather than any other early childhood institution because she believed in the philosophy by which it was run.

The children's parents and caregivers with whom the researcher conversed during observation sessions reported, without exception, that their children loved attending the sessions. The children demonstrated a fondness for Ms Frida and Ms Amy who, in turn, were proud of the high calibre of: (i) the education they provided for the children; and (ii) the support they provided for the children's families. Session plans showed the teachers' concerns for every child's learning, well-being and family concerns.

Interestingly, the centre had a particularly spiritual atmosphere, upon which many visitors to the centre commented without prompting. The 'spiritual atmosphere' proved very difficult to capture in words but was nevertheless experienced by many people there.

The compatibility of a teacher and the culture of the institution within which the teacher works is ostensibly an important factor in the success of the teacher to resolve her three concerns and bring her students to learning.

Chapter 9 Discussion and Conclusions

Devising teaching methods is important, but nurturing the spiritual life of children is much more about the realities of human relationship than it is about detailed lesson plans.

David Hay (Hay with Nye, 1998:162)

9.1 The relationship between the emerging theory and contemporary ideas

Espousing a 'pure' form of grounded theory research, Glaser advises against extensive literature reviews prior to the open-minded, in-depth study of data and theory generation for two reasons:

- (i) it assists the researcher-as-analyst to be theoretically sensitive, that is to say, it assists the researcher to approach the data free of pre-conceived agendas; and
- (ii) topics to review are not known until the main foci of the participants are identified.

The researcher found that, during the substantive theory generation phase, disregard for progress in research and contemporary development of ideas was a natural consequence of the required intense engagement with the data. Solitude was sought out and relished as an ideal condition of the research environment, and the researcher spent many months avoiding contact with the world beyond that suggested by the data. At the end of the solitary, substantive theory generation phase, engagement with, both, the new literature that had been written since the self-imposed isolation, and the literature to which the substantive theory now pointed, revealed surprising connections between the emerging theory and contemporary ideas.

In grounded theory research, there is always the chance that the time and energy a researcher expends will simply result in discovering and theorising something in the data that has already been found elsewhere. Nevertheless, conducting such 'discovery'

research and theory generation with a genuinely theoretically-sensitive approach provides rare opportunities for new insights within frameworks already established independently of the research, and a rich, nourishing environment for creative development of those insights into new knowledge and understandings. At the very least, ‘discovery’ of concepts in the data that are subsequently found to exist in the literature acts as a form of triangulation and thus serves to validate those concepts.

Moving towards the culmination of the doctoral research, albeit more because of time than for any other reason, the developing theory has shaped up to be a theory of *relating for learning*. The grounded theory research into spiritually nurturing teaching has suggested a new meaning of ‘learning’ and resulted in a theory of *effective teaching*, where *effective teaching* is defined in terms of the quality of the educative connection between the teacher and the student. With the teacher-student relationship at the forefront of the theory, the abilities of the teacher to read the student’s spiritual face, and to interface with it in a way that results in the student learning, become the critical considerations. Understanding the role of the teacher-student relationship in the student’s learning involves consideration of both the teacher’s and the student’s spirituality.

9.2 Care theory and *relating for learning*

In 1984, Nel Noddings published her ideas about caring and the feminine approach to ethics (as distinct from the masculine approach). For the twenty or so years since then, she has developed her ideas and the implications of her ideas for education and other social institutions. Noddings’s care theory was brought to the attention of the researcher only after the substantive theory had been generated, and it seemed to offer a broad philosophical framework within which the developing *relating for learning* theory might sit. Noddings sees “relations, not individuals,” as ontologically basic and *caring* as a certain kind of relation or encounter (Noddings, 2003:xiii). Many of the profound understandings that Noddings has realised through her deep and extensive analysis of the caring relation, are the same understandings to which the researcher has come during the grounded theory research. Care theory looks likely to have good potential to inform, and thereby strengthen, the *relating for learning* theory.

Noddings identifies joy as a basic human affect and explains that recognition of and longing for relatedness form the foundation of the feminine ethic. With hindsight, the way the researcher clearly saw in the raw data, the participant teachers striving to relate to their students suggests that she was working from a feminine ethic standpoint from the outset of the research. Thus the strong correlation of ideas from the *relating for learning* theory and care theory is not surprising.

Recognising that the *relating for learning* theory is likely to have been generated from within an ethic of care assists the exploration and explanation of the practical implications of the theory. The theory suggests the desirability of teachers having the motivation, know-how and support to establish working, learning-directed relationships with their students. In Sections 9.3, 9.4 and 9.5, discussion about these aspects of effective teaching is begun, with a view to seeding further, post-doctorate inquiries and development of the ideas.

9.3 Teachers' motivation to establish learning-directed relationships with students

The research did not explore specifically why teachers want to teach, nor did it capture the possible variations in *all* teachers' perceptions of their primary concerns or tasks. The research did find, however, that every one of the *participant* teachers understood the student's learning to be the main aim of their teaching; they all ultimately aimed to facilitate deep, meaningful and lasting learning in the students. The data also captured information about one 'teacher in the neighbouring classroom' who was more interested in the students 'passing the test', suggesting at least *two 'types'* of teachers, each defined by a teacher's rationale for teaching. The data gathered to date has the capacity to inform inquiry into only one of these two types of teacher, namely, those who hold *bringing their students to learning* as their primary aim, that is to say, those who aspire to be *spiritually nurturing*. Noddings proffers analyses of *caring* (for an example, see Noddings, 1984:127) that enhance understandings of the distinction between those teachers whose intentions are intrinsic and those teachers who focus on learning because

they understand it to be a technical part of the teaching role that they are employed to play.

Noddings's care theory has potential to explain the intrinsic motivation of spiritually nurturing teachers to establish and maintain learning-directed relationships with students. For those teachers whose learning-directed intentions are intrinsic, the interest in the students' learning is understood as but a subset of a wider caring *about and for* each student. These different 'ways to care' were also detected by the grounded theory research of the doctorate (see Section 7.3.1.1.1).

Furthermore, Noddings says, "the joy that accompanies fulfilment of our caring enhances our commitment to the ethical ideal that sustains us as one-caring" (Noddings, 2003:6), suggesting an explanation of the intrinsic satisfaction that teachers experience when they see students learning and believe they have played a part in that learning. The *ethic of care* perspective from which Noddings's analyses are driven offers a meaningful and appropriate conceptual framework for developing understandings about a teacher's own spiritual development and spiritual faces. Further post-doctoral study of teachers' spirituality as an important factor in the student's learning at school seems imperative.

9.4 Teachers' knowledge about how to effectively teach

Caring about and for the students and *intending* to affect their learning, however, is not sufficient to teach effectively. Realisation of a teacher's aspiration to be spiritually nurturing involves, both, *intention* on the part of the teacher, and *success* at raising the relational consciousness of the student. Factors that possibly lead to successful teaching are of popular interest in educational research and are addressed extensively in the literature.

The doctoral research suggests that *success* is dependent on the *quality of the educative connection between the student's and teacher's spiritual faces*, and, therefore, that the capability of the teacher to read and respond to the student's spiritual face in a given

teaching situation is a critical factor. The teacher's capability, in turn, has many components. As an example, one factor is the ability of the teacher to *demonstrate* her caring to the students. Noddings's (1984:6) recognition and exploration of the link between caring and relation has the potential to explain why caring teachers *who can demonstrate their caring* to their students are successful at engaging students and bringing them to learning; she believes that every individual (student) *recognises* and *longs for relatedness*.

Spiritual face has constituent components that impact on any given interaction between the teacher and the student. For example, a student's spiritual face includes the understandings that he has learned from previous experiences, his personality and genetical make-up, and his consequent ways of reacting to stimuli. Ostensibly, the different components of spiritual face are of varying significance to the teaching-learning interaction and have varying potential impact on the learning outcome.

Recent studies in New Zealand suggest that *culture* is a component of a teacher's and student's spiritual faces that has high significance to the success of the teaching-learning interaction. In Te Kotahitanga project, Russell Bishop and project facilitators work to improve educational outcomes for Māori students in mainstream classrooms. Having developed an Effective Teaching Profile from students' (and other participants in their educations') talk about what would help the students learn better, the ongoing work of the project involves developing participant teachers' understandings of the Profile, and provision of in-class and whole-school support for teachers to make the suggested changes to their practice. In terms of the *relating for learning* conceptual framework, Bishop and project facilitators are attempting to enhance the interface between the cultural component of Māori students' and their teachers' spiritual faces.

Bishop and O'Sullivan report that teachers face significant personal challenges when they participate in Te Kotahitanga.

There will [...] be an emotional and a conceptual aspect to the changes, or an element of what Timperley, Phillips and Wiseman (2003) term 'cognitive dissonance', as repositioning affects our sense of who we are, what is right and wrong and true and false ...

(Bishop & O'Sullivan, 2005:12)

Arguably, use of the *relating for learning* conceptual framework of educative connections between students' and teachers' spiritual faces to examine and explain educational research such as Te Kotahitanga, has potential to de-politicize the political tensions inherent in addressing many educational issues. Culture is but one of the components of spiritual face that might be considered in light of the *relating for learning* theory.

9.5 Support for teachers to develop learning-directed relationships with their students

Teachers can experience support for their working relationships with students in many ways. In Section 8.3, where *empathetic schools* were identified as supportive contexts for spiritually nurturing teaching, the benefits of teaching with others who have similar philosophical and pedagogical beliefs were briefly discussed. Other structures that might support teachers, and that were evident in the data, include school-organised time-management structures such as daily scheduling and timetabling, and curriculum structures such as government policies about the purpose of schooling and national curriculum mandates. Structures such as these are more likely to contribute to environments in which teachers who aspire to be spiritually nurturing feel more supported, when they are set up with respect for the importance of teacher-student learning-directed relationships, that is to say, set up from within what Noddings would identify as an ethic of care.

The research captured schools' management structures regarding class groupings and student placements that seemed to have been derived from an ethic of care. For example, Ms Cath's way of teaching was supported by the school's whanau-organisation of classes which meant she usually taught the same students for several years. She was able to develop a strong relationship with each student with far less effort than Mr Josh who spoke of the frustrations of having students for only short lengths of time because of staff changes and the school's policy to put students with a different teacher every year.

Ms Kelly spoke of the fondness she developed for her 5 year old students and the sadness she felt when they moved on to another class. School policy makers might consider, not only the effects on students' learning, but also the personal cost to the teacher who becomes attached to her students, when making decisions to support teachers with establishing and maintaining learning-directed relationships.

All of the participant teachers referred to *unstructured time with students* as very important to developing and maintaining learning-directed relationships with them. Arguably, the present New Zealand curriculum, overburdened with achievement objectives and heavy demands for student achievement data in the name of teacher accountability, works against the teacher having unstructured time with students, and having time to teach the curriculum content in a manner that results in meaningful learning. Interestingly, Noddings has written, albeit from America, about the need to change the purpose of schooling from "academic adequacy" to a moral purpose of producing caring people (Noddings, 1992). Indeed, the *relating for learning* theory suggests the need for careful positioning of spirituality within the mandated curriculum if it is to support and not hinder students learning. The theory suggests that teachers and other educationists who want to tend to students' well-being and nurture students' spiritual growth need to adopt a spiritually nurturing *approach to teaching* rather than simply to include spirituality-related curricula in the learning programme.

9.5.1 Support from government for addressing spirituality in school education

The conceptual understandings developed in the thesis strongly suggest a way of looking at *the place of spirituality in education*, not as another area of learning that students and teachers need to cover in the curriculum, but as an integral *approach* to education.

In pursuing inquiry into spiritually nurturing teaching, an important distinction between *spiritual education* and *spiritual nurturance* has been recognised from the outset of the research. *Spiritual education* implies that the teacher intends to affect the child's spiritual growth in pre-determined ways, that is to say, the teacher has an achievement-oriented agenda for the child's spiritual development. *Spiritual education* commonly

has two aspects. The first addresses a body of knowledge about spirituality with which teachers want students to engage, and the second assumes a spirituality developmental pathway along which teachers aim to progress students.

These two aspects of spiritual education constitute important contributions to the curricula in some New Zealand state schools, most visibly in the integrated schools of special character, for example, Roman Catholic schools, Steiner schools, and Muslim schools. The special character of these schools is defined by specific religious or philosophical doctrines, and the special-character curricula are shaped by identified development frameworks of spiritual growth.

New Zealand state schools as a whole group, however, serve a multi-cultural, democratic society and have multi-faith student populations. The lack of common understandings between all public education stakeholders at this time in New Zealand education history is evidenced by the wide range of definitions of spirituality present in recent New Zealand education literature.

Compare ‘secular spirituality’ and Māori spirituality as but two of many examples. Egan (2000) identifies the spirituality that the Health and Physical Education curriculum statement is mandating New Zealand school teachers to address as ‘secular spirituality’. In his masterate thesis on spiritual well-being in New Zealand State Schools, Egan defines ‘secular spirituality’ as “the way that people, outside of a religious tradition, create meaning and purpose in their lives” (Egan, 2000:16).

Shirres (1997) explains that understandings of Māori spirituality vary from tribe to tribe. In his book *Te Tangata: The Human Person*, Shirres explains the Reverend Maori Marsden’s understanding of the three kete (baskets) from which Maori knowledge has come (in traditional Maori thinking), and which represent three aspects of Maori spirituality:

According to Marsden *te kete aromui* is the kit containing the knowledge of what we see, *aro-nui*, ‘that before us’, the natural world around us as apprehended by the senses.

Te kete tuauri is the basket containing the knowledge that is *tuauri*, ‘beyond, in the dark’, the knowledge which understands,

‘stands under’, our sense experience. It is the understanding we build up of “the real world of the complex series of rhythmical patterns of energy which operate behind this world of sense perception” (Smith 1913:130, cf. Buck 1958:12).

The third basket is *te kete tuaatea*, the basket which contains the knowledge of spiritual realities, realities beyond space and time, the world we experience as ritual.

(Shirres, 1997:17)

Because a development framework for spiritual growth that is relevant to all stakeholders of public education in New Zealand is yet to be identified, it is argued that decisions regarding the inclusion, content and form of spiritual education in a school’s curriculum should be made by each school working together with the school’s community.

Spiritual nurturance, as distinct from spiritual education, and as developed in the doctoral research, implies a way of behaving (being) that the teacher believes will result in a nourishing environment in which the student can thrive spiritually (learn well) in the course of every-day school life. That is to say, spiritual nurturance implies a way of being and behaving that is characterised by concern for the student and the student’s learning.

The researcher contends that directives regarding *spiritual education* have no place in the curriculum mandated from the government level of the education system at this time, whereas attention to *spiritual nurturance* is imperative in schools serious about students learning. That is to say, *spiritual education* should remain the prerogative of individual schools and the communities they serve but striving to be *spiritually nurturing* should be expected of every teacher.

The New Zealand curriculum writers’ intentions are for teachers to tend to students’ well-being in all their teaching, although the curriculum documents fall short of explaining what that means or how to do it (see Chapter 2 for an analysis of the occurrence and meaning of *spirituality* in the curriculum documents). The thesis shows

that, by virtue of their emphasis on students learning²⁰, the curriculum documents already harbour an inherent commitment to nurture students' spirituality. The theory generated by the doctoral research is theory about teaching that honours that commitment.

9.6 Implications of the *relating for learning* theory for teachers' work

The doctorate furthers understanding of the concept of *spiritual nurturance* by contributing a theory that places to the fore the importance of the student's experience of the teacher's teaching; a teacher can *intend* to be spiritually nurturing, but whether or not the teacher's intentions are fulfilled is determined by *her effect on the student*. This conditional relationship between the spiritually nurturing teacher and the student is mirrored by the definitive dependency Noddings (2003) identifies between the 'one-caring' and the 'cared-for'. It makes defining the qualities of a spiritually nurturing teacher problematic because success depends on the interface with the student rather than particular qualities per se. More research and study to identify and further explore the components of both teacher's and student's spiritual face is warranted.

Ostensibly, the *likelihood* of a teacher bringing about learning in a student can be evaluated by identifying teaching qualities that will make learning more likely, and these could be used to inform teaching practice that aims to nurture spirituality. The *relating for learning* theory generated by the doctoral research suggests the importance of ongoing teacher professional learning at a deeper level of the human relationships required for actual student learning.

The theory supports a holistic approach to teacher evaluation that acknowledges the multiple facets of teacher's striving to bring students to learning. 'Good' teachers make educative connections with their students, and a holistic approach to teacher evaluation would balance the teacher's ability to relate to students, with accountability data on students' academic achievement. Understanding of the importance of the balance seems

²⁰ Here, the term 'learning' is intended as a verb.

particularly important for those who are in control and have the power to *appoint* teachers and evaluate teachers' performance.

9.7 Further testing of the theory

Glaser said that a theory is nothing more than a set of related hypotheses. Theory generated out of real life situations is more likely to consist of true propositions and therefore more likely to be a feasible theory. As a set of related propositions, a theory invites further research to verify or discredit those propositions.

Strauss and Corbin write:

Although validated during the actual research process, a theory is not tested in the quantitative sense. This is for another study. Usually, parts of a theory are tested quantitatively. [...] Remember that a theory is just that – a theory. A proposition that does not seem to hold up under further testing does not necessarily indicate that the theory is wrong; rather, it indicates that its propositions have to be altered or expanded to encompass additional and specifically different conditions.

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998:213)

Two perspectives of the learning-directed teacher-student relationship are relevant to the theory, namely, the relationship as experienced by the student (i.e., the student-teacher relationship) and the relationship as experienced by the teacher (i.e., the teacher-student relationship). Although the theory is about the *teachers' experience of teaching*, data gathered about the students' experiences of what the teachers are talking about would serve to enrich the theory.

Similarly, the small number of teachers' accounts of their own childhood school and learning experiences contributed an important dimension to the data, because they added childhood experiences interpreted from the standpoint of an adult who has learned a lot about education. Gathering of more such data might be a focus of future research to further validate the theory. Such a study might include examination of the extent to which schools adhere to the nine principles specified in the Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education 1993b), and particularly the ninth principle:

The New Zealand Curriculum relates learning to the wider world. The school curriculum will provide learning which students can see to be relevant, meaningful, and useful to them.
(Ministry of Education, 1993b:7)

9.8 Summary and Conclusions

9.8.1 Comments on the research

The doctoral research resulted in an understanding of analysis that differs from that of Strauss and Corbin. Strauss and Corbin (1998) identify three elements of analysis that generates initial categories and suggests relationships among the categories: (i) the data, (ii) the researcher's interpretations of the data; and (iii) interplay between the data and the researcher, i.e., the researcher actively reacting to and working with the data as she/he is both gathering and analysing it.

In the doctoral research, analysis was understood to comprise three elements that contributed to and shaped the emergent theory: (i) the thing being studied, i.e., that which is represented by the data; (ii) the data and other technologies being employed by the researcher; and (iii) the researcher's interpretations. The three elements interacted and influenced each other in highly complex and unpredictable ways.

In grounded theory, the researcher uses technologies to gather information about what he/she is studying, applies his/her own thought processes, knowledge, background, available resources, emotional reactions and personality to the data, and generates an elaborate explanation of the thing being studied.

Nevertheless, the grounded theory researcher sets out to ground the theory in the world as it is experienced by those who he or she is studying. The generated theory should benefit the participants, or the group that the participants represent. Just as the scientific researcher has a commitment to validity of the data he or she collects, so the grounded theory researcher needs to have loyalty to the participants, demonstrated by a commitment to ensure, as far as possible, that the data are a true representation of the

participants' world. Similarly, any technology used to store, sort, group or otherwise manipulate the data must serve to preserve, and not distort, the participants' original intentions.

The authenticity of the theory depends on the researcher's commitment to serve the participants. The research method was valuable for identifying teachers' learning intentions from the available data, namely teachers' talk during interviews with the researcher and the researcher's observations of the teachers teaching.

Glaser's grounded theory methodology is situated within the hermeneutic and interpretive research paradigms. Strauss and Corbin write:

[Grounded theorists] accept responsibility for their interpretive roles. They do not believe it sufficient merely to report or give voice to the viewpoints of the people, groups, or organizations studied. Researchers assume the further responsibility of interpreting what is observed, heard, or read...

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998:160)

The researcher aimed to theorise the thinking and the practice of 'good' teachers; to name what they do in order to help them reflect on their own practice and thereby empower them in their endeavour to teach children effectively.

Robert Stebbins (2001) classifies grounded theory research as *exploratory research*. Writing about discovering 'new' understandings in others' experiences, Felipe Fernández-Armesto detects a certain arrogance in an explorer who sets out to 'make discoveries' in terrain traditionally inhabited by others, even if the explorer does so in the belief that the discovery will help the 'others'.

Journeymen call themselves explorers when they think they belong to a higher culture than that of the people among whom they are travelling. Yet they are dependent ... on local lore to guide them.

(Fernández-Armesto, 1998:12)

The doctoral research was considered exploratory research, and was undertaken with a certain arrogance in the belief that the researcher's unique way of looking at things

might interest others. The researcher endeavoured, however, to not be the arrogant explorer discovering new terrain but rather a journeyer keen to see the terrain through the eyes of the locals. Stebbins (2001) has identified such exploration as *innovative*.

From the researcher's journal:

One should always be invited to do 'people' research by the people being researched, or else declare that the research is for one's own end; one should not presume to know for others that the research will benefit them. The invitation may not be direct, especially in the case of less powerful individuals like children. The child will not come to the researcher and say, "please help me". But the researcher may hear the child's general cry for help and feel able to take on their cause.

9.8.2 Summary

The thesis reports the researcher's journey from an original desire to enhance the quality of school children's experience of education by contributing new understandings about the place of children's learning in their spirituality, to generation of a theory, *relating for learning*, about teachers teaching effectively.

The thesis, indeed, contributes: (i) new ways of looking at spirituality in education; and (ii) a new meaning of *learning*. The research was founded on the belief that human life is but a part of the spirit's journey, and that human living provides the body (which, in turn, represents the environment and the nutrients) for growth of the spirit. Furthermore, in a human's life, learning represents spiritual growth and constitutes development of relational consciousness. It follows that, if a teacher is concerned to nurture an individual's spiritual growth, she has only to assist the individual in his or her life by being instrumental in bringing him to learning. School teachers, by virtue of being in the business of helping their students to learn, are perfectly positioned to nurture their students' spiritual growth.

Recognition that some teachers were already good at bringing students to learning, and a hunch that these teachers were also good at nurturing the students' spirituality, compelled the researcher to observe those teachers and learn from *them*. *Spiritual*

nurturance came to be understood as the thing towards which teachers who desired to invoke real learning in their students aspired.

The theory was generated from data gathered by talking to the nine participant teachers about their teaching, and by observing them teaching their students. The theory identified establishing and maintaining a trusting relationship with each student as essential to effective teaching. The relationship involved the student *trusting* the teacher as a capable educational leader, and *trusting* that the teacher respected and cared for the student. The student's trust, in turn, facilitated the teacher gaining the information and conditions required to effectively develop the student as a learner and assist the student to learn the formal curriculum.

Whether or not a teacher is effective in invoking learning, and thereby being successful at spiritually nurturing the student, depends on the *interface between the teacher's and student's spiritual faces*. That is to say, the educative effectiveness of the relationship between them at any given time depends on the quality of the connection between their respective relational consciousness at the time. This has many implications for schools wishing to support their teachers to be spiritually nurturing and focus their teaching on student learning. Fostering a school culture based on an ethic of care seems imperative.

9.8.3 A final word on the theory

Felipe Fernández-Armesto, in his book *Truth: a History and a Guide for the Perplexed*, describes four categories of ways in which people have understood truth. Although each category broadly represents a period in history, Fernández-Armesto makes the interesting point that “all four categories have always been around, competing or cooperating with one another as ways of discovering truth, in varying degrees” (1998:6). There is a strong connection between humankind's pursuit of truth and ideas about spirituality. Fernández-Armesto's observation about the universality of *understandings of truth* can similarly be made of *understandings of spirituality*. While contemporary theorists have identified spiritual beliefs and patterns of belief that characterise given cultures in particular historical timeframes, (and indeed, a new paradigm of spiritual understandings that recognise the *self* as a legitimate source of

authority seems to be presently developing internationally), a given belief is likely to exist somewhere in the world at any given point in time.

It is not necessary for the reader to condone the ontological foundations in order to know and derive use from the thesis. The logic underpinning the research and the language of the thesis are both born from the *researcher's* beliefs, but the conceptual understandings in the theory and the power these represent arguably are available and useful to readers of *all* beliefs. The reader may choose to reject the researcher's acceptance of the existence of the transcendent and adopt a humanistic standpoint. One of the benefits of the humanistic standpoint is that the useful practical implications of a theory can be utilized without condoning the mystical foundations of the theory. The research started with the idea that *spirituality is important*. The researcher believes in God but does not value people who *don't* believe in God any less than those who *do*, and she doesn't believe God does, either. Much damage has been done over the history of humankind in the name of rejection of others who do not hold the same beliefs – it is time to seek truths that embrace people as more important than their personal convictions.

Prophetically, Bell Hooks wisely counsels teachers in the vein of the thesis:

To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred: who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for ... our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.

(Hooks 1994:13)

The research, originally motivated by an emancipatory aim to free New Zealand children from ineffective compulsory schooling, has ended up generating a theory about teachers teaching in a way that focuses on learning, and that thereby honours both the teacher's and the student's spiritual growth. Forming trusting relationships that are effective for bringing the students to learning is an essential part of that teaching.

A final word from the researcher's journal:

You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. At the end of the day, we must respect the children, and trust them to grow and learn and find their own way on their life journey. As teachers we aspire to help them; to lead and encourage them, to guide and serve them, to use our own expertise in their best interests, to companion them with a listening ear and a caring soul. We can only strive to make a difference in their lives and to make their time at school significant in their journey; to relate to them in a way that will help them really learn.

Appendix I: Rejected Thesis Introduction

Rejected Thesis Introduction (written from a Curriculum Design perspective)

The process of designing the curriculum is typically thought of as choosing and arranging the content of the overt curriculum that we want students to learn, e.g., knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Plenty of literature is available about how to manage teaching and learning of the overt curriculum. However, little explicit discourse has been undertaken regarding how to manage the ‘hidden’ curriculum, even though the ‘hidden’ curriculum is now recognised and acknowledged. Spiritually-nurturing activities in schools exist inside the hidden curriculum. This research contributes information for teachers about how to manage and grow patterns of behaviour that are not exposed through overt curriculum planning, actioning, evaluation and policy formation. This type of research is essential if teacher-driven curriculum design is to nurture children’s spirituality.

Theorists’, practitioners’ and researchers’ understandings of curriculum and curriculum design are very different now than they were a century ago when education practice in Western countries was founded on the scientific assumptions of the modern era. Then, most educational inquiry assumed a simple means-end model of educational practice.

Typically, education conceived within the modernist scientific paradigm compelled a reductionist vision of **curriculum** as a part of education that embodies what is to be learned and how teachers are to plan and teach it. Such a limited vision left students out of the equation, and restricted attempts to discuss ensuing issues about the effect of the curriculum on students (Priestley, 1996). Concepts such as the “hidden curriculum” and “null curriculum” have evolved as a consequence.

In a similar reductionist fashion, the curriculum literature written from a modernist scientific paradigm, including most contemporary curriculum textbooks, addresses **curriculum design** as either the **pattern** of the parts of the curriculum or the **process** of actually creating the curriculum, otherwise known as curriculum development. In

1988, the researcher co-presented a curriculum design paper that adopted the ‘curriculum design as process’ interpretation (Ayres, Hughes and Nolan, 1986). The paper identified a cyclical relationship between curriculum **planning**, curriculum **implementation**, and curriculum **evaluation**. Since then, however, ‘policy making’ has been popularly added to the list of curriculum design activities, and we now understand the nature of the relationships between the activities, not as cyclical, but as dynamic and having unpredictable direction. Our understandings no longer fit within the means-end model of education of the modernist scientific paradigm.

Consideration of the process of curriculum design invariably starts, these days, with identification of the constraints within which the curriculum designer is working, and examination of the curriculum designer’s beliefs and assumptions about education. This is because these factors are seen to heavily influence the resulting curriculum. For want of a name for these aspects of curriculum design, the term “curriculum determinants” has been coined for use in the thesis. The concept is enlarged later in this section.

It is clear from the growing number of considerations falling under the umbrella of ‘curriculum design’, that ‘curriculum design’ is no longer merely a pattern of curriculum parts or an education process. ‘Curriculum design’ is more usefully thought of in a postmodern light as an academic field that encompasses everything to do with educational intentions and learning outcomes in an educational setting. Defined thus, ‘curriculum design’ includes, not only the design activities of curriculum planning, actioning (formerly implementation), evaluation and policy formation that are commonly associated with the process of curriculum design, but also all the factors in the educational setting that impinge on the designer’s tasks of conducting those activities.

The doctoral inquiry will be focused on factors pertaining to curriculum design at the classroom level of operation, ie., on the experiences of the teacher and the students. Other levels of the curriculum system, eg, syndicate, school, government, will only be considered to the extent that they directly affect **the teacher as curriculum designer**.

Curriculum design is perceived in this way, i.e., in terms of the **teacher's tasks**, because, regardless of the number of people involved in creating a curriculum plan, the **teacher is recognised as the primary curriculum designer** of any given actioned curriculum. Of all the 'stakeholders' in child education, namely the children, their parents/caregivers, their teachers, school administrators and managers, school support personnel, the school community and society at large, it is the person who is doing the teaching who has the ultimate control in the educational situation, at the 'chalkface', so to speak (although this position might now be more aptly named the 'childface', given contemporary objection to 'chalk and talk' teaching methods). The teacher is ultimately in control of the education process and is seen to be immediately responsible for the outcome of the educational situation.

The other levels of curriculum design practice, eg, school, community, area and state, and indeed, the rest of the education system, should, in the researcher's opinion, be based on firstly, **what works for the children** and secondly, **what works for the teachers**. The implications of the doctoral research outcomes for curriculum design at levels beyond the classroom are addressed later in the thesis.

Jack Priestley supports placing children at the forefront of any consideration of curriculum design. In the Hockerill Lecture entitled *Spirituality in the Curriculum*, he makes a poignant connection between wisdom and spirituality:

“...wisdom is a quality of being. ...To become is something to do with spiritual growth.”

(Priestley, 1996:2)

In the lecture, Priestley corrects the tendency of today's educationists to “make the word ‘curriculum’ do the job of ‘Education’” (ibid.:5) and points out that the noun ‘curriculum’ depicts a passive thing that “is a much smaller thing than Education”(ibid.:5). Curriculum is “a course to be run” (ibid.:5), a “thing that stands outside, waiting to be given” (ibid.:2). The noun ‘education’ depicts an active process that involves, not only ‘curriculum’, but also ‘hidden curriculum’ and, most importantly, students. It is consideration of the students that Priestley laments is being left out of education discourse, rendering the discourse little more than debates about “courses without horses” (ibid.:7). He makes a plea to start thinking about education in

terms of both the curriculum **and** the students; to “open ourselves to the whole process of what is happening when the tapes have gone up and the horses and courses come together” (ibid.:7); to consider “the spirit of race day” (ibid.:7). He argues that we need to conceptualise education in this way in order to understand the place of spirituality in schooling.

Elliot Eisner’s (1985) description of teaching as educational transformation supports the focus on teachers as curriculum designers. Eisner introduces this concept in his classic book, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, originally written in 1979 and published as a third edition in 1994. He sees educational practice as complex, open-ended and contingent in character. He describes *educational transformation* as the process of transforming the goals and content chosen by the teacher (or curriculum designer) as worthy of inclusion in the curriculum, to the kinds of events that will have educational consequences for students. In the doctoral research, *educational transformation* is acknowledged as the key to educational effectiveness. Indeed, Eisner stresses it is for this task that the teacher must invoke “the educational imagination” because “educational transformation ... draws most heavily on the expertise of the teacher” (1985:119). Educational transformation, then, is a key part of the process of curriculum design that will be studied in the teacher participants.

Educational transformation cannot be pinned down to any one of the curriculum design activities within the already identified framework, namely curriculum planning, actioning, evaluation and policy development. Educational transformation is not an activity in itself, but rather an abstract concept of a change of form that happens during teaching. In order to study it, a broad picture of the curriculum design activities that are going on in each participant’s educational setting needs to be developed.

Curriculum planning involves identification of intended: content; teaching and learning methods; learning environment features; student assessment methods; and programme evaluation methods. Curriculum actioning involves: gathering and organizing resources including time and professional support; teaching and learning; and assessing students and programmes. Curriculum evaluation involves making judgements about the effectiveness of the actioned curriculum based on student and programme assessments.

Curriculum policy development includes formation and maintenance of all policy that impinges on the curriculum design activities. All the activities require the teacher to make decisions and it is the teacher's decision-making that adds up to educational transformation.

The task of developing a broad picture of these activities and the constituent decision-making will be challenging because, within the teacher's job of teaching, these activities are now understood to be in dynamic relationship with one another and to occur in unpredictable sequence. They are, so to speak, in 'chaos'. In antithesis to modern disdain for this term, postmodern understanding of 'chaos' sees it as empowering and productive. William Doll, Jr. (1993) writes:

Chaos is "a necessary and important part of creation ... that out of which creation is generated" (p89).

"creativity occurs by the interaction of chaos and order, between unfettered imagination and disciplined skill." (p88)

Eisner suggests that, in order to study educational transformation, the researcher needs to employ **educational connoisseurship** and **educational criticism**. He writes:

"The development of educational connoisseurship requires an ability not only to perceive the subtle particulars of educational life but also to recognise the way those particulars form a part of a structure within the classroom... [It] requires the ability to perceive the "rules" through which educational life is lived."
(Eisner, 1985:221)

In order to study educational transformation, then, as well as looking at the curriculum design activities within which the teacher engages, information about 'curriculum determinants' will also need to be gathered. Curriculum determinants encompass the social and professional milieu within which the teacher practices. Murray Print (1993: 25-26) uses the term 'curriculum presage' to describe "those activities and forces which influence curriculum developers in their curriculum decision-making tasks". Print identifies curriculum presage as a conceptualisation stage that precedes formal curriculum development, yet has profound influence throughout the curriculum development process. In contrast, curriculum determinants are not a stage of a process,

per se, but they nonetheless constitute an aspect of the curriculum design academic field that is worthy of attention.

Elucidating one's philosophy and overall conceptualisation of education, and reflecting on how these influence one's general educational aims and policies are probably the processes least commonly recognised as components of curriculum design, and yet they are arguably the most potent. Regardless of whether or not one works at identifying, acknowledging and developing one's underlying beliefs, the beliefs do influence and determine all other curriculum practice. Stewart and Prebble (1993) examine the importance of taking the time to work out one's overall aim of schooling. They advocate establishing a shared vision for the school, and establishing strategies within the school that continually reflect on and update the shared understandings.

Whether a teacher works in a school that has a collaborative culture that encourages shared understandings of the overall aim of schooling, or the teacher works in a collegial vacuum and his or her personal beliefs stand in isolation from other professionals in the school, the teacher's understandings, beliefs and values about how education works profoundly affect the curriculum design practices.

Creating a picture of the curriculum determinants in each participant educational setting, thus involves gathering information about:

- (i) the teacher personally, including:
 - the teacher's beliefs, personal philosophies and understandings about child learning and the teacher's role in the child's learning,
 - the teacher's perceived societal expectations of teachers,
 - the teachers skills in handling collegial relationships and practical constraints on the teaching job ('skills' includes attitudes towards these things);

- (ii) the social and professional environment within which the teacher works, ie, the school structures and ways of doing things, including:
 - administration and management structures,
 - staff relationships and meetings,
 - ways of, and attitude towards, including parents and community; and
- (iii) the physical environment within which the teacher works, i.e., physical resources, including:
 - money,
 - school buildings and grounds,
 - access to places other than school.

Doll writes:

“ [In] curriculum terms ... it is not the individual as an isolated entity which is important but the person within the communal, experiential, and environmental frame. In fact the concept of isolated or rugged individualism, sacred to so much of modern (and American) thought, is a fiction. ... What is important, epistemologically and pedagogically, is the comparison of the patterns an individual develops operating in a number of different situations – this is an ecological, holistic, systemic, interrelated view. Within this view, lie patterns otherwise unseen.”

(Doll, 1993:92)

Looking at education and curriculum design in this way has come about because of developments in thought that we have labelled post-modernism... post-modern understandings about the nature of reality (ontology) have also led to growing recognition of the reality of ‘spirituality’ as a human dimension and the subsequent calls for schools to cater to it.

Appendix II: Ethics Protocol

MASSEY UNIVERSITY HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPROVED PROTOCOL 00/110 FOR PROPOSED TEACHING/RESEARCH PROCEDURES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

APPLICANT: **Name:** Deborah Anne Ayres

PROJECT: **Title:** Curriculum Design and Children's Spirituality in New Zealand

Status: doctorate

Clinical Trial Status: no

ATTACHMENTS: Covering Note about Participant Forms
 Educator Information Sheet
 Educator Consent Form
 Educator Interview Plan
 Parent/Caregiver Information Sheet
 Parent/Caregiver Consent Form
 Student Information Sheet A. for class observations
 Student Information Sheet B. for small group interviews
 Student Consent Form
 Student Interview Plan
 Transcriber Confidentiality Pledge

DATE: **28.7.00**

1. **DESCRIPTION**

1.1. **Justification**

The aim of the research is to develop theory about curriculum design that nurtures children's spirituality. The theory will be derived from teacher's experiences. The research is founded on two major assumptions: (i) spirituality is a universal human concern, as distinct from religion which is a social and cultural manifestation of spirituality (the research primarily addresses spirituality and not religion); and (ii) some New Zealand educators are already providing spiritually nurturing education. Qualitative research methods will be used to gather information about curriculum design of spiritually nurturing educational practice in a range of educational settings. The research utilises and adds to recent international research.

The proposed research is justified on the following grounds:

- (i) Research on curriculum design that nurtures children's spirituality is timely because the recent unprecedented inclusion of **spirituality** in the New Zealand mandated curriculum has left many practising teachers unsure of how to address it. There is a dearth of research-based information about children's spirituality with which to inform pre-service and in-service curricula for teachers. (Similar situations exist in the Australian, British and American education systems.)
- (ii) A national approach to spirituality education in the New Zealand state school sector is in its infancy, and development of a strong approach needs to be founded on theory that embraces the diversity of beliefs and cultural backgrounds of the children in New Zealand schools. Theory grounded in New Zealand practitioners' experiences and understandings makes the resultant concepts more likely to be relevant and useful to New Zealand teachers.
- (iii) Research and literature on various aspects of 'relational consciousness' (as one interpretation of spirituality) suggest a relationship between children's spiritual well-being and the quality of their learning.
- (iv) It has been suggested that the long-term and continuing failure of mainstream education to successfully educate Maori and Pacific students, may be due to a gulf between children's spiritually-rich lives outside school where wairua is understood as integral to being human, and the spiritually-bereft environments in schools where concern for secularism has often precluded acknowledgment of wairua. This is a critical issue in kura development. Research which adds to our understandings of children's spirituality and how to nurture it in school may contribute to 'closing the gap'.
- (v) Development of a working definition of spirituality for educators needs to precede design of empirical tools that are arguably required to investigate spiritual growth in an education context. The development process needs to respect both children as human beings in their own right, and New Zealand teachers as professionals in their field. The definition should thus be rooted in both children's and practising teachers' experiences and understandings.
- (vi) Attempts by schools to measure spiritual development and attempts by the Education Review Office (ERO) to hold schools accountable for developing children's spirituality are likely to lack rigour and validity unless they are informed by research-based theory about the educational and curricular significance of children's spirituality.
- (vii) Research interest in spirituality is burgeoning internationally and in many academic fields. New Zealand-based research on spirituality is still limited. I contend that recent grounded theory research into the interpretation of children's spirituality (Hay, 1998) implies that 'spiritually nurturing' educational practice already exists in New Zealand, albeit under the auspices of things other than spiritual growth or development, e.g., values education. I think that New Zealand education has much to offer international understandings of the place of spirituality in school education. I believe this doctoral research will make a significant and scholarly contribution to the international understandings.

1.2. Objectives

- (i) Broadly define 'spiritually nurturing education' from existing research and literature, for the purposes of identifying potential participants who include a spiritually nurturing aspect in the education they provide for their students.
- (ii) Develop an analytical framework to structure the collection and consideration of educators' stories about their curriculum design practice.
- (iii) Gather comprehensive information about educators' curriculum design practice with regard to the spiritually nurturing aspect. Information will be sought in three categories: (a) educators' educational aims and personal philosophies about the way their students learn; (b) curricular decision-making processes; and (c) the effect of the spiritually nurturing aspect of the curriculum on students.
- (iv) Develop theory about curriculum design that nurtures children's spirituality by comparing, contrasting and analysing the gathered information.
- (v) Continually refine a working definition of 'spirituality' for educators.
- (vi) Publish and otherwise disseminate the research findings to educators in New Zealand and internationally.

1.3. Procedures for Recruiting Participants and Obtaining Informed Consent

"The idea of qualitative research is to **purposefully** select informants (or documents or visual material) that will best answer the research question. No attempt is made to randomly select informants."

(Reference: Cresswell, J.W. (1994). Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. London: Sage. p148)

Guiding Principle: At all levels of the recruitment and consent process, the researcher will undertake to follow the protocols of the institution involved.

The schools or educational settings will be selected on the basis that they contain examples of educational practice that the researcher has identified as spiritually nurturing. "Spiritually nurturing" is defined in terms of developing children's

profoundly felt connections with themselves (self-identity), with others, with the world and/or with God. Educational practice is 'spiritually nurturing' if it is any one or more of the following:

1. conducive to students developing a positive sense of their own identity. This could include developing a sense of being lovable, a sense of competence, a sense of usefulness to others, a sense of being loved and valued by others, and a sense of belonging to a group. It could also include working out what it means to be human, and the part one has to play in the human race.
2. conducive to students developing positive personal relationships. This could include reflecting on, and working out the place in their lives of, connections and relationships with others.
3. conducive to students experiencing profound learning about the universe. Profound learning is learning that affects one's understanding of the world, ie., one's worldview.
4. conducive to students developing and pursuing a personal relationship with an omnipotent transcendent, e.g., God. This could include reflecting on one's own cosmological beliefs.

Selection Criteria for schools and teachers: Thus, schools or educational settings targeted for inclusion in the research will have come to the attention of the researcher as showing evidence of successful teaching in **one or more** of the above four areas. The teachers will be selected on the basis that, in my opinion, they aim to achieve one or more of the above four qualities in their educational practice.

It is likely that the targeted schools and educational settings will constitute a range of school levels (early childhood, primary, intermediate and secondary) and consequently a range of age-groups (young children (3-4 yrs), children (5-11 yrs) and adolescents (12-16 yrs)). The information and consent forms and procedures are tailored to the suit each age-group.

(i) School trustee consent

The researcher will meet with the principal, board chairperson and/or supervisor of the school or educational setting to explain the research and to gain trustee approval. The researcher will present the Educator Information Sheet¹ (appended), which may need to be presented at a full board meeting. Trustee approval will be complete when the board of trustees has consented in writing, minuted at a board meeting. A key outcome of the trustee approval is to have the opportunity to invite teachers and students to participate.

(ii) Teacher consent

The researcher will present an explanation of the research to interested teachers and seek their consent to participate. Teachers who wish to participate sign the Educator Consent Form (appended).

¹ The Educator Information Sheet includes all criteria recommended on pages 11 and 12 of the *Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Teaching and Research involving Human Subjects* (August 1999).

(iii) Parent consent

- (a) If the teacher and the researcher consider that observations of the students in the educational setting are appropriate, parents of the students will be sent a Parent/Caregiver Information Sheet (tailored to the age of the students involved, example appended) explaining the nature of the observations, and requesting their approval.

Parents will be asked to seek the willingness of their children to be observed at school before signing the Parent/Caregiver Consent Form. Child and adolescent students will have the nature of the observations explained at school and will be encouraged to discuss the possibility of their participation with their parents or caregivers.

- (b) If the teacher and the researcher consider individual student interviews and observations are desirable, a second Parent/Caregiver Information Sheet (example appended) is issued to the parents of the students concerned, requesting their consent. The researcher will explain this phase of data collecting to the student and invite him or her to participate (Student Information Sheet appended).

(iv) Student consent

In the case of child and adolescent students, when both parental consent and the willingness of the student to participate are obtained, the researcher will assist the students to formally confirm their consent by filling out the Student Consent Form (appended).

In the case of young children, parents/caregivers will make a decision on behalf of the child, with assurance that the researcher will cease data-collecting activities if the child shows any signs of discomfort, distress or unwillingness to participate.

1.4. Procedures in which Research Participants will be involved.

Participant educators will be the primary source of data. They will be asked to:

- (i) Meet with the researcher initially, to discuss the sorts of data collection that are necessary to build a comprehensive picture of the way the participant plans, actions and evaluates the curriculum. Each participant's input into planning the strategies for collecting data about him/her is seen as an important part of the research methodology. The meeting will be recorded on a digital dictaphone.

- (ii) Verify written accounts of meetings and observation sessions.

After the initial meeting, involvement will be according to plans agreed upon by the participant and researcher. It will likely include:

- (iii) Two interviews of approximately hour's duration (Educator Interview Schedule appended), which will be recorded on a digital dictaphone.

- (iv) Sharing curriculum-related documentation with the researcher.
- (v) Advising the researcher on the best methods for distributing Information Sheets and gaining consent from students and their parents.
- (vi) Having the researcher unobtrusively observing class sessions, and possibly recording them on video.
- (vii) Having the researcher withdraw and interview small groups of students from their class, at a time negotiated to least affect the students' schooling.

Student participants will be subject to the researcher observing and possibly videoing class sessions, and may be involved in small group interviews with the researcher (sample Student Interview Plan appended).

Missed class time by students: If small group interviews with students are deemed necessary by the teacher and myself, I will ask the teacher to identify times that will cause the least disruption to the student's other learning. The planned times and the school activities the students will miss are specified to caregivers and students in the Information Sheets. Interviews will take approximately 30 minutes.

Data recording methods

Interviews will be recorded using a digital dictaphone and written notes.

Student observations will be recorded in writing by the researcher and possibly on video.

Student small group interviews will be recorded using a digital dictaphone and written notes.

Issues involving video taping: If the teacher is agreeable, I would like to video classroom practice so the tapes can later be used as prompts in discussions between the teacher and myself. Discussions will be about the teacher's decision-making while actioning the curriculum, and the effect of his/her decisions on the students.

I understand that, before I can record classroom activities on video, I need to obtain consent from the teacher, the parents/caregivers of the students, and the students themselves.

Because I may use excerpts of the video-tapes later for teaching purposes, I also need to find out from participants whether or not they are happy to appear on the excerpts. If they are not, I will blur their faces on the tapes to mask their identities.

1.5. Procedures for handling information and material produced in the course of the research including raw data and final research report(s)

Data storage

The written records of observations, audio-tapes, video-tapes, and backup floppy disks of computer-stored data will be kept under lock and key in the researcher's study at home.

Digital audio recordings will be down-loaded onto the researcher's computer, protected with passwords, and e-mailed to transcribers who will have signed confidentiality pledges.

Transcribers will delete data files and transcriptions from their computers one month after the researcher has confirmed receipt by e-mail. One month will ensure any loss of computer files at the researcher's end of the operation are recoverable.

At the conclusion of the research:

- the audio-tapes, video-tapes, computer files containing raw interview data and transcripts will be disposed of, except for excerpts kept for teaching purposes.
- excerpts may be kept for teaching purposes, only if participants have recorded their permission on the Consent Forms.

Data access and use

Only the researcher, the two supervisors and the transcribers will have direct access to raw data and transcriptions.

The data will be used only for the purposes of developing the researcher's doctoral thesis. The substance of the thesis may be addressed in further publications and public arenas, eg., conferences and courses, in which cases anonymity and confidentiality will be respected according to the wishes of the participants (see section 2.3 of this application).

Summaries of the research findings in their own educational setting will be offered to participants, and arrangements for distribution agreed upon at the outset of the research. Participants will also be informed of the whereabouts and protocol for access to the final thesis.

If key participants give consent for their video and/or audio tapes to be used for teaching purposes, but those individuals in the 'background' do not want to be identified, specific identities will be technologically masked, ie., faces blurred on videos and names changed on audio tapes.

2. ETHICAL CONCERNS

2.1. Access to Participants

It is important that the participants are willing to be part of the research, and are not coerced into doing so by people in authority over them. Initial access to the educational setting will be gained through the Principal or the person in charge of the setting. Thereafter, teachers will be approached by the researcher, either in person or by letter.

Access to the students will be conditional on the approval of the teacher, and class observations will not commence until agreement has been obtained from the parents/caregivers, and the students.

The researcher will ask the teacher for the names of children to participate in small-group interviews, and permission to approach the children and their parents/caregivers to seek their consent. Access to individual students for small-group interviews will be conditional on the approval of the teacher, parents/caregivers and the individual students concerned.

Selection criteria for names of students from teachers: Data collection will involve teachers trying to help me understand how they make curriculum decisions and what influences and supports them. In some cases, I envisage the teacher will suggest I talk to specific children to see evidence of the effect of the curriculum. I will interview students only in the instances where the teacher and I jointly agree that doing so would enhance my understanding (of how the curriculum is working) sufficiently to make interviewing worthwhile.

2.2. Informed Consent

Information Sheets are tailored for potential teacher participants, and parents/caregivers of potential child and adolescent student participants. The Information Sheets are given to the potential participants to keep. Potential student participants are also told of the study verbally, and asked to talk about the study further with their parents.

Consent Forms must be signed by parents/caregivers before students are asked for their consent. The Student Consent Form is read to the child or adolescent student by the researcher and in the company of one other adult. The student signs the form to indicate consent.

The Consent Forms are appropriate to the participant's role and age.

2.3. Anonymity and Confidentiality

The nature of the topic, spirituality, involves collecting participants' personal and potentially sensitive information. The Information Sheets explain who will have access to this information and what form the information will take so that people can take this into account when deciding whether or not to participate.

Verbal Discussions

All data may be discussed with supervisors.

Data involving the effect of the curriculum design on the children's learning may be discussed with teachers.

School processes will be discussed with teachers.

All participants will be asked to respect the confidentiality of the study work.

Documents Written about the Research

Real names of children will not be used.

Real names of schools or educational settings will not be used in writing unless permission is granted.

2.4. Potential Harm to Participants

I do not anticipate any harm to participants as a result of my research.

Parents of student participants may be concerned that my inquiry may cause the children to reveal personal and private things, and perhaps things that parents do not want me to know. I am a trained teacher and I am aware that this can happen at any time when working closely with children. I undertake to treat such incidences professionally, with respect and confidentiality.

It is possible that, in the course of my research, I will become aware of possible harm to the student from sources other than my research. In such a situation, I will handle any disclosure of abuse in accordance with CYPFS guidelines as set down in *Breaking the Cycle: Interagency Protocols for Child Abuse* (1996).

2.5. Potential Harm to Researcher(s)

The only possible harm envisaged is false accusation of child abuse. To minimise this, students will be interviewed in groups in a place that is open to observation at all times, eg, if a withdrawal room is used for interviewing, the door will be left open at all times.

2.6. Potential Harm to the University

The only harm envisaged is the possible criticism that is risked by any research that deals with controversial matters in the community.

2.7. Participant's Right to Decline to Take Part

All participants retain the rights to decline to take part, to withdraw from the study at any time and without prior notice, and to refuse to answer any particular questions at any time. These rights are specified on all Consent Forms.

2.8. Uses of the Information

No ethical concerns are envisaged. However, the uses of information will be declared as part of the recruiting procedure so that any unforeseen concerns can be addressed before people agree to participate.

2.9. Conflict of Interest/Conflict of Roles

None envisaged.

2.10. Other Ethical Concerns

None envisaged.

3. LEGAL CONCERNS

3.1. Legislation

Note: Indicate where applicable the relevance of any of the following legislation:

3.1.1. Intellectual Property legislation

e.g. Copyright Act 1994 – The research and ensuing documentation of the research will respect this legislation.

3.1.2. Human Rights Act 1993 – Full respect for the legislation and the underlying philosophy. The research will not breach this.

3.1.3. Privacy Act 1993 – The consent process ensures that the research abides by this act.

3.1.4. Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 – not relevant

3.1.5. Accident Rehabilitation Compensation Insurance Act 1992 – not relevant

3.1.6. Employment Contracts Act 1991 – not relevant

3.2. Other Legal Issues

None envisaged.

4. CULTURAL CONCERNS

Note: Where applicable indicate whether you have the necessary knowledge and experience to work in a cross cultural situation and whether you have discussed this research with the Interethnic Research Committee.

I consider it highly desirable to have people from a range of cultures participating in the research and I am aware that this presents special challenges to me as a female Pakeha researcher, especially because of the sensitive nature of the inquiry topic, ie., spirituality. I have talked over my proposed research with Arohia Durie. Arohia sees the proposed work to collect curriculum design data from teachers and classroom observations of children as suitably covered by the recruitment and consent processes.

It is not my intention to interpret or make generalisations about Maori spirituality or the spirituality of Maori as a cultural group, as I am neither sufficiently experienced nor culturally positioned to do so. I understand that any such work would require the support and guidance of a Maori advisor who would verify and validate my interpretations. If my research, which is likely to continue to evolve throughout the data-collecting phase, leads me to do this sort of work, I will approach the MUHEC again with specific plans before commencing.

The same applies for any and all other cultural groups. I do not intend to interpret or make generalisations on the basis of cultural identity.

5. OTHER ETHICAL BODIES RELEVANT TO THIS RESEARCH

5.1. Ethics Committees

Note: List other ethic committees to which you are referring this application.

None.

5.2. Professional Codes

Note: List all the New Zealand professional codes to which this research is subject.

New Zealand Association for Research in Education.

6. OTHER RELEVANT ISSUES

Note: List any other issues you would like to discuss with the MUHEC.

The possibility of returning to MUHEC with further ethics applications should data collection scenarios arise that are not covered by this application.

Covering Note about Participant Forms

Because I am conducting the research in a diverse range of educational settings, all the following forms are to be tailored to the appropriate ages and situations of the potential participants. Thus, the attached forms are examples only.

[Massey Letterhead with my department address and phone number]

The S.E.N.S.E. Study
'School Education to Nurture Spirituality Effectively'

EDUCATOR INFORMATION SHEET

This sheet invites you to participate in my doctoral study of curriculum design that nurtures children's spirituality. It describes what the study is about, outlines how and why I'd like you to participate, and specifies your rights as a research participant.

Background

Spirituality is mentioned in several places in the New Zealand curriculum. For example, the Curriculum Framework talks about:

- students in the social science learning area, examining ways in which different people meet their 'spiritual needs' (p14);
- the arts learning area encouraging students to recognise the 'spiritual dimensions of their own lives' (p15); and
- the health learning area encompassing the physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and **spiritual** dimensions of a person's growth (p16).

The curriculum statements for the specific learning areas take these suggestions a little further. For example, the Health and Physical Education statement identifies 'spiritual well-being', ie. taha wairua, as part of the underlying concept of well-being in the health curriculum.

My own view is that spirituality is a human dimension that is part of every person, like the intellectual and physical dimensions. However, whether or not **you** recognise the existence of a spiritual dimension, or choose to pursue spirituality through a religion, is not important to this study. I am **not** doing the research from a religious point of view.

The Research

Recent research in Britain by David Hay and Rebecca Nye has suggested that a child's spirituality can be thought of as deeply felt awareness of his or her own relationship with self, with other people and things in life, and with an omnipotent transcendent, e.g., God. By defining spirituality like this, we can identify education already going on in New Zealand that aims to enhance these relationships and that is, therefore, probably 'spiritually nurturing'. At this stage, I think that a 'spiritually nurturing' environment involves encouraging children's own personal awareness of their own learning in their own lives. I know my understanding will develop in the course of the study.

I want to get alongside teachers who I suspect are already doing spiritually-nurturing work, to collect data about their curriculum design practice. This will include their personal philosophies about the way children learn, curricular decision-making processes and school support structures for curriculum design processes. Later, in my thesis, I intend to discuss the data in the light of existing and developing philosophy and literature. I anticipate a theory about children's spirituality will emerge, and that I will be able to identify the distinctive characteristics of spiritually nurturing curriculum design practice.

Invitation to Participate

I am inviting you to participate in this study because *(so-and-so, eg Judy Lawley, Director of Living Values,)* recommended that your focus on *(whatever in your teaching, eg using the Virtues Project to teach values)* might be relevant to my thesis. I see your work with students as spiritually nurturing in that ... *(individualised description)*.

Participation will involve you minimally in an initial one hour meeting to discuss the sorts of data collection that might be required in order for me to build a comprehensive picture of the way you plan, action and evaluate the curriculum aspect that is spiritually nurturing, and the influences that either help or hinder you.

Further data collecting will be decided between us and could involve:

- further meetings/interviews between you and me;
- me observing you planning, evaluating and/or putting the curriculum into action with students in a class situation; and
- me interviewing small groups of students about their reaction to the curriculum design and its effect on them.

I consider your input into planning a schedule of contact for the study important. All meetings between you and me will be audio-taped (see Consent Form). With your approval and the consent of students and parents, class observations will be video-taped and small group interviews audio-taped. I will take written notes at all sessions. The audio-tapes will be transcribed by myself or by a transcriber who has signed a pledge to maintain confidentiality.

You will be asked to verify my written accounts of meetings and observation sessions, and to advise me on the best way to distribute Information Sheets and Consent Forms to parents/caregivers and students.

In summary, I am asking you to share your education practice, thoughts and feelings with me over a period of 1 – 2 weeks. The time necessary will be determined between us.

Effects on You

You might like to consider participation in the study in light of your own professional development, and discuss with your principal the possibility of including this study in your professional development plan. You will have the opportunity to grow and learn in your professional practice by reflecting on and teaching me about it.

On a less positive side, spirituality is unquestionably a personal and private topic, and there is the possibility that the nature of my inquiry will unintentionally cause you embarrassment or psychological discomfort. In this event, I can only assure you of my commitment to maintaining confidentiality, and ask you to trust me to be sensitive and caring.

Your Rights

- You have the right to decline to take part.

If you consent to participate, you retain the right:

- to withdraw from the study at any time
- to refuse to answer any particular questions
- to ask questions about the study at any time during participation
- to provide information on the understanding that you will not be identified in discussions or writing about the study without first obtaining permission from you
- to access a summary of the findings of the study when it is concluded.

Student Participants' and their Parents' Rights

I will not begin observations or small group interviews until the students **and** their parents or caregivers have given their consent for the students to participate in the study. University-approved procedures for informing and gaining the students' and their parents' consent have already been developed and they ensure every participating student has the same rights as are listed for you, above. I will explain the procedures to you further at our initial meeting.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

As a researcher, I am committed to maintaining confidentiality, and I practise various recommended data-handling techniques in order to ensure this. These are explained further below.

All written records of interviews and observations, and the audio- and video-tapes will be kept under lock and key. Information kept on computers will be protected by passwords. Only the two supervisors, hired transcribers who have signed a pledge to confidentiality, and I will have direct access to raw data.

At the conclusion of the research, the audio-tapes will be disposed of. If you and the other participants agree, I may keep excerpts of video-tapes for teaching purposes. If the key participants are happy to have their data tapes used for teaching purposes but those individuals in the 'background' of the video do not want to be identified, specific identities will be technologically masked, i.e., faces blurred and names changed on video tapes.

I will make a summary of my research findings available to you and the other participants at the conclusion of the study. I will discuss with you the best way to get the summary to you.

The results of the study will be used in my doctoral thesis which will be available to be read by the public. It is likely that the thesis will also lead to publications in education and further research work in the field. In the thesis and publications, participants' wishes concerning confidentiality and anonymity will be respected.

For Further Information

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further information before you make a decision about participating. My supervisors are also happy to talk to you about my research:

Ivan Snook
Emeritus Professor
Tel: xxxxx

marg gilling
Senior Lecturer
Tel: xxxxx

Thank you for your time and consideration.

signature

Debbie Ayres
Massey University PhD Student

[Massey Letterhead with my department address and phone number]

The S.E.N.S.E. Study
'School Education to Nurture Spirituality Effectively'

EDUCATOR CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission and that the information will be used only for this research, publications arising from this research project, and teaching purposes.

I agree to verify written accounts of interviews and observations.

I agree to interviews and observations being audio-taped or video-taped in appropriate ways as described in the Educator Information Sheet, negotiated with the researcher, and consented to by students and their parents/caregivers.

I agree / do not agree to excerpts of videos being kept by the researcher for teaching purposes.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

[Massey Letterhead with my department address and phone number]

The S.E.N.S.E. Study
'School Education to Nurture Spirituality Effectively'

EDUCATOR INTERVIEW PLAN

The initial interview will be semi structured and will begin in a way appropriate to the particular setting I'm interested in. The initial interview will take the form of a joint analysis of how the targeted educational aspect is spiritually nurturing. This will involve both the researcher and the participant sharing ideas.

Thereafter, the focus of the inquiry is how the educator puts the spiritually nurturing aspect into action, in terms of the curriculum design processes of planning, actioning and evaluating the curriculum.

General topics for discussion:

Educational Focus

The 'spiritually nurturing' aspect of your teaching that has attracted my attention.

Your philosophy of the way children learn.

How I see what you are doing as spiritually nurturing.

Curriculum Planning

How you decided to include the spiritually nurturing aspect in the curriculum – what motivated you, influenced you.

How you decided on your teaching methods – your reasons for choosing them.

How you thought you would know if your teaching was succeeding. How you planned evaluating the curriculum aspect.

The support you get from others.

Curriculum Action

Tell me what happened when you put it into action. Did it go as planned? What decisions were made along the way?

Sorts of decisions.

Intention timeframe of decisions (now – next year)

Intention scope of decisions (one student in your classroom – many students nationally)

Participants in decision-making. Who was in on the decisions – student(s), parents, professional colleagues.

The support you get from others.

Curriculum Evaluation

How you do it.

Who participates in curriculum evaluation.

Use(s) of assessment data.

Extent and scope of judgements/evaluations.

What happens next.

The support you get from others.

[Massey Letterhead with my department address and phone number]

The S.E.N.S.E. Study
'School Education to Nurture Spirituality Effectively'

PARENT/CAREGIVER INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Parent/Caregiver

My name is Debbie Ayres and I am a PhD student doing research to explore education practice that nurtures children's spirituality. Your child is in a class that I would like to observe in my study. I am writing to ask your permission for your child to participate in the study.

I am **not** doing this research from a religious point of view. I am coming from the point of view that spirituality is a human dimension that is part of every person, like the intellectual and physical dimensions. Whether or not a person recognises the existence of a spiritual dimension, or chooses to pursue their spirituality through a religion, is not important to this study. I am mainly interested in the way *Mr So-and-so (teacher's name)* designs the educational programme for his class. As part of my study I want to look at the effect of what he is doing on the students. This will involve me conducting:

- **observations** of the class during the school day, over the next week.
- **interviews** of small groups of students in *the staffroom* at a time specified by *Mr So-and-so*, for no more than 30 minutes. If your child is involved in interviews, he/she will be missing... *such and such class activity...* during the interviews. I will be asking the children about their feelings and thoughts about their school experiences and learning.

You may be concerned that my inquiry may cause your child to reveal personal and private things, and perhaps things that you do not want me to know. I am a trained teacher and I am aware that this can happen at any time when working closely with children. I undertake to treat such incidences professionally, with respect and confidentiality.

The observations and interviews may be taped on tape-recorders or videos. Only my supervisors, the person transcribing the tapes (who has signed a confidentiality agreement), and I will have access to them. The information I collect will only be used for the purposes of my doctoral thesis, related publications, and teaching purposes. Names of the school, the teacher and the students will not be used and strict measures are in place to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. However, because of the special nature of your school, the identity of the school may be guessed by others. Please take this into consideration when deciding whether or not to consent to your child's participation.

At the end of the research, all the audio-and video-tapes will be disposed of, with the possible exception of excerpts of the video-tapes which may be kept by the researcher for teaching purposes. If you consent to your child participating in the research but do not want your child to be identified on the video excerpts used for teaching, your child's identity will be blurred on the excerpts.

You have the right to withdraw your child from the study at any time. Your child has the right to not answer any particular questions and he/she may ask for the tape recorders to be turned off during interviews.

Please indicate on the Consent Form your willingness for your child to participate in the class observations and small group interviews. I will also ask your child to sign a Consent Form before I begin. I have talked to the class about the study, and your child has been encouraged to talk it over with you, too. I anticipate beginning my observations and interviews in one week, on *date*, but I will not begin until I have all parents'/caregivers' and students' Consent Forms. Please return the Consent Forms as soon as possible.

For more information please do not hesitate to ask. I can be contacted on *tel. (04) 904 1483 at such-and-such times*. Thank you for your consideration.

Debbie Ayres

The S.E.N.S.E. Study
'School Education to Nurture Spirituality Effectively'

PARENT/CAREGIVER CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw my child from the study at any time and that he/she has the right to decline to answer any particular questions.

I understand that my child's name will not be used and that the information will be used only for this research, publications arising from this research project, and teaching purposes.

I agree to my child, _____, participating in the study.

I want / do not want my child's identity to be blurred on video excerpts used for teaching purposes.

Signed:
Name:
Date:

[Massey Letterhead with my department address and phone number]

The S.E.N.S.E. Study
'School Education to Nurture Spirituality Effectively'

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET A: Classroom Observations

Information on the form will be talked through with the child(ren) so that its meaning is clear.

My name is Debbie Ayres and I am a student from Massey University. Ms(Mr) So-and-so (*teacher's name*) is helping me with a project about teaching, and she/he has suggested that I come along and watch what's going on in your classroom. First I want to make sure you kids are happy to be part of my project.

I want to come and video what goes on in your classroom, and I'll write notes about it, too. After I've seen what's going on, I'll go back to the university to write up my project. I'll be careful not to use your real names when I write so no-one will be able to tell that its you I'm talking about.

Before I can start watching your class, two things have to happen:

1. Your Mum or Dad or whoever looks after you has to sign a Consent Form to say they don't mind you being part of the project; and
2. You have to sign a Consent Form, too, to say you don't mind me videoing you in the classroom.

If you don't mind, I'd like to use bits of the video-tapes in my teaching at the university. You need to let me know if that's okay, on the Consent Form.

After school today, I'll give you a note to take home to explain to the people who look after you what I'm wanting to do. You might like to talk this over with them when you get home. Please ask them to sign their Consent Form, and then bring it back to school as soon as you can before *Friday*. When I get their Consent Form back, I can give you your one to sign at school.

If you sign the Consent Form, that means you are happy to be part of the project and you don't mind me videoing the class. Of course, if you don't want to be part of the project or to let me video you at school, don't sign the Consent Form.

Do you have any questions?

Thanks,

Debbie Ayres

[Massey Letterhead with my department address and phone number]

The S.E.N.S.E. Study
'School Education to Nurture Spirituality Effectively'

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET B: Class Observations and Student Interviews

Information on the form will be talked through with the children so that its meaning is clear.

My name is Debbie Ayres and I am a Massey student. *Ms(Mr) So-and-so (teacher's name)* is helping me with a project about teaching, and *she/he* has suggested that I come along and watch what's going on in your classroom and to talk to you kids. First I want to make sure **you** are happy to be part of my project.

I want to do two things with you for my project. The first is video what goes on in your classroom, and the second is talk to some of you kids about your experiences at school. When I talk to you, I'll take a group of two or three of you to *the staffroom (or wherever is convenient in the school)* during *such-and-such time (to be specified by teacher)* and ask you questions about things like what you thought and how you felt when you did something at school. In *the staffroom*, I'll record our talking with a tape recorder, not a video.

At the end of it all, I'll take the videos and tape recordings back to the university to write up my project. I'll be careful not to use your real names when I write so no-one will be able to tell that its you I'm talking about.

Before I can start watching your class or talking to you in small group, two things have to happen:

3. Your Mum or Dad or whoever looks after you has to sign a Consent Form to say they don't mind you being part of the project; and
4. You have to sign a Consent Form, too, to say you don't mind me videoing you in the classroom or asking you questions in *the staffroom*.

If you don't mind, I'd like to use bits of the video-tapes in my teaching at the university. You need to let me know if that's okay, on the Consent Form.

After school today, I'll give you a note to take home to explain to the people who look after you what I'm wanting to do. You might like to talk this over with them when you get home. Please ask them to sign their Consent Form, and then bring it back to school as soon as you can before *Friday*. When I get their Consent Form back, I can give you your one to sign at school.

If you sign the Consent Form, that means you are happy to be part of the project and you don't mind me videoing the class or talking to you in *the staffroom*. Of course, if you don't want to be part of the project or to let me video you at school or to talk to me, then don't sign the Consent Form.

Do you have any questions?

Thanks,
Debbie Ayres

[Massey Letterhead with my department address and phone number]

The S.E.N.S.E. Study
'School Education to Nurture Spirituality Effectively'

STUDENT INTERVIEW PLAN

Small-group interviews will be tailored to the students concerned and the educational aspect on which I am focussing in each educational setting. Generally speaking I will be trying to find out:

The students' feelings about the aspect at school.

The students' understanding of the meaning of 'learning'.

The students' perception of the benefit of the aspect to their learning.

The students' ideas about any other benefits/ impacts/ effects of the aspect on their lives.

The students' perception of their participation in curriculum design processes of planning, action and evaluation.

[Massey Letterhead with my department address and phone number]

The S.E.N.S.E. Study
'School Education to Nurture Spirituality Effectively'

TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY PLEDGE

I pledge to keep all information about this study confidential.

I will keep tape recordings to be transcribed safe and secure during transcription, and courier them to the researcher immediately upon completion.

Sound files to be transcribed and all transcriptions will be kept on my computer and protected with a password.

I will email transcriptions to the researcher upon completion.

I will delete transcriptions and sound files from my computer one month after confirmation from the researcher of receipt of transcriptions.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

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