Exploring Teachers' Perceptions of Spirituality and its Impact on their Teaching

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Abstract

This research is focused on teachers' understanding and experience of spirituality and how it influenced their experiences as teachers and their pedagogical approaches. This study connected spirituality and pedagogy through a postcolonial lens and encouraged a diversity of views to develop in the area of teachers' spirituality, which is usually overlooked. My original contribution to knowledge is what I have called 'spirituality infused pedagogy'. Specifically, it advances knowledge about the pedagogical practices of teachers that are informed by their spiritual beliefs and how they affect classroom environments and teachers' experiences. This research is important because there is limited research investigating spirituality regarding teachers' individualised beliefs, their teaching contexts and pedagogical decision making.

In this qualitative case study, five teacher participants were recruited using a snowball sampling method. Using semi-structured interviews and the analysis of artefacts, each teacher was presented as a case or a "bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). The theoretical framework for this thesis is underpinned by postcolonial theory, which is informed by concepts drawn from Spivak's (1990, 1993, 2006) postcolonial critique. Individual interviews were utilised to understand where teachers' beliefs stood in their teaching contexts. This study used thematic analysis to generate themes. The analysis of research data generated three themes: shaping of teachers' beliefs, carrying these personal beliefs into professional contexts, and enacting these beliefs in their teaching and learning environments.

Based on Spivak's assertion and from the data analysis, it was found that teachers' spiritualities were shaped in different ways. This development of spiritual beliefs was influenced by childhood experiences and travel. The spiritual beliefs of participants were internalised, which later influenced their role as a teacher. The findings also highlighted the fluid and flowing nature of spirituality with the data analysis revealing that teachers' beliefs were not bound by geographical, cultural and political boundaries. As a result, teachers' spiritual beliefs displaced East/West and religious/secular binaries.

The individual spiritual beliefs of the teacher participants underpinned the way they viewed their role as professionals. Teacher participants felt that their individual spiritual beliefs were not acknowledged in their teaching contexts. These spiritually inclined teachers

viewed the curriculum through a spiritual lens and connected their personal and professional lives by engaging in the spiritual concepts of ahimsa (no-harm), connectedness and silence. This pedagogical approach, which is anchored in teachers' spirituality is the base for a 'spirituality infused pedagogy'.

My research is significant because of its possible implication for teacher education and professional development. Therefore, it is recommended that primary schools consider providing teachers with opportunities to discuss their spirituality in safe and constructive environments. Ultimately, this should help those teachers with spiritual beliefs feel comfortable, confident and more accepted in their educational contexts. In conclusion, the spirituality of teachers is worth exploring because their practice informs teaching and learning in classrooms.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of spirituality in education by understanding the connection between teachers' spirituality and their pedagogy. This exploratory study focused on five primary school teachers in the Australian educational setting, with teacher participants represented as a case. As I entered the research process, I adopted the role of a reflexive researcher drawing attention to the spirituality of teachers. The theoretical framework of the study stemmed from a postcolonial critique of marginality by Spivak (1990, 1993, 2006). This chapter outlines my role as a researcher by describing my positionality and motivation in engaging with this research process. I also present ideas of a spiritual teacher that became a bridge between spirituality and education for me. This is followed by the working definition of spirituality, research questions, and an outline of the thesis structure.

1.1 Situating the Researcher

As a qualitative inquiry researcher, I needed to situate myself because my subjectivities added another layer to this exploration. Situating myself in this research involved clarifying my positionality and motivation for the research. Here, positionality refers to acknowledging my position in the social context of the study (Knight & Keifer-Boyd, 2019; Reyes, 2020). Understanding the space which I (as a researcher) inhabited is a central tenet of Gayatri Chakravorthy Spivak's (1993) postcolonial thought, and it determined my positionality in a political context. Keeping in line with Biklen's (2011) observation that all researchers have their own historical, political, philosophical, and social interactions, I attempted to make my background known through a discussion of my own spiritual beliefs and life experiences, which is reflected in my working definition of spirituality.

1.1.1 My positionality and motivation

I am a female Indian-Australian primary school teacher, currently researching teachers' spirituality at an Australian university. As I make this assertion about inhabiting this space in Australian schools and university, I am aware of Spivak's (1990) caution:

No one can quite articulate the space she herself inhabits … it's the thing
that seems to be most problematic, and something that one really only
learns from other people. (p. 68)

Based on my own experience, I agree with this notion of one's own positionality
being a reflection on a space assigned by others. This aspect of others influencing one's
positionality provided me with an important reason to consider the contextual background
and interactions between my participants and their context. It was especially evident in how I
approached my work and how my family/social life was shaped against others around me
who had different cultural and national backgrounds. In relation to this research, my
contextual background can be broadly divided into my lived experiences from India where I
was born and those from New Zealand and Australia where I have chosen to live and work as
an adult. India for me is, therefore, the land of birth, Janma Bhumi. As I developed all my
work-related and professional skills living in New Zealand and Australia, for me these are the
lands of work, Karma Bhumi. The concepts of Janma Bhumi and Karma Bhumi are
commonly used in Indian culture. In the Indian colonial context, these concepts referred to
the migration of Indians by the then ruling British imperial government outside India as
labourers (Roopnarine, 2009). In today's globalised world, the idea of Karma Bhumi can be
viewed as a person being born in one place and moving to another place (such as another
country) to study or work. This movement is encapsulated in the idea of 'diaspora', which is
an aspect of my theoretical framework drawn from Spivak's postcolonial marginality (see
Sub-section 4.1.1). Furthermore, the word 'bhumi' means land and the concept of 'Janma
Bhumi' and 'Karma Bhumi' highlights a connection with the land. Interestingly, 'land' is an
important aspect of Indigenous spirituality which is discussed in detail in the Sub-section
2.1.1.

1.1.1.1 Overview of spirituality from my Janma Bhumi

My interest in spirituality emerged over several years. In my schooling in India, I
witnessed the acceptance of spirituality and the freedom to express it. Although I was
educated in a secular school that did not promote one particular religion, the morning routine
consisted of prayers, celebrating festivals from different religions was a part of my school life
and words such as God, soul, and spirit were commonly spoken. Over the years, I became
aware of the involvement of my family members in a range of spiritual and religious

practices. My mother practices spirituality through her daily prayers and worship of her guru, Saibaba from Shirdi, and other gods, including Lord Ganesha and Lord Krishna. Her mornings begin with prayers or chants leading into puja, or cleansing the idols and worshipping them, followed by aarti, the songs of praises for gods. However, my mother-in-law is actively involved in Vipassana meditation, and my father-in-law is an avid reader of spiritual books by Osho, an Indian mystic, guru and spiritual teacher with an international following. My sister-in-law is committed to another path led by a spiritual teacher who is focused on people performing their work and living life at their optimal capacity.

My first-hand experience of spiritual encounter included attending a 10-day Vipassana meditation program. At the beginning, I was hesitant, as I did not know how I would cope with 10 days of meditation without speaking a single word to anyone. However, this turned out to be the most profound experience of my life as it taught me to be at peace with myself. These observations and my experience made me question how people choose their spirituality despite having similar, cultural and family backgrounds. Concerning my study, this experience drew my attention to teachers committing to their own spiritual beliefs while working within similar school contexts.

I grew up in a Hindu family, and I was told that God is one and people may believe in different interpretations of God, but in the end it's all the same. I was also told that our job as a human being was to overcome all our desires and reach the state of 'moksha'. This state indicates freedom from all sufferings by ending the cycle of multiple births and deaths (Mishra, 2013). I was told that this 'moksha', which is also known as 'mukti, nirvana or kaivalya', is the purpose of human life. According to Hinduism, 'moksha' is attained once an individual is enlightened with the knowledge that their consciousness is one with God or Brahman (Srivastava, Dhingra, Bhardwaj, & Srivastava, 2013). Therefore, ultimately, there is no division, no separation between the level of consciousness and it all becomes one at that enlightened level.

Being in India, I was aware of other religions and regularly interacted with people from different faiths. In other religions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, 'God' is the creator of everything that exists in the universe. Thus, there is a binary between the creator and the created whether living or non-living (Srivastava et al., 2013). Despite this fundamental difference in beliefs, this did not create any barriers for me because of my

underlying belief that all is one with the ultimate consciousness reflected in my encounters with other faiths. This was the only truth for me when I left India.

1.1.1.2 Overview of spirituality from my Karma Bhumi

My travel from one country to another not only transformed my life, but it also influenced my spirituality. I will not say that my belief about oneness shifted a lot when I travelled and moved countries from India to New Zealand, and from New Zealand to Australia. However, it definitely changed from being the Truth to a truth that I believed. As I saw people in different countries with different beliefs, the oneness within all consciousness became my reality as I opened my mind to multiple realities. Exposure to these differences motivated me to take on my journey of discovering spirituality and articulating my beliefs to myself. I believed that choosing this topic for my research was one way of discovering multiple realities about spirituality.

When my family left India, we first settled in New Zealand. I completed my teaching qualification there and started working as a primary school teacher. In New Zealand, I discovered the spiritual beliefs of the Māori culture. As a primary school teacher in New Zealand, I observed various non-religious schools with a significant Māori population. Māori are the Indigenous people of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Their spiritual beliefs revolve around relationships among people and between people and the land (McLoughlin, 2007). The New Zealand Curriculum acknowledges spirituality by emphasising "wholeness" (Fraser, 2014, p. 106). The schools that respect the Māori culture integrate various spiritual and cultural practices including "pōwhiri (formal welcoming ceremony), karakia (prayer), whaikōrero (speech making), kapa haka (action dance), and waiata (song)" (Fraser, 2014, p. 109). My own experience as a student in India and my working experience as a primary school teacher in Aotearoa, New Zealand, alerted me to a presence of spirituality in non-religious educational contexts.

Following on from here, my family moved to Australia. The thought of researching spirituality in education was first kindled when I began teaching at an independent school in Melbourne, which promoted the spiritual growth of students via various spiritual practices. Some of these practices included pausing before each lesson and reading spiritual stories to discuss deeper meaning. Being a spiritual person myself, I took to these practices and made

them my own. As a part of my Master of Education studies, I explored the effect of these practices on me, and realised that they positively influenced my personal life and teaching.

Despite the school promoting children's spirituality, I realised that there was no dedicated time for teachers to express their own spiritual beliefs and discuss how these beliefs influence their teaching. This led me to think about the experience of other teachers who consider themselves spiritual and wondering how their spirituality influenced their teaching. In 2013, as a result of these reflections, I began my doctoral journey that focused on teachers' spirituality and its influence on their teaching. When I first decided to pursue the topic of spirituality, I was nervous because spirituality in education is not a prominent topic in the educational landscape in Australia. However, Palmer (2003) gave me courage with the words, "I vigorously advocate any way we can find to explore the spiritual dimensions of teaching learning and living" (p. 380). Having been a primary school teacher in different countries, including India, New Zealand and Australia, I realised that spirituality was included in some educational settings and marginalised in others. My research was a way to explore spirituality in education and to promote awareness and initiate discussions about it. In conducting the present study, I aimed to give voice to this topic because there might be more teachers who believed in this while others might shy away from such a topic. My personal motivation behind this research emerged from my interest in spirituality and education.

1.1.2 Working definition of spirituality

Keeping in mind the ambiguous nature of spirituality, it was crucial to establish a working definition for the present study, which offered a reference point for the conversations with the participants. My working definition of spirituality is as follows:

> *Spirituality is the awareness of self and experience of oneness with all, in the universe and beyond, through this self-knowledge.*

My working definition contains two aspects: the self and an experience of oneness with all. This definition combines a personal element of self-knowledge with a relational aspect of oneness with all. Without reflecting on myself, I would not be able to capture the nuances of my interaction with everything around me. My experiences of others, people, animals, nature, the universe and transcendence required acute awareness on my part or else I

would fail to comprehend these experiences fully. My definition, to some extent, reflects the Hindu concept of the goal 'moksha', i.e. the attainment of oneness with 'Brahman' (see Sub-section 1.1.1).

My definition also emanates from the Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Being raised in a Hindu family, I am attracted to this concept from the Advaitic tradition that refers to the non-dualism between the true nature of self (atman) and the ultimate reality (brahman) (Davis, 2010, p. xv). Advaita or non-dual indicates 'no-two', and the aim of the Advaitic tradition is to work towards realising the true nature of the self, which is the same as the ultimate reality. My definition is about oneness, and I propose that there is no distinction between self and the other, and in the spiritual sense, there is no journey or search for truth, rather it is all about the experience of oneness.

My working definition states "spirituality is the awareness of self and experience of oneness with all, in the universe and beyond, through this self-knowledge". This definition closely resonates with Palmer's (2003) idea that "beneath our deep differences in belief and/or disbelief, we share something much deeper" (p. 382). It also coincides with Dhiman's (2016) assertion that "regardless of our surface differences, there is an underlying sacred commonality" (p. 140). This oneness involves experiencing the connection with all things in the universe and feeling as one with everything around us, and viewing everyone as "one limitless reality" (Dhiman, 2016, p. 161). This oneness can also be perceived as "the infinite reservoir of the collective or universal conscious, in which individual separateness and ego boundaries are transcended" (Vaughan, 1979, p. 4). This definition underpinned my thinking as I engaged with the words of my participants and provided me with a frame of reference. The next section describes the biographical account and philosophical ideas of Jiddu Krishnamurti, a renowned spiritual teacher. It is known that "education forms a central core of Krishnamurti's worldview" (Pandey, 2013, p. 207). The reason for including this description is because Krishnamurti's ideas about education from a spiritual perspective provided a way in for me to connect spirituality with education.

1.1.3 Influence of perspectives from spiritual teachers

Jiddu Krishnamurti was born in 1895 and in his young age, he was adopted by Dr Annie Besant the president of Theosophical society. He was proclaimed to be the world

leader and all the plans were in place for him to assume the mantle, when Krishnamurti chose to take a different direction. He turned his back on the future that was planned for him; instead he spent his life in trying to radically change humanity (Krishnamurti Foundations, 2014).

Krishnamurti believed in human transformation and education as a foundation of humane society. He observed that people look around and experience different religions, organisations and teachers to find happiness and peace in the face of despair (Krishnamurti, 1969). Krishnamurti (1987) believed that religions are created to relieve us of any insecurity and to keep hope that we are looked after. This might be the reason Krishnamurti (2000) cautioned about the influence of religion as "conditioning" (143).

In education, he explained the teachers should be beyond these conditionings that's the way students will aspire to achieve big and they will not be held back (Krishnamurti, 2000). He believed that education should liberate students by making them free of fear. Krishnamurti's emphasis wasn't only on gaining skills and techniques instead developing a mind that is eager to learn. Teacher's role in addition to the "transmitter of information" (Krishnamurti, 1958, p. 147) is to prepare students "to face life" (p. 142). Further, he reminded that teachers can be "an excellent example for students" (p. 143). In todays' world of social media and technology, teacher's personal lives are easily accessible to their students.

Therefore, there is all the more reason the teachers set the bar higher with their own behaviour and social conduct. However, Krishnamurti (1958) is against teachers being inspirations for their students as this will result in students imitating their teachers. He argues that students should be led by teachers but students should not be copying their teachers as it will kill students' creativity and we will get a similar world in future. Teachers should provide an example through their own behaviour and provide space for students to develop new and innovative ideas for the betterment of humanity. This is possible only when students are free from any fear and conditioning and their minds are open. This discussion of Krishnamurti's ideas provides me a spiritual understanding of teachers' role for exploring teachers' spirituality in educational contexts. After establishing my position as a researcher, my understanding of spirituality and the influence of Krishnamurti, and my ideas about

spirituality and education, I proceed to the important matters of this study. The following section presents the research aim and questions that prompted me to undertake this research.

1.2 Research Aim and Questions

The relatively unexplored area of teachers' spirituality led me to my research. An understanding of teachers' spirituality for their own mental health led me to discovering studies about mindfulness practices for teachers (Hyland, 2016; Reiser & McCarthy, 2018). Teachers' beliefs are also explored in relation to teaching efficacy and students' performance but there is little research that has investigated their spiritual beliefs in relation to their teaching contexts and pedagogical approaches. Therefore the research questions revolved around the way my participants understood and experienced spirituality and the way in which it influenced their experiences as teachers and their pedagogical practices.

The present study aimed to explore spirituality in education from the perspectives of teachers. There is a provision in educational documents that promotes spirituality in schools (see Section 2.3). Therefore, it makes sense to understand the spirituality of teachers as an aspect of their professional lives if we consider teachers as a whole. The central guiding research questions of the present study were:

> How do primary school teachers in Australia experience and understand spirituality?

> How does their spirituality influence their experience as teachers and their pedagogical practices?

The study did not adopt a particular spiritual or religious position, and the working definition was used as the frame of reference. As such, each teacher participant described their own meaning of spirituality and provided their own definitions.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis includes nine interconnected chapters that come together to answer my research questions that initiated this entire process. Here, I include an outline of all nine chapters:

Chapter One: This chapter includes the researcher's personal and professional experiences, motivation and research interests. I begin the introduction to this thesis by explaining my role as a researcher and providing my working definition of spirituality. This is particularly important for a topic such as spirituality, which shares a strong connection with religion. Thus, the topic of spirituality may be misinterpreted or dismissed by the reader due to suspicion of being biased towards a particular belief. I aimed to clearly state initially where I stand concerning the present study and take ownership of my role as a researcher. This is followed by the aims of the research topic and the research questions.

Chapter Two: This chapter contains the context of the study describing the socio-political environment in which the present study is situated, followed by contextual information relating to Australian education policy documents and different school sectors. In line with the theoretical framework of postcolonial theory, it is crucial to consider Australia's historical past regarding colonialism, particularly the marginalisation of Indigenous worldviews. Exploring the spirituality of teachers necessitates the inclusion of relevant education policies including the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Department of Education, 2020), the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2018) and the Australian Professional Standards for Teaching (APST) (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2017). In addition, the descriptions of government, independent, and Catholic educational sectors are included.

Chapter Three: This chapter reviews and critically engages with the relevant literature in the following areas: unpacking spirituality, and teachers' spirituality in relation to their wellbeing and teaching contexts. The first section is a review that explores the definitions and descriptions of the term spirituality, as discussed by the scholars. This is followed by understanding the meaning of spirituality in secular, religious and Eastern and Western contexts. The second section deals with teachers' spirituality in concerning their wellbeing and teaching contexts. This literature review focuses strongly on spirituality of teachers and helps situate my study in the academic discourse by identifying the need for this research.

Chapter Four: This chapter concerns itself with the explanation of the postcolonial theory. Followed by my choice of theorist, Gayatri Chakravorthy Spivak, this leads to discussing important concepts of postcolonial marginality such as diaspora, deconstructing

binaries, homogenisation, and the margin in the centre. Finally, I explain the critical and analytical edge to this research derived from Spivak's postcolonial concept of marginality. From a theoretical perspective, the findings relate to Spivak's postcolonial concept of marginality as teachers' spirituality inhabits the margin in the centre. The concept of diaspora is from the perspective of geographical location and spiritual growth. In addition it relates to displacing West/East, religious/secular and personal/professional binaries regarding spiritual beliefs.

Chapter Five: This chapter describes the method used in the present study by presenting the rationale adopted to explore the research questions. By highlighting my role as a researcher, I provide detailed insights into using an interpretivist approach for data analysis. The case study approach is explained and justified in the research design. The selection of the participants and the recruitment processes are outlined as part of this design. Introducing each participant as a case is a crucial aspect of this chapter, which is followed by an introduction and discussion of the data collection methods. The discussion includes the benefits of the chosen method and its application to the research aim. The data analysis method is explained and the advantages of using this method and how these were relevant to my research focus. Finally, I discuss the trustworthiness of my data and the ethical issues anticipated and encountered in the research.

Chapter Six: This chapter presents findings regarding how the teacher participants arrived at their own spiritual beliefs. First, I discuss the childhood influence on teachers, from their home and education, followed by their spiritual journeys to arrive at their own set of beliefs. The highlight of this chapter is the teachers' individual spirituality being shaped by their life experiences and becoming an integral part of their personal lives.

Chapter 7: This chapter presents findings and discussion about the spiritual beliefs of teachers interacting with their teaching contexts. I found that the teachers I interviewed did not confine themselves to the traditional role of imparting information. Instead, these teachers perceived the teaching role as being a prominent presence that was capable of having an impact. The findings demonstrate how teachers negotiate their spiritual beliefs in their respective teaching contexts.

Chapter 8: This chapter presents findings and discussion about spirituality infused pedagogy in two main areas. The first part of this chapter included the elements of spirituality influenced pedagogy: ahimsa, connectedness, and silence and stillness. Followed by the second part about spirituality infused pedagogy in different curricular subjects.

Chapter Nine: This is the final chapter that presents a summary of the research and an overview of key findings regarding the research questions. It highlights the contribution to knowledge made by this research. The chapter offers implications and recommendations for teacher education and professional development opportunities based on the contribution of this research and provides suggestions for possible future research.

These chapters are interconnected through my own reflections and insights that are integrated at the beginning and end of this thesis (see Section 1.1 and Section 9.1). In addition, the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 4 is an integral part of my findings and discussion presented in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. In addition, other threads run across these three chapters. For instance, the spiritual beliefs of teachers are presented and discussed in Chapter Six and expressed as part of classroom practice in Chapter Eight. The interconnected nature of this thesis aligns well with the concept of spirituality, as discussed further in Section 3.1. The following chapter presents the contextual information for the present study situated in Australia.

Chapter 2: Mapping of Spirituality Across the Australian Educational Contexts

In the previous chapter, I presented my motivation and the working definition of spirituality. To gain a nuanced understanding of teachers' experiences, it is important to consider the context for their teaching. Keeping this in mind, this chapter traces spirituality across Australian educational contexts. I begin this chapter with an overview of spirituality in Australia from historical and socio-political perspectives. This provides the necessary background to understand the positionality of my teacher participants within the Australian context, which deepens my understanding of their experiences as teachers. I then examine the inclusion of spirituality in the Australian educational policies, which is important because teachers' work in schools is influenced by national, state and local level policies. Finally, I present a discussion about spirituality within the educational policies and documents that directly influence the teaching profession.

2.1 Grounding Indigenous Spirituality from the Colonial Perspective

Spirituality in pre-colonial Australia was deeply rooted in Indigenous spirituality, which is the spirituality of the traditional owners of this land. In this section, I provide an overview of spirituality regarding the history of Australia. Keeping in line with my theoretical framework of postcolonial marginality, I explore the influence of Australia's colonial past on spirituality.

In Australia, the European imperialist nations settled their populations as a colonial project (Morgan, 2017; Young, 2001). Initially, Australia was settled as a penal colony in 1788 (Huggan, 2007), which then transformed into a settler colony. This permanent presence influenced the existing population of the land (Morgan, 2017). The Australian historical colonisation event involves the "displacement of the aboriginals" (Nayar, 2015, p. 138). In relation to the term 'Aboriginals', Benson and Kosonen (2013) recommend "the term *Indigenous* with a capital *I* to privilege the peoples or life ways that originate from the geographical place in question as opposed to coming from outside" (p. 5). Therefore, from here on the Aboriginal population will be referred to as Indigenous Peoples.

The abovementioned displacement was not only contained to the physical movement of the Indigenous population, but it also led to the marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge,

lifeways and spirituality. The worldview of Aboriginal people is based on relationships and relatedness (Martin, 2012). The interconnected nature of the Indigenous culture implies a close connection between Indigenous knowledge and spiritual beliefs. There is scope for engaging with Indigenous lifeways because "Australia's deep Aboriginal origins" are "present and active" (Bouma, 2006, p. 2). Therefore, despite the Indigenous ways being overlooked, they are not completely removed from this land where they belong.

Indigenous cultures had pre-existing and "sophisticated spiritual beliefs and practices" (Ling & Bouma, 2009, p. 683). One of the important aspects of Indigenous spirituality is the connection to land. As Bouma (2006) highlights, Indigenous spirituality is "grounded in place and land" (p. 2). This is a point of difference in Judeo-Christian traditions brought in by the colonising influence because these traditions brought in the idea of heaven. Tacey (2010) articulates this difference:

> Another major obstacle to a creation of spirituality is the lack of connection between white and black Australia. We know that Aboriginal spirituality is earth-based, and has been so for up to 40,000 years or more. While many of us have ignored the spirituality of the earth because our heads have been in the clouds or looking toward the heavens, we have also bracketed earth-spirituality out of our culture partly because we have not wanted to enter into conversation with Aboriginal spirituality. (p. 7)

Tacey's (2010) quote highlights the difference in spiritual beliefs; however, this distinction in beliefs is also reflected in the field of education. From the imperialist perspective, "European intellect, culture, and the understanding of the world were considered more advanced- superior to others" (Cannella & Viruru, 2004, p. 10). This dominance of Eurocentric perspective reflects in the educational priorities of this land.

2.1.1 Indigenous spirituality and colonisation

Indigenous spirituality has been around for a long time. Indigenous culture in Australia is the "longest surviving continuous culture" in the world and for traditional as well as today's Indigenous people, "spirituality is a part of every aspect of life" (Calma, 2010, p.

322). As Nichol (2011) mentions, "education and culture are interwoven inextricably" (p. 103). Naturally, education in Australia should include spirituality as its integral part.

Indigenous spirituality is based around land, sea and sky and the ancestral spirits that are the source of existence. The integral part of Indigenous spirituality is the interconnectedness between the natural elements, the land and the animals inhabiting the land. "When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people say they have a spiritual connection to the land, sea, landforms, watercourses, the species and plant life, this connection exists through the Law developed at the time of creation." (Grieves, 2008, p. 369). This connection with land is recognised by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Article 25 within this declaration states that:

> Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their
> distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise
> occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other
> resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this
> regard. (United Nations, 2007, p. 19)

The stories or myths are a creative way of expressing the methods to develop and maintain this healthy and balanced interdependence between various spiritual landscape components in the Indigenous way of life. The stories also emphasise the significance of ancestors and their role in creation. This philosophy is conducive to forming respectable and sustainable ecological relationships (Grieves, 2008).

These spiritual beliefs were influenced by Christianity since 1821 when the Wesleyan Missionary Society first arrived in Australia (Calma, 2010). Although "Indigenous preachers and influential Christians have long argued that Indigenous belief systems and Christianity can, and do, co-exist" (Calma, 2010, p. 322), Grieves (2008, p. 368) clarified that Western religion and Indigenous spirituality differ in their beliefs about the sacred and the profane. In Western religions, sacred relates to heaven and paradise, whereas profane is the world in which we live. In Indigenous spirituality, there is no distinction between the sacred and the profane. According to traditional Aboriginal spirituality, physical and spiritual realms are one and the same (Calma, 2010). The concept of afterlife or rebirth is foreign to Indigenous

spirituality, instead the life with its ups and downs forms the canvas for spiritual growth, and sacred is the "thread of interconnectedness" (Grieves, 2008, p. 368).

The missionary work expanded throughout Australia by the middle of the 19th century with the addition of various branches of Christianity including Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran and Pentecostal (Calma, 2010). The intention of these churches was the conversion of Indigenous communities into their religion. Missions with the support of the government influenced the Indigenous way of life in all areas including school education, with schools at the heart of indoctrination into Christianity (Calma, 2010). Consequently, Indigenous knowledge was marginalised when it came to including it in the day-to-day workings in the colonised societies, including the field of education. This caused tension owing to the dismissal of Indigenous knowledge by education authorities.

2.1.2 Colonisation and Indigenous education

During colonisation, Indigenous children were either taken away from their families to learn the European way of life or remained with their parents and educated with the aim of assimilation at the cost of their own culture, language and community (Nichol, 2011). With the intention of including both Eurocentric and Indigenous ways of knowing in contemporary modern education, Nichol highlighted the difficulty of drawing parallels between them. He also emphasised that education in Australia caters to the white middle class with non-white students expected to fit into this culture and exposed to learning experiences that are challenging. Failure to conform or cope with such learning leads to these students dropping out of the education system. Therefore, this system is not the most effective approach for the multicultural schools of today (Nichol, 2011).

Indigenous education aims to preserve and maintain Indigenous "lifeways" (Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 63). Therefore, it is concerning that the exclusion of prior knowledge of Indigenous students founded in their historical backgrounds from their learning environments poses an immediate risk of educational disadvantage (Manning, 2017). Phillips (2012) suggests that in educational settings Indigenous students should be allowed to develop their own worldviews rather than conforming to the dominant non-Indigenous ways. Such a technique would ensure the inclusion of Indigenous worldviews in education at an equal level with the Western

educational discourse (Martin, 2012). This thought is supported by Yunkaporta (2009) when he researched the use of Aboriginal pedagogies that will help in, "bringing together the highest knowledge of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal systems to find a productive common ground" (p. 161). This inclusion of different worldviews in education has become more significant in light of the contemporary nature of Australia's multicultural society.

2.2 Multiculturalism

Australia, is a "multicultural and multifaith " sovereign country (Bouma, 2006, p. 5) and this multiculturalism in Australian society is reflected in the school environments. As Kalantzis (2013) noted that, "schooling in Australia is a compulsory, universal experience" (p. 90), all young Australians are expected to be learning at schools. This participation of students from multicultural and multi faith backgrounds reflects in the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity within the Australian school contexts. With this understanding of the relevance of multiculturalism in the context of this study, I will examine the related policies and data in the Australian context.

A review of relevant policies shows that the White Australia Policy (1901–1958) was dismantled in 1958 as Australia became a multicultural nation (Jones, 2017). Following this, the *Racial Discrimination Act* was established in 1973 (Chakrabarty, 2015; Jones, 2017). This Act legislated that discrimination against people based on their "race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic origin, or immigration status" is unlawful (Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d., para. 2). Despite this, McKeemish et al. (2020) noted that over time power remained with the dominant colonising group of people:

> To encompass the continuing hegemony of Anglo-heteropatriarchal social,
> economic, political, cultural, and knowledge structures, and the
> infrastructures established by white male "settler" colonizers and their
> successors and imbued with their belief systems and values. (p. 27)

This hegemony of Judeo-Christian belief as described by McKeemish et al. (2020) was subjected to changes because of the transforming social make-up in Australia. There was a strong influence of Christian traditions introduced by the European colonisers in 1788. The 19th century marked the visible and established presence of other denominations of

Christianity including Catholics, Methodists, and Church of England. During the post-war era, the immigration program initiated by the Immigration Minister Arthur Cardwell resulted in a noticeable mix of different ethnicities. Later in the 19th century, various non-European religions were introduced because of the gold rush (Ling & Bouma, 2009). This development saw the introduction of religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. By the 21st century, Australia became home to many nationalities, resulting in the multicultural influences, which contributed to 1% of religions other than Christianity (Carey, 1996), with the1991 census revealing 17 different religions (Australian Bureau of Statistics, [ABS], 2018).

The census data, collected in 2016, identified that in addition to being culturally and linguistically diverse, Australia is a "religiously diverse nation" (ABS, 2018). Therefore, there are multiple cultures, faiths and beliefs in today's Australian society (de Souza & Rymarz, 2007). Figure 2.1 demonstrates the top categories of religious diversity, with Christianity the highest. Within the category of Christianity, various denominations are included. The top five categories also include Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and no religion. The Other category includes multiple religions including spirituality as one of the categories.
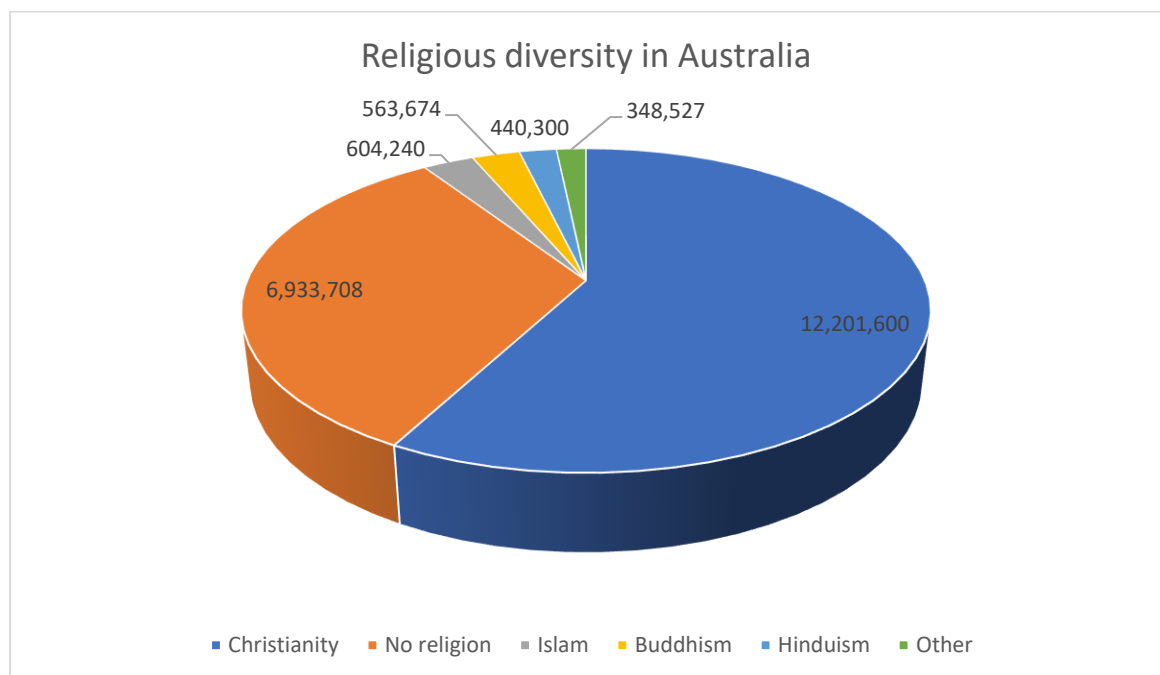
Figure 2.1 Religious diversity in Australia (Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018)

In relation to multicultural context, Giroux's (2005) encouragement to view schools as a form of cultural politics" (p. 147) becomes quite significant. Consequently, schools are an interesting site for research about spirituality, where teachers can make a conscious effort to engage with this multiculturalism in constructive manner to "bring the concepts of culture, voice, and difference together" (Giroux, 2005, p. 147). The following section presents the understanding of spirituality in the Australian educational contexts. This is because to understand teachers' spirituality, one needs to consider their school environment.

2.3 Spiritual Perspectives in Australian Education

For the present research to transpire, it was important to first situate spirituality in an Australian educational context. Because of the global movements as discussed in Section 2.2, Australian classrooms are becoming multicultural. A combination of diverse cultures and ethnicity makes inclusive education challenging for teachers because contemporary education must respond to cultural, religious and political differences in classrooms (Leeman & Wardekker, 2013). According to Byrne (2014), "school-room micro-interactions encapsulate Australia's struggle with ideas of otherness as it shifts from being a white, Anglo-Celtic, Christian society, to a nation that recognises itself as one of multiple cultures and beliefs" (p. 163). The present study relates to the spirituality of teachers, who are also a part of this diverse Australian society.

This section examines the inclusion of spirituality in three areas: educational policies, school contexts and the national curriculum. This critical engagement with educational policies allowed me to uncover limitations inherent in the existing policies. In considering the policy documents, Gerrard's (2015) reminder was helpful. He wrote, "there are no neat linear lines of connection between educational research knowledge and educational policy and practice" (p. 856). Additionally, the type of school determines the environment of the schools that teachers will be working within and everyday teaching is informed by the curriculum document.

Young Australians are in a future-oriented education system, with schools aiming to "prepare them (students) for life − developing communication skills, self-discipline and

respect for themselves, their peers and their world" (Australian Government, 2020, para. 3). The focus of Australian education as stated by the Australian Government:

> Our schools aim to develop students into independent and successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens – with the view to giving them all the skills, knowledge and capabilities to thrive in a globalised world. From Kindergarten to Year 12, Australian schools focus on providing equity for every student, and striving for excellence in all areas of education. (para. 6)

This quote captures the future-oriented approach to education in contemporary education and is intended to promote the understanding of diversity. In considering where spirituality is located in these areas, the relevant literature notes that the Australian education system is geared towards content-based learning (de Souza, 2003). Therefore, a cognitive or rational aspect is more prominent compared to an emotional or spiritual aspect. De Souza (2003) noted that the programs intended to improve connections and resiliency focus on the emotional and cultural aspects, but not on the spiritual dimension in education. However, Buchanan and Hyde (2008) claim that spiritual and emotional development are both neglected. The following section presents an overview of the extent to which spirituality is addressed in Australian educational contexts and considers its implication for teachers' spirituality.

2.3.1 Spirituality contained within the education policy in Australia

In relation to spirituality, it is important to consider the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Trading and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008). Spirituality is recognised as a part of holistic development according to the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008), a document that has guided the Australian Curriculum for 10 years between 2008 and 2018 (ACARA, 2016). Curriculum and policy documents draw heavily from this declaration. The preamble to the Melbourne Declaration states:

> Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual, and aesthetic development and wellbeing of

young Australians, and in ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion. Schools share this responsibility with students, parents, carers, families, the community, business, and other education and training providers. (MCEETYA, 2008)

Further, one of the goals in this declaration is about helping young Australians become confident and creative individuals. The following elaboration for this goal helps understand the spiritual, moral, and aesthetic dimensions of life:

(Young Australians) have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness, and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical wellbeing. (MCEETYA, 2008)

These statements establish that there is scope for introducing a spiritual dimension to the education of young Australians. This preamble and goal are both supported by the 2019 Alice Springs (Mpartwe) Declaration (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, [DESE], 2020). This sentiment is supported by Firth (2018) who responded to the current Education Minister Dan Tehan's announcement to update the Melbourne Declaration. He argued that the above-mentioned declaration is still relevant today and the implementation of the two goals must be addressed rather than starting over.

Educational policies are a fair indication of "a nation's approach to navigating insider-outsider boundaries" (Byrne, 2014, p. 162). This is because the educational policies by the ruling parties determine the inclusion and exclusion of curricular content based on the 'othering' of some content. For instance, Byrne points out the level of inclusion of Christianity is more detailed than that of learning about Hinduism. This ends up being tokenised to give an illusion of including all viewpoints, whereas in reality it only just covers some areas superficially. Educational policies have a direct connection with the types of schools and the inclusion of spirituality is dependent on the school contexts. Naturally, the experiences of teachers regarding their spirituality will differ based on the type of school where they work.

2.3.2 Spirituality and the types of schools

Most schools in Australia fall under one of two categories: government schools and non-government schools. In addition to these there are language schools, specialist schools and selective entry schools. The other two modes of obtaining education in Australia are distance education and home-schooling (State Government of Victoria, 2019). The types of schools most relevant for the present study are government and non-government schools. These are also considered as public and private schools respectively. The two main distinguishing features between these two sectors are: funding structures and non-religious/ religious orientation. I will briefly discuss the both of these distinguishing features to provide the context of the types of schools as relevant for this study.

Public and private in school sectors is a topic of debate because it raises a matter of equity in education (Ford, 2011). While the historical background of public schools is anchored in government funding and accountability, public school systems are also funded through parental contributions and fees and parents' socio-economic situation has a direct impact on their capacity to contribute. Consequently, this created an advantage for some schools as other schools are disadvantaged creating barriers for equity in public schools within and across states (Ford, 2011). On the other hand, there is an understanding that non-government schools operate independently, yet there is a provision for Commonwealth funding to be directed towards these schools (Evans & Ujvari, 2009). This has been a controversial issue because the subsidies to the private education sector from the government disadvantages public schools (Vickers, 2005).

Government schools are run by the government and are usually situated within students' area of residence (State Government of Victoria, 2019). These schools maintain a secular educational setting, which finds its roots in the *Education Act 1872*, which state, "In every State school secular instruction only shall be given and no teacher shall give any other than secular instruction in any State school building" (Museum of Australian Democracy, 1872). This resulted in all government or public schools becoming secular. Secularism refers to the division between state and church, i.e. it relates to the political exclusion of religion from the public sphere. Australia is officially a secular country. Guided by Section 116 of the Australian Constitution, one religion or belief is not privileged over another; however, the

nation's population has freedom of choice to practice any religion (Australian Government, n.d.). A deeper look into this arrangement reveals the complexity involved.

Some government schools despite the secular setting provide their own special religious instruction (SRI) program. On 1 May 2014, the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, the Hon James Merlino MP issued a ministerial direction (MD) 141 to provide clear guidance to schools regarding the inclusion of religious instruction in the school timetable (Department of Education and Training, 2015). According to MD 141, the school principals were expected to offer 30 minutes of SRI when approached by any of the accredited providers. This instruction was not compulsory and interested students could participate with parental consent. From 2016, the Victorian government decided to move SRI from class time to lunchtime or before or after school (Cook & Jacks, 2015). The intention behind this move was to allow time for core curriculum as well as programs relating to respectful relationships and domestic violence. According to Cook and Jacks, this decision was met with mixed reactions from parents, the chaplaincy organisation Access Ministries, the main provider of religious instruction, and the Australian Education Union. This demonstrates that the secular settings in schools were not as neutral and there was some influence of religious organisations and members of school communities.

Among non-government schools, religious schools are common in Australia. These schools provide an option for parents to choose a school that reflects the same faith as their family to provide a religious foundation that is aligned with their family's beliefs (Evans & Ujvari, 2009). Another type of non-government school is the non-denominational school. These schools are aligned with the Australian Curriculum and are governed by educational policies. What sets these schools apart is that they are guided by their own educational philosophies and they are not affiliated with any religious institutions. The main characteristic of the non-government school sector is the freedom and ability of the school management to prioritise their own educational values and visions based on their religious affiliation or educational philosophy for denominational and non-denominational schools, respectively.

There is a common understanding emerging through the literature that in non-secular or denominational settings the inclusion of religion is acceptable, whereas in the secular or non-denominational setting, the inclusion of the spiritual is acceptable (Campbell, 2006).

Therefore, religion and spiritual relate to non-secular and secular contexts, respectively. Keeping in mind the changes in the nature of spirituality from being associated solely with religion to more secular and individualised (see Sub-section 3.1.2), Rossiter (2010) suggests relevant religious educational institutions:

> Giving attention to religious traditions will always remain an important part of the religious educational process. But to focus relatively exclusively on such teaching is both too narrow and counterproductive - even if institutional maintenance were a principal purpose. It is considered that helping young people learn how to identify, interpret and evaluate contemporary spiritual/moral issues needs to become a more prominent part of religious education (p. 130)

Rossiter's (2010) words above provoke thinking in terms of clear boundaries between religious and secular educational contexts and open up the opportunity for crossover of these two categories in the interest of students. Low (2019) cautions against associating good or bad, neutral or biased with the secular and non-secular teaching contexts without considering what meanings these carry. The experiences of the teachers and their spirituality must be perceived in accordance with their teaching contexts without attaching any judgement. A uniting factor in all schools is their adherence to the Australian Curriculum. The next section outlines the Australian Curriculum from the perspective of spirituality.

2.3.3 Spirituality in the curriculum

Australian schools implement the curriculum and educational policies that are overseen by the state and territory governments (ACARA, 2018). The Australian Curriculum is a national curriculum undertaken by primary and secondary schools across the country. It is overseen by the ACARA and provides a framework consisting of eight learning areas. Each of these areas is associated with content descriptors and achievement standards (ACARA, n.d.). The other two components in Australian Curriculum are general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities provide some links across these learning areas. These links are based on the practical skills and capacities that students need to gain.

The Australian Curriculum as a seemingly "world-class" curriculum is in fact a "prescriptive and top-down" curriculum, which does not allow space for the inclusion of spirituality (Ditchburn, 2012, p. 347). The curriculum has raised issues in relation to providing equitable learning opportunities to Indigenous students. This led to the *Closing the gap report* that aimed for improved life and health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Australian Government, 2020). As Section 2.1 highlights, the marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge and spiritual beliefs as a result of colonisation could be one of the reasons for the educational disadvantage faced by Indigenous populations. Indigenous knowledge and spirituality are closely connected, and bringing in a spiritual aspect in curriculum and pedagogical approaches is one way to close the gap in educational contexts.

In relation to the present study, there is a gap in this area in education that calls for the inclusion of spirituality. This gap has been identified by Donnelly and Wiltshire (Australian Government, Department of Education and Training, 2014). In their review of the Australian Curriculum, they stated:

> Indeed, in the context of the Melbourne Declaration's aspiration that the national curriculum would enable students to understand the 'spiritual and moral' dimensions of life, there appears to be a distinct imbalance in the Australian Curriculum as these key aspects have been neglected. (p. 5)

The Australian Curriculum excludes this type of spiritual approach despite the Alice Springs (Mpartwe) Declaration (2019). In relation to Indigenous art in the Australian Curriculum, it states that:

> Students' exploration of traditional and contemporary artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples provides insight into the way the relationships between People, Culture and Country/Place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples can be conveyed through the arts, their expression in living communities, and the way these build Identity. (ACARA, 2018)

The above quotation highlights the relational aspect by reference to Indigenous art, yet the connection between art and spirituality is not clear in the Australian Curriculum. Similarly, in relation to mathematics, the cross-curricular priorities in the Australian Curriculum recommend teachers to "recognise connections between the areas of mathematics and other disciplines and appreciate mathematics as an accessible and enjoyable discipline to study" (ACARA, 2018). Thus, the curriculum recommends teaching mathematics in an interconnected manner with the other curricular disciplines, yet there is no mention of any spiritual aspect concerning mathematics. Therefore, the connections are recommended within the curriculum but are not always obvious, and spirituality does not filter through the curriculum.

2.4 In Search of Spirituality in Teachers' Professional Aspects

In this study, I aimed to view the teacher's role from a spiritual perspective. In conventional teaching and learning scenarios, teachers are separated from their students because of their mastery of knowledge leading to a hierarchy. In this way, there is a relationship of giver and receiver between teachers and students respectively. In this situation teachers are seen as experts of their subject. These teachers possess a formal authority over their students. They present themselves as models so that the students can follow the examples set by their teachers. In their teaching they are seen as facilitators and delegators (Zhu, 2010).

In different educational endeavours like areas of sustainability and equality in education, have wider implication in the society and as a result might require teachers to engage deeply with these topics and promote deeper engagement among students. However, teachers' role is still viewed as sharing knowledge and developing skills among students. This is demonstrated in Timm and Barth's (2021) study about education for sustainable development (ESD) which emphasised on teachers role in focusing on pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and content knowledge (CK). Furthermore, in educational programs that "promote deep study, long-term learning, and equality of treatment" (Butera, et al., 2021, p. 323), teachers' role is seen as developing knowledge and skills among students.

In some ways, teachers' role has remained about providing students with skills and knowledge to connect with the world around them and live well in this world using these

competencies. Yet, this connection with the outside world seems to be seeping in through technology rather than direct connection. In other words, teachers are still making the world comprehensible to young minds, however it is through the medium of technology. With the advancement of technology in the Post-COVID world, the teacher's role has been fast-tracked as an ICT facilitator in a major way. This is evidenced by a study about teaching Computational Thinking (CT) in early childhood (Wang, Choi, Benson, Eggleston, & Weber, 2021). This study recognised teachers' role as promoters of these programs for students. Teachers are expected to support students' thinking by presenting a problem in a way that is relatable for students and then help them in breaking down the problem leading to a successful solution. Similarly, a study about Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Teaching (CAPT) in English pronunciation saw teachers' role to "equip them with knowledge, skills and values to face the challenges of the real world" (Gilakjani & Rahimy, 2020, p. 1133). This shows the importance of the role of teachers in connecting students with the world around them.

Teachers as professionals are obliged to fulfil specific requirements. When considering teachers' spirituality in the professional sphere, I examined three aspects: teaching standards, teacher education and professional development. This is because, in Australia, a national requirement for all teachers is to demonstrate the APST. Additionally, teachers' training is bound within systems established by teacher education policies and the effectiveness of teachers' practice is influenced by professional development opportunities. In reviewing these resources, my aim was to examine the inclusion (or not) of teachers' spirituality.

2.4.1 Teaching standards

All practicing teachers in Melbourne schools must maintain APST as a part of their registration, accreditation and professional development process. Since 2010, the AITSL has played an important role in the teaching profession in Australia by providing APST (AITSL, 2017). These standards provide guidelines for graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead (head or supervisory) teachers. APST span over the three teaching areas of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. Meeting these standards is a requirement for new and practicing teachers across all states. Teachers are expected to

demonstrate their competence in seven standards covering the three teaching areas, with these standards consisting of focus areas and descriptors that provide further details.

None of these seven standards makes a clear link to spirituality in education. The focus area that comes closest is 1.1, which refers to children's physical, social and intellectual development. However, it does not mention spiritual development. Focus area 1.3 considers the religious background of students concerning effective planning in the classroom. In addition, focus areas 1.4 and 2.4, which relate to teaching and understanding Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, include some spirituality aspects because it is an important aspect of the First Peoples of Australia. Apart from these 'hit and miss' references to spirituality, APST does not contribute towards addressing teachers' spirituality, leading to a clear divide between teachers' personal and professional lives. I considered their significance and included aspects of the APST in my findings and discussion chapters (Chapters Six, Seven and Eight), and drew on these professional standards as a significant reference point to understand the data.

The preamble for APST (AITSL, 2017) acknowledges that the teacher's role is crucial in creating "successful and productive lives" for their students and that teachers provide "a dependable and consistent influence" (p. 2) to support students' choices in their personal and professional lives. From a theoretical perspective, this representation of the teacher's role by AITSL (2017) aims for consistency and uniformity across the teacher community and gives an impression of homogenisation (Spivak, 1990). In other words, it overlooks the voices of individual teachers by creating a master narrative or standards that give teacher expectations a prescriptive manner. APST could be viewed as the centre's way (in this case, the Australian Government) of providing explanations that shape the margins (Spivak, 1993). Additionally, AITSL plays an important role in shaping and reforming initial teacher education via "standards and selection processes, partnerships and high-quality courses" (Arnold & Mundy, 2020, p. 1). In the next section, I will consider teacher education and how it connects to teachers' spirituality.

2.4.2 Teacher education

In teacher education, importance is given to professional skills, techniques and development, which demonstrates a divide between the personal and the professional because

consideration for the teacher as a person is overlooked. Uniformity is expected because "the authors propose that teacher education be organized around a core set of practices in which knowledge, skill, and professional identity are developed in the process of learning to practice during professional education" (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009, p. 273). An emphasis on knowledge in teacher education shows that teaching is primarily viewed in a professional realm where the personal aspects of teachers are not visible. Consequently, teacher education does not adequately address pre-service teachers' spirituality and prepare them to successfully integrate this aspect of their personal lives into their professional lives as teachers.

Teacher education aims to bring quality teachers in schools. This teacher quality is often seen in relation to a teacher's knowledge base. Teacher quality is one of the four key areas in the student-first approach to education (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2015). The report on 'Best Practice Teacher Education Programs and Australia's Own Programs', which was submitted to the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, recommends the intake of high calibre students in teaching professions (Ingvarson et al., 2014). In some nations such as Finland and Singapore, teaching is considered a respectable profession and teacher quality has been an important concern (Darling-Hammond, 2017):

> Nations that have a strong professional ideal for teaching deliberately celebrate teachers and treat teaching as an important profession with a knowledge base that must be mastered if students are to have equitable opportunities to learn. (p. 292)

This quote highlights the idea that quality teaching relates to having a strong knowledge base, which is reflected in teachers' motivation to pursue higher studies at a Master's or PhD level. On the other hand, students' learning is gauged from their performance on standardised tests such as the Programme for International Student Assessment. As noted by Mayer and Mills (2020), "performance management, standards and increased accountability are managerial professionalism" (p. 45). These managerial professional attributes are evident in current education.

In the UK, drawing on the *Education Act 1944* and *Education Reform Act 1988*, Rolph (1991) argued for the inclusion of the spiritual dimension in teacher education. Similarly, in Australia, the Melbourne Declaration (2008) and the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration (2019) support the inclusion of the spiritual dimension in education. As discussed in Section 2.4.1, schools are responsible for children's spiritual development. Consequently, it is important to include the spiritual dimension in teacher education. In the Australian context, teacher education usually includes "professional studies, curriculum studies and professional experience" (Mayer, 2014, p. 461). Out of these three aspects, the professional studies aspect relates to pedagogical approaches and is about how teaching and learning occur (Mayer, 2014). This area has the potential to integrate pre-service teachers' spirituality concerning the pedagogical approaches they can use in their teaching.

While placing a strong emphasis on knowledge, techniques and skills in the teaching profession is justified, there must be consideration for the connection with the child, which is at the heart of teaching. This aspect of connecting with students can be explored by acknowledging teachers as people and professionals. At the heart of Palmer's (1998) writing is the attention to what happens in that space between the teacher and the child, a space where real learning occurs. Techniques and skills can get you there in that space. Darling-Hammond (2017) advocates for developing a state-of-the-art teaching profession like any other knowledge-based teaching. However, these professional skills and strategies do not suffice in that space. This is where the teacher brings their whole self, with teachers showing up in this space with their inner and outer worlds.

2.4.3 Teacher professional development

Teacher professional development refers to educational opportunities provided to practicing teachers "to update and upgrade their knowledge and qualifications" (Ling & Mackenzie, 2001, p. 92). The following section presents the current approach to teacher professional development in Victoria as the participants in the present study were teachers in this state. The Victorian Institute of Teaching (2020) stipulates the completion of 20 hours of annual professional development that aligns with APST in the areas of professional knowledge, practice and engagement. These professional development opportunities are evidence-based and promote practitioner–policymaker collaboration towards successfully

educating all students (Darling-Hammond, 2017). The emphasis laid on outcome-based teaching promotes professional development that aligns with this goal in specific schools.

The school leadership would promote a certain type of professional development for their teachers. Those who are spiritually-inclined might prefer a more holistic professional development that the schools might not fund. "Professional development funding to schools in this global economic rationalist era has been reduced, giving schools little autonomy in decision-making and individual teachers less opportunity to attend professional development which is self-chosen" (Ling & Mackenzie, 2001, p. 94). A review of professional development courses offered by the Victorian education department shows no courses that relate to teachers' spirituality, rather these revolve around the techniques and skills required as a teacher (Victoria State Government Education and Training, 2020). An examination of courses offered by some of the private organisations showed that the most frequently provided professional development courses involve topics such as improving literacy and numeracy in classrooms, and the courses about social and emotional learning relate to students rather than teachers (Pearson, 2017). In this way, the existing professional development courses do not consider teachers' spirituality.

From the perspective of inclusive education and facilitating education for students with special needs, various professional development courses are offered. These courses involve learning about specific disabilities such as vision impairment (Victoria State Government Education and Training, 2020) or incorporating assistive technologies in the classroom (Kanaya, Light, & McMillan Culp, 2005; Martin et al., 2010; McMillan & Renzaglia, 2014). A holistic approach to professional development with consideration for acknowledging teachers' spirituality is supported by Day and Sachs' (2004) assertion:

> It is becoming increasingly clear from the literature on teachers' work, professional lives and development that expertise, capability, personal professional biography, situational, emotional and psychological factors as well as the complexity of the pupils whom they teach, and changes over time and circumstance, affect their effectiveness. (p. 12)

This highlights that the aspects of teachers' personal lives, including their biography and emotional and psychological factors influence their effectiveness as teachers.

Professional development and learning for Victorian teachers are informed by teaching strategies, student outcomes, and the educational policy triad. This presents a risk of being fixated on tangible results while overlooking more subtle spiritual aspects. Teachers' professional learning in Victoria is linked to student outcomes and their learning needs (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Therefore, professional development opportunities tend to become narrow around the content and pedagogy knowledge that is directly connected to student learning outcomes (Peltola, Haynes, Clymer, McMillan, & Williams, 2017). In this regard, Shields (2013) has the right idea that "Nurturing the spirituality and fostering a sense of vocation in new teachers requires us to find ways to join them on their faith journey" (p. 163). The importance of understanding teachers' own faith journey in the context of new teacher induction in Catholic schools has been highlighted (Shields, 2013); however, this can be adopted in other educational contexts.

2.5 Summary

The contextual understanding explained in this chapter provides a background for the present study in Australian schools. Globalisation and migration have made Australia a multicultural and multi faith society, which is evident in its religious diversity. However, the colonial influence in Australia led to the marginalisation of Indigenous spirituality, which was reflected in education by the marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge.

Students and teachers in schools belong to multiple faiths and beliefs; yet, this pluralism of beliefs is not always acknowledged in educational settings. The presence of various school contexts (secular, religious, and non-denominational) creates a complex setting for multicultural and multifaith communities, especially when it concerns spiritually-inclined teachers. A review of relevant educational policies and teachers' professional documentation showed underexplored opportunities for recognising spirituality in teachers' professional lives. The next chapter engages with the relevant literature about the meaning of spirituality and the empirical and theoretical literature on teachers' spirituality.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This research aimed to understand the importance of teachers' spirituality in their teaching experiences in the Australian context. The previous chapters established the context for this study. In Chapter One, I provided my background and motivation as a researcher. Considering the topic of spirituality, I discussed my working definition of spirituality and influences that shaped it. Chapter Two presented the Australian context to situate spirituality in a historical landscape and locate teachers' spirituality in educational policies. This literature review chapter extends the understanding from the previous two chapters. My working definition (see Sub-section 1.1.2) and the "Unpacking spirituality" section (see Section 3.1) in this chapter together create a sound conceptual foundation for the concept of spirituality. Additionally, the inclusion of teachers' spirituality, or, rather, the absence of it, in policy documents (see Section 2.4) provide a contextual understanding for reviewing the literature regarding teachers' spirituality. Postcolonial marginality as a theoretical framework of this study also has a bearing on the literature presented here.

This chapter presents a review of the literature in two main areas: spirituality as a broader concept and teachers' spirituality, which is at the core of this research. In the "Unpacking spirituality" section, I delve into multiple meanings of spirituality and various influences on how spirituality shapes up for people. Through engagement with the relevant literature, I explain how I navigated between spirituality and religion for this study. Further, I present Eastern and Western religious perspectives that align with the backgrounds of my participants and the theoretical framework of postcolonialism. The rest of the chapter provides an overview of the literature related to teachers' spirituality. Beginning from exploring pedagogical implications for including spirituality in education, this section covers the areas of health and wellbeing, and teaching. Finally, I highlight the under-researched area of the influence of teachers' personal spiritual beliefs in their teaching context.

3.1 Unpacking Spirituality

In this section, considering the ambiguous nature of the concept of spirituality, I shed light on the multiple meanings attached to the word 'spirituality', followed by a discussion about the descriptions of spirituality that are central to this study and aspects that influence

spiritual development. I then proceed to understand the nature of spirituality and religion with an explanation for its relevance to this study.

3.1.1 Multiple meanings of spirituality

There is a vast body of literature concerned with the overarching concept of spirituality, and the existing literature is valuable in understanding its ambiguous nature (Bone, 2007; de Souza, 2012; Hay & Nye, 2006). In the education field, various scholars have defined spirituality in multiple ways (Palmer, 1998; Tacey, 2004; Wright, 2000). Spirituality is captured in Dossey and Keegan's (1989) definition from a holistic perspective:

> A broad concept that encompasses values, meaning, and purpose; one turns
> inward to the human traits of honesty, love, caring, wisdom, imagination,
> and compassion; existence of a quality of a higher authority, fighting
> guiding spirit or transcendence that is mystical; a flowing, dynamic balance
> that allows and creates healing of body-mind-spirit; and may or may not
> involve organized religion. (p. 24)

Spirituality is perceived as feelings of peacefulness, compassion and love (Bone, 2007). Some researchers have focused on the enrichment aspect of spirituality by describing it as a life full of abundance (King, 2010), as a search for meaning and truth (Hyde, 2008a), or a journey towards unity (de Souza, 2003). Other researchers considered the bodily awareness in experiencing spirituality, for example, as felt sense (Hyde, 2008b; Trousdale, 2014; Watson, 2013), or embodiment (Trousdale, 2014). All of these descriptions highlight different spiritual aspects. Drawing on this understanding, it is fair to say that "manifestations" of spirituality are as many "as there are human beings" (Long, 1997, p. 502). Watson (2006) reflects on these different beliefs as follows:

> Any individual's account of spirituality brings into play a belief system
> through which that individual's understanding and use of the word
> 'spirituality' is given its meaning. This means there will be many accounts
> of spirituality. (p. 116)

Watson's comments highlight multiple ways in which spirituality can be perceived. Therefore, in light of these varying accounts of spirituality, it is difficult to establish an

exhaustive definition. My working definition that 'spirituality is the awareness of self and experience of oneness with all, in the universe and beyond' is in line with Watson's idea of the individual account of spirituality. In the following discussion, I draw upon some of the descriptions of spirituality from the literature. The purpose of these definitions is to not privilege one description over the other. Instead, it is to be cognisant of the range of definitions that may be used as reference points for the participants' responses in the chapters that follow.

One description of spirituality relates to connectedness (Bone, 2010; de Souza, 2003, 2012). In other words, spirituality brings about a feeling of connectedness. This can be understood as a feeling like one is joined or linked to something or someone. This feeling of connectedness would mean that no one would feel alone or lonely because they are in this world with others who share the connection. As Bone (2010) states, this connection can be with people, nature, animals and the universe. The concepts of connectedness and relationality complement one another because connection is central to both these ideas. Spirituality is also understood as an expression of relationality (de Souza, 2003, 2009). Relationality and connectedness imply sustainable thinking and living when people feel connected with their surroundings and environment, and thus are more careful and responsible in accessing, using and conserving natural resources. When feeling spiritually connected to everything, one would feel as if they belong and exist in this world with everything else around them.

This spiritual connectedness widens a person's thinking about themselves by including other people, nature, animals and the universe in their personal worlds. Thus, as a person begins to think outside their own life, problems, and challenges, it widens their horizon. They tap into that, which is much bigger and universal. This idea of widening horizons is captured in Palmer's (2003) definition of spirituality as "the eternal human yearning to be connected with something larger than our own egos" (p. 376). Palmer's interesting choice of word "yearning" indicates that people who experience spirituality in this way are longing for this connectedness that takes them beyond themselves and makes them a part of something bigger. At times, this connection could manifest a deeper belief of what holds us all together. Palmer posits that "we share something much deeper" (p. 382), which coincides with Dhiman's (2016) assertion that "there is an underlying sacred commonality"

(p. 140). Superficial engagement with these ideas of deeper sharing or sacred commonality could lead to the misconstrued idea that we are all the same because of what we have in common within us. Therefore, both Palmer (2003) and Dhiman (2016) acknowledge that we are different in many ways in our looks, personalities, thinking and beliefs, and suggest that despite these differences, a part within us is common.

Spirituality is also presented as movement and evolution rather than stagnation, and related to people finding their purpose in life. It is about continually widening horizons to reach a sense of ultimate unity according to de Souza (2003), who defines spirituality as "human's movement towards ultimate unity" (p. 276). As de Souza explains, this movement proceeds through layers of connections, beginning with self and moving towards community and the world, and finally connecting with the transcendence and becoming one with it, which she refers to as 'ultimate unity'. For this, one has first to be aware that there is something beyond immediate reality. Being spiritual is often associated with finding meaning and purpose in life (Hyde, 2008a). Spirituality and psychology intersect at this awareness of one's purpose and meaning in life because the highest level of 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs' is the human need of self-actualisation (Emmons, 2000; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Piedmont, 1999). This spiritual task of finding purpose and meaning is a work for life and can be reflected in people's private and professional lives in finding meaningfulness in their work.

In unpacking the meaning of spirituality, consideration of spiritual attributes is inevitable. In her description of spirituality, Bone (2010) refers to the awareness of love, happiness, compassion, peace, and goodness in the world. These attributes of spirituality point towards a positive psychological mental state. From a psychological perspective, Emmons (1996, 1999) made a clear link between the pursuit of spirituality with physical and psychological wellbeing. In particular, psychological wellbeing is closely associated with positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder, Lopez & Dunn, 2002). This movement focuses on people's strengths and the positive mindset that empowers them to avert mental health issues and grow and evolve their personality. The spiritual attributes of feeling peaceful, having compassion for others and an eye for the goodness, happiness, and love in the world is a step in the right direction.

In this study, religion and spirituality are used as two different terms with the understanding that these concepts are not mutually exclusive The following section presents an overview of the relationship between spirituality and religion.

3.1.2 Spirituality in relation to religion: An overview

I took a postmodern perspective of spirituality and religion being different (Bouma, 2006) and I argue that spirituality and religion can coexist with a flexible approach that eschews creation of rigid and unmoving boundaries between the two categories. Hill et al. (2000) explain this as religion originating from a Latin root "religio" which signifies a bond between humanity and some greater-than-human power" (p. 56), while spirituality relates to spirit or soul and comes from "spiritus" meaning "breath of life" (p. 57). Despite having different roots in the Latin language, religion and spirituality were considered the same and used interchangeably for a long time in history.

Understandably, there is confusion regarding the connection between spirituality and religion. For instance, Marshall's (2009) description of spirituality is contradictory. Initially, Marshall mentions that spirituality is inclusive of religions, and people might express their spirituality through their religious practices. Yet, they also suggest that teachers should be explicitly asked about their definitions of spirituality and explain how they are different from religion through the appeal, "Probing questions should tease out any potential distinctions between spirituality and religion" (Marshall, 2009, p. 40). From a postcolonial perspective (see Chapter 4), this position of differentiating spirituality and religion sets up a binary. Keeping within the topic of teachers' spirituality and a postcolonial theoretical framework, the following section focuses on reviewing literature that distinguishes between religion and spirituality followed by a discussion about understanding Eastern and Western perspectives of spirituality and religion using a postcolonial lens.

3.1.2.1 Spirituality and religion: Differentiation

The idea of religion as a great narrative originated in 19th-century modernism, and it was "full of strong symbolic content available for collective identity quest" (Agadjanian, 2006, p. 179). The beginning of secularism prompted the popularity of spirituality as separate from religion (Zinnbauer et al., 1997) and some scholars suggest that religion was an obstacle

in having a more personalised connection with the sacred through spirituality (Turner, Lukoff, Barnhouse, & Lu, 1995). Maćkowiak (2017) suggests that the term "religion" is "associated with institution, uniformity, and group. Spirituality, on the contrary, is individual, subjective, and experience-based" (p. 335). Spirituality primarily relates to the knowledge about the self (Wisdom Library, 2020). Spirituality is considered different from religion or 'dharma', which concerns itself with a belief system or virtues. Religion was about individuals coming together to connect with the transcendent using predetermined contents and symbols, whereas spirituality was an individual endeavour. An empirical study by Zinnbauer et al. (1997) sought to examine the difference between religion and spirituality. Based on the findings, the researchers differentiated spirituality and religion as follows:

> [S]pirituality was most often described in personal or experiential terms, such as belief in God or a higher power, or having a relationship with God or a higher power. Definitions of religiousness included both personal beliefs, such as a belief in God or a higher power, and organizational or institutional beliefs and practices such as church membership, church attendance, and commitment to the beliefs system of a church or organized religion. (p. 561)

Spirituality is more personal than religion, which has a wider, community-based structure. Religion and spirituality are sometimes conceptualised as going 'outward' and 'inward', respectively (Dhiman, 2016; Woodhead, 2010). Religion looks outwards or is extrinsic in nature and is manifested through institutions, rituals and practices (Hodge, 2001). This outward and inward distinction is because religion relates to institutions, rituals and symbols, whereas spirituality relates to the inner lives of people and revolves around their experiences. King (2009), a research fellow at London Metropolitan University and a follower of spiritual leader Osho's ideas, wrote about the spirituality and religion binary:

> Here spirituality will be initially defined as a *profound connectedness* [original emphasis]. Religion in turn can be defined as pursuit of this profound connectedness in a social context, though this should not be too limiting an idea: a solitary person may pursue a spirituality that looks just like religion, or a conventional seeming religionist may pursue a very solitary kind of inward spirituality. (p. 14)

Spirituality can be viewed as relational, whereas religion is more belief-based (Nelson, 2009). This makes spirituality more personal and subjective than religion, which is perceived as more structured and rigid (Hill et al., 2000). Watson (2000) refers to spirituality as a quality shared by all humanity and not necessarily tied to that more disputatious word "religion" (p. 96). Spirituality relates to the "humanist and intrinsic aspect of individuals" rather than "traditional notions of institutional religion" (Natsis, 2016, p. 67). As Hoppe and Speck (2005) suggest, spirituality "can be uncoupled from religion. This uncoupling allows for the focus on the individual" (p. 24). Therefore, spirituality is different from religion as it relates to personal and internal attributes, whereas religion is institutional and ritualistic and influenced by external factors.

People who identify themselves as spiritual differentiate themselves from religious; yet those who are religious do not necessarily see spirituality as being separate from religion (Nelson, 2009). The separation between spirituality and religion is manifested in people identifying themselves as spiritual but not religious (Woodhead, 2010). Ramshaw (2010) suggests that this trend originated from wanting more personalised spiritual experience and viewing conventional religion as being restrictive. People who are spiritual but not religious prefer to go inwards and, as Woodhead (2010, p. 38) writes, "reject outward dimension in favour of inner". Another observation made by Roof (1993) referred to someone who was spiritual and not religious as someone who will feel at home in contexts, which are influenced by secularity. The secularity is neither denominational or non-denominational. Naturally, people who identify themselves as spiritual and not religious would find themselves comfortable in these secular settings.

Following on from this differentiated approach to religion and spirituality, I argue that while spirituality and religion are different, they are not oppositional. For individuals, spirituality and religion can coexist. This is reflected in concepts of spirituality that accepts and includes God and spirituality that is without a presence of any God" (Hoppe & Speck, 2005) or "non-religious spirituality and religious spirituality" (Allen, 2008, pp. 6–7). Both these ideas hold spirituality as an umbrella concept and consider spirituality with and without religion. My position for this study, which is motivated by my theoretical understanding to some extent, is that of a spirituality/religion binary that is not necessarily an opposition. Consequently, to complete the picture of spirituality, it is vital to consider religious beliefs.

The next section outlines different perspectives of religious beliefs. My research participants belonged to different religious family backgrounds; consequently, an overview of religious perspectives is relevant. Additionally, a consideration of Eastern and Western religious perspectives is important for this study because of its postcolonial theoretical framework.

3.1.2.2 Eastern and Western religious perspectives

The Eastern philosophy of Hinduism considers a permanent self (Atman) as being one with all-encompassing consciousness (Brahman) (Sharma, 1995). Indian scriptures such as the Upaniṣads and Bhagavad Gītā are based on the understanding that "we are essentially One Limitless Reality" (Dhiman, 2016, p. 161). Eastern traditions believe that karma is "a physical substance that can adhere or modify 'jiva', the non-substance, formless, pure consciousness" (Dundas, 1992, p. 83). This relates to the idea of reincarnation, being born again in different forms with the same 'jiva' or pure consciousness. The aim of human life is to have 'jiva' free of any bad karmas as this leads to permanent liberation and freedom from the cycle of birth and rebirth. This state of liberation is referred to as 'moksha, nirvana or kaivalya'.

Another two Eastern traditions of Jainism and Buddhism guide people on a path of self-enlightenment. These are not about worshipping God or gods, rather following the path of the spiritual teacher in their tradition. The principle of *ahimsa (no harm)* is central to Jainism and Buddhism. This is because *ahimsa* towards all living creatures is positive karma, and it will not adhere to 'jiva' the non-substance. In the West, karma was adopted and adapted by the Western cultures, and is automatically connected with cause and effect. In other words, it can be explained with the proverb 'reap what you sow' (Long, 2009). Although, at a cursory glance, both the ideas appear to convey the same thing, they are in fact different.

Western religious perspectives are captured within Judeo-Christian-Islamic theism (Buckareff & Nagasawa, 2016; Mawson, 2005). The central concept of these traditions is God. The understanding of God within the traditions can be described as:

(i) There is one God; (ii) God is an omniscient, omnipotent, and morally
perfect agent; (iii) God is the creator ex nihilo of the universe and the

sustainer of all that exists; and (iv) God is an immaterial substance that is
ontologically distinct from the universe. (Buckareff & Nagasawa, 2016, p.
2)

Many followers of these traditions involve God in the daily workings of human life.
As explained by Mawson (2005, p. 12), "[t]theists pray to God; they ask him questions; they
listen for answers; they ask him to do things; they suppose that by asking him to do things,
they make it more likely that he will do the things they have asked him to do". In the present
study, all participants were connected to Christianity in some way, and the following section
highlights the important aspects of Christianity that relate to this study.

In Christianity, God and humans are separated through human disobedience and sins.
There is, however, an opportunity for salvation or connection, which became apparent
through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Jesus was the Son of God, who gave people hope
to attain eternal life (McLoughlin, 2007). Following Christian faith involves participating in
rituals such as attending church and mass services, having baptism (Boeve, 2003) and
following funeral and memorial rituals (Ramshaw, 2010). The connection between
Christianity and colonisation relevant to the Australian education context has been discussed
in Sub-section 2.1.2.

Spirituality cannot be fully understood in a vacuum. There are certain influences and
impacting factors that assist in forming, maintaining and evolving spirituality. Some of these
influences are carried from childhood and adolescent years, and they consolidate or evolve
over the years as people grow in experience and maturity.

3.1.3 Influences on spiritual development

The spiritual and religious beliefs of people are influenced by their backgrounds. The
participants in my study belonged to varied backgrounds and brought with them different
experiences relevant to their spiritual development. The most relevant influences for the
present study included the childhood experiences from their family and educational settings
and places of residence and travel. The following section provides a review of the literature
on childhood experiences and lived and travelled places concerning spirituality. The reason
for including literature on childhood experiences is twofold. First, my teacher participants

drew on their own childhood experiences when engaging with their spirituality. Second, a study about teachers is incomplete without consideration of the children they teach. Therefore, reviewing the literature about spirituality in relation to childhood became important. Additionally, the connection between places and spirituality is significant for this study as the participants lived in different locations and travelled to different places for their spiritual development. In the Australian context, Indigenous spirituality places a strong emphasis on connection to the land.

3.1.3.1 Childhood experiences

Children are capable spiritual beings who are developing their spirituality through their childhood and educational experiences. The importance of childhood influences on beginning teachers and the influence of these experiences over time is demonstrated in a study by Strekalova-Hughes, Maarouf, and Keskin (2015). Findings from this study show that childhood experiences are "viewed as part of the continuous construction of teachers' self with the respect to their present lens of reflection on these experiences" (p. 3). Strekalova-Hughes et al. demonstrate how childhood experiences influence the personal beliefs and professional lives of students studying to be teachers in Early Childhood Education. This study points to the importance of understanding spiritual development in childhood and influencing factors.

Until the 1970s, children's spiritual experiences were overlooked because spiritual capacity was viewed in relation to cognitive development (Keating, 2017a). Various studies conducted after 1970 explored children's spirituality independent of their cognitive development. Now it is known that children, despite having developing cognitive capacity, can access a deeper state of consciousness (Hay, 1998; Hay & Nye, 2006; Keating, 2017b). In 1998, in the UK, David Hay and his research assistant Rebecca Nye conducted a study of children's spirituality. They interviewed school-aged children from different religious and non-religious backgrounds. The detailed description of this study is published in the book *The spirit of the child* (Hay & Nye, 2006). The information in this book revealed that the researchers used three sensitivities, awareness sensing, mystery sensing and value sensing to understand children's spiritual abilities. This grounded inquiry revealed that children have a natural ability to connect with their own self, the people around them, the world they live in, and the transcendent, in some cases God (Hay & Nye, 2006; Hay & Socha, 2005). Studying

the different influences on spiritual and religious development in adolescents has been an area of research (Benson, 2004; Pandya, 2017). Boyatzis (2009) considered various aspects involved in developing spirituality and religiosity, including "children's religious concepts, social dynamics that influence religiosity and spirituality, and religion's role in adolescent wellbeing and thriving" (p. 51). Young people are constantly observing and absorbing what they see in their parents' beliefs and actions as they spend a lot of their childhood time with their parents.

One of the important influences in childhood relates to parents' religiosity. A study of over three thousand adolescents by Francis and Gibson (1993) revealed positive influences of parents' religiosity on their children's religious practices. Similarly, Sansone, Kelley, and Forbis (2012) reveal that "better parenting in childhood is associated with higher levels of certain aspects of current religiosity/spirituality in adulthood" (p. 542). Here, better parenting relates to parents expressing their religiosity around their children. The model used in this study demonstrates the effects of parent's religiosity as they shape adolescent attitudes about church, which relates to the influence of overall cultural influences from their upbringing. In this regard, Champagne (2019) draws attention to spirituality anchored in traditions that children are exposed to:

> I perceive traditions to be the raw material with which our spiritual stories can be constructed and told. Traditions, understood from a very broad perspective, come from our families, our milieus, our cultures, as well as from institutions. (p. 2)

In addition to understanding the influence of traditions, educational settings present another crucial influence on children's spirituality. Hemming's (2013) mixed method qualitative research using two case studies in community and Catholic primary schools aimed at understanding how children express their spirituality in everyday life in terms of special places around the school and embodied experiences. The findings demonstrated that students could create their own spiritual places and experiences around the school. Therefore, Hemming argued that teachers and schools must be prepared to offer this opportunity to students. lived and travelled places play an important role in shaping one's spiritual beliefs.

3.1.3.2 Lived and travelled places

Spirituality is influenced by the place of growing up and the culture of each place. Some places are considered to have spiritual and religious significance and people travel to these places, which might mean that people connect travelling with "sense of call" (Dandelion, 2013, p. 125). Travel has been closely linked with pilgrimage, which is a prime example of a strong relationship between travel and religious practices where "religious doctrine, practice and travel all coincide" (Norman, 2011, p. 1). Keeping in mind this description of willingness to acquire new ideas and different viewpoints, the role of travel in developing open-mindedness is significant. Hare (2009) describes open-mindedness as:

> Open-mindedness requires the absence of a dogmatic and rigid stance that dismisses reflection and inquiry as pointless on the grounds that absolute certainty is already at hand; it embraces instead the ideal of an unbiased and impartial examination of arguments and evidence regardless of the direction in which such inquiry leads. (p. 38)

This consideration of open-mindedness for the present study is supported by Withers, Zuniga, and Van Sell's (2017, p. 234) assertion that open-mindedness is a "consequence" of spirituality, which can be nurtured through travel. As evident from the descriptions described in Sub-section 3.1.1, spirituality is fluid and moving, and can evolve into something new; and open-mindedness is conducive to moving in new directions.

3.1.3.3 Culture

Culture helps connect with this world and know one's place. The review of relevant literature reveals that spirituality is intertwined with culture through religious practices. These in turn connect to ethnic background and geographical location. This makes it difficult to perceive spirituality in isolation. Consequently, it is crucial to understand spirituality in relation to the other connecting aspects that influence people's spirituality. Eckersley (2007) has explored the connection between culture and spirituality through religion. He notes that culture is not only about certain beliefs, assumptions and understandings, rather culture is about knowing how the world works.

Spirituality and culture can sometimes connect through institutionalised religion. Both religion and culture are anchored in ethnic background as well as geographical location. As such, spirituality also links to ethnic and national identity of people (Ortiz, Villereal, & Engel, 2000). Religion is bound to 'cultural representation" and relates to rituals and worship of God or gods (p. 55). By the virtue of belonging to a particular community, religion or country, people carry with themselves a certain set of beliefs and understanding. Rossiter (2010) refers to this as "cultural meanings", these are explained as:

> Cultural meanings are understood as the sets of socially constructed ideas, values, assumptions and emotions that inform people's thinking and behaviour. Cultural meanings are distinctive of particular social and ethnic groups and religions; but they also operate across the social context from family to nation state, and increasingly at a global level. (p. 131)

Furthermore, for people who hold such cultural meanings, these become a part of their life and are carried with them across various boundaries including geographical borders across countries. Thus far, this review of the literature has highlighted multiple meanings of spirituality and the interconnectedness between spirituality and religion and outlined the influences on spiritual development. The following section situates teachers' spirituality in educational contexts.

3.2 Teachers' Spirituality

Based on the review of relevant literature, two considerations regarding teachers' spirituality are relevant to the present study: teachers bring their personal beliefs into the classrooms, and teachers' perceptions influence the classroom environment. Taylor and Young (2003) draw attention to teachers' beliefs and their influence in the classroom:

> The teacher brings personal [micro/exosystem] and professional [mesosystem] histories, knowledge about subject matter and pedagogy, beliefs about students, their families and communities, and ideas and about the purposes of teaching history. This professional knowledge frames teachers' decisions about what content, strategies and resources to select for

teaching purposes. In particular, teachers' perceptions of their students have
a powerful influence on classroom climate and practice. (p. 6)

The above consideration by Taylor and Young (2003) does not recognise teachers' spiritual beliefs and its influence on their teaching and eventually the classroom environment. Fraser and Grootenboer (2004) identified the significance of creating spiritually conducive environments for students. They wrote: "[W]hile teachers cannot plan and predict precisely what will foster spirituality in classrooms, teachers can cultivate a climate that enhances children's spirituality" (p. 307). One of the seminal works in the field of teachers' spirituality includes the works by Parker Palmer (1998, 2000). In particular, his book, *The Courage to Teach* (1998), has drawn the attention of many teachers and educators who are interested in spirituality. This book informs teachers about how spirituality is perceived and how it can reflect on classroom teaching. Palmer (1998) argues that it is significant to consider teachers' spiritual beliefs.

Several researchers recognise the spiritual dimension in education by engaging predominantly with children's spirituality (Palmer, 1998; Tacey, 2004; Wright, 2000). Empirical studies on teachers' spirituality account for a relatively small body of literature and are situated in various scholarly fields. Therefore, this literature review includes literature from the fields of psychiatry and psychology (Academic Mindfulness Interest Group Melbourne, 2006; Makwana, 2015), managerial psychology (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002), leadership and organisation management (Pawar, 2008) and occupational science (Elliot, 2011). The following discussion focuses on the role of spirituality in educational contexts, which allowed me to situate teachers' spirituality in personal and professional contexts.

3.2.1 Locating spirituality in education

This section is a consideration of how spirituality is translated into pedagogical approaches. Some of the well-received and well-recognised pedagogical approaches draw on the spiritual aspect of educational contexts. These pedagogical approaches challenge the traditional teacher-student relationship. The consideration of pedagogies of freedom, democracy and social justice are hinged on spiritual attributes such as reflection, transformation, care and empathy. It is evident that the teacher-student relationship is a crucial aspect of these approaches; therefore, understanding teachers' spirituality is a useful

project because different pedagogical approaches assume certain beliefs and values of teachers, but these have rarely been discussed.

In 1968, Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher disturbed the hierarchy in the teacher-student relationship by introducing critical pedagogy. Through his well-known book, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Freire (1970) strongly critiqued the traditional 'banking education' model that produced hierarchical relations between teachers and students: teachers being the one depositing knowledge and students being empty bank accounts. He proposed *problem-posing education* based on dialogic co-creation of knowledge, thereby levelling the teacher-student hierarchy created by the traditional model. In the same vein, in care ethics in education proposed by Nel Noddings (2011), a well-known American education philosopher, a relational aspect of the teacher-student dynamic is highlighted. Maintaining a focus on students' needs, care ethics offered ways for teachers to create caring relationships towards students.

These pedagogical approaches are conducive to spirituality. Freire's (1998) idea of critical pedagogy links to spirituality through its central tenet of 'conscientization', which relates to being aware of one's sociocultural circumstances and transforming this reality with the aim of freedom. This pedagogical paradigm of 'conscientization' demands teachers become reflective and foster awareness through their teaching. Awareness and transformation are seen to be spiritual aspects. Care ethics in education finds similarities with spirituality through empathy and care. The idea of care ethics by Noddings (2011) differs from other similar concepts because it emphasises the importance of the one caring together with the one cared for. Noddings explains that this caring situation may lead to empathy.

Among all spiritual attributes, silence was a prominent aspect that is relevant to an educational setting. What follows is a detailed description of the pedagogy of silence as a spiritually conducive pedagogical approach. Researchers grapple with silence as a conflicting space for classroom teaching (Nisbett, Peng, & Norenzayan, 2001; Ollin, 2008). From the spiritual perspective, silence is a positive space that brings energy into a busy and chaotic life.

> The silence creates an in-between space. It is a space for focus and a
> moment when it is possible to relate to the self. These moments of

contemplative silence are a reminder that everyday life is packed with

activity but that when a small silence is incorporated into daily life it serves

to reenergise the spirit". (Bone, 2007, p. 197)

This idea of contemplative silence as suggested by Bone (2007) is significant for a busy school day that is full of scheduled lessons and specialist activities informed by the demands of delivering the curriculum. Yet, silence has negative connotations in Western educational contexts. Nisbett et al. (2001) explain that this could stem from the difference in perspectives of the East and West. The Eastern way is that of holistic thinking that synthesises different aspects all at once, whereas the Western way is that of breaking the whole in parts and analysing them (Nisbett et al., 2001). Consequently, the Eastern way of thinking values silence, whereas dialogue and conversations are at the heart of Western teaching and learning ways. Belanoff (2001) highlights the positive and productive side of silence while mentioning the negative when used as a verb, silencing others, women and the marginalised. Belanoff noted Western discomfort and negative connotations with silence using the words, "[W]e're a culture fearful of silence" (p. 400) compared with thinking, reflection and meditation in non-Western cultures, where silence is valued and privileged.

Silence has been used in classrooms as an effective pedagogical strategy despite the negative connotations it sometimes carries. Ollin (2008) acknowledged the negative perceptions of silence in educational contexts and interviewed 25 teachers to discover the different types of silences used by teachers in teaching and learning. In addition, "silent pedagogy" (Ollin, 2008, p. 265) was employed by teachers where they adopted intentional silence to benefit their students' learning. These findings align with Lee and Sriraman's (2013) study based in Korea, where the teachers who were culturally exposed to Eastern philosophical traditions of Confucianism and Taoism were involved in the constructivist teaching of mathematics. The analysis of video-recordings of these teachers' practice in mathematics class and their interviews revealed the use of "pedagogy of silence" in the classroom (Lee & Sriraman, 2013, p. 156). This study revealed an interesting insight into Korean culture stating, "In Korean culture, speech is usually produced after completion of speculation or study. Incomplete speech is considered more inferior to silence" (Lee & Sriraman, 2013, p. 163). In the UK, a larger study with 319 students aged between 14 and 16 years old showed that silence was important for their learning to occur (Jaworski & Sachdev,

1998). However, in multicultural Australian schools, silence by a student can be perceived negatively and a sign of disengagement or lack of understanding rather than a positive space for learning (Zhou, Knoke, & Sakamato, 2005).The above studies show the importance of the spiritual attribute of silence for teaching and learning. The next section deals with different aspects of teachers' spirituality and how these influence their wellbeing.

3.2.2 Teachers' spirituality and teaching

Teachers' spirituality allows them to connect with their inner lives and bring their whole self into teaching. By doing this, teachers attend to the question: "who is the self that teaches?" (Palmer, 1998, p. 8). This consideration directs teachers "toward the recovery of the inner resources that good teaching always requires" (Palmer, 1998, p. 8). This connection with their spiritual selves enables teachers to teach from a holistic place by overcoming the division between the teacher as a person and the teacher as a professional. This feeling of completeness aligns well with the idea of spirituality. It is important to consider how this works for teaching and learning in the classroom.

Traditional education consists of outcome-based, result-oriented systems that provide little room for children to show their creative side to the fullest. Curriculum-driven school timetables seldom allow for separate time to engage in activities that foster spirituality (Haskins, 2009). This argument that traditional education does not support spiritual endeavour has been endorsed in the past by a renowned educationist, Maria Montessori. Her educational pedagogy was based on independence and freedom to learn (Montessori, 1948). Teachers acted as facilitators in making appropriate material available for children to learn. This educational philosophy also emphasised the social development of children. Montessori (1972) explained:

> The child is richly endowed with powers, sensitivities, and constructive instincts that as yet have neither been recognized nor put to use. In order to develop, he needs much broader opportunities than he has been offered thus far. Might not this goal be reached by changing the entire structure of education? Society must fully recognize the social rights of the child and prepare for him and the adolescent a world capable of ensuring their spiritual development". (p. 31)

This new way of thinking about educational pedagogy led to the vision that Suhor (1999) presents as, "Spirituality grows in classrooms when teachers see themselves as agents of joy and conduits for transcendence, rather than merely as licensed trainers or promoters of measurable growth" (p. 16). This understanding of the role of teachers from a spiritual perspective leads to teachers' spiritual beliefs concerning curricular subjects being researched.

In relation to the arts, Laurel Campbell, an assistant professor in Art Education in the US, conducted in-depth interviews with three teachers from high school and college levels. These teachers were either teaching art as their job or were artists themselves. Campbell (2003) mentioned that "[A]rt educators are situated in a unique position to encourage students' connections between the inner self and art making" (p. 3). Campbell (2005) summarised her findings by stating that the research led to "consideration of how pre-service and experienced teachers might benefit from heightened sense of awareness of one's inner beliefs and one's outer actions particularly in teaching art" (p. 64). These conclusions help understand the role of reflective practice in art education.

Transforming children's lives by nurturing and inspiring them requires going beyond academic subjects and teaching techniques. Here, what is sought is high-calibre quality teaching from teachers who can go beyond mere teaching techniques that will inspire the students and transform their lives. Haskins (2009), an experienced Montessori educator, recommended using specially designed writing activities to nurture students' spirituality and making the classrooms safe spaces to express spirituality. Carlsson-Paige (2001) explains that although it is difficult for teachers to find ways to nurture children's spirituality, teachers at times go out of their way to ensure they focus on children's emotional, social and spiritual aspects by providing "holistic and student-centred curriculum" (p. 23) through everyday classroom activities such as puppet shows, role-plays and classroom discussions. Promoting peacefulness is related to holistic education. Lubelska's (2012) whole-school implementation of the Peaceful Schools Movement in the UK promoted peacefulness in these schools. Feeling peaceful is one of the spiritual attributes, and the Peaceful Schools Movement promoted this peacefulness using well-established techniques such as mindfulness, conflict-resolution and the effective use of quiet spaces around the schools.

3.3 Teachers' Spirituality and Their Health and Wellbeing

Relevant studies have shown that teachers' spirituality is closely connected with their wellbeing (Fisher, 1998; Fisher, Francis, & Johnson, 2000). A review of the literature highlighted the significance of spiritual activities such as practising mindfulness and cultivating the habit of reflectivity for teachers. Such activities have implications for classroom teaching and are worth considering in the present study. Despite the perceived secular stance in Australia, given an opportunity, teachers are interested in sharing their spiritual beliefs. In 1998, John W. Fisher attempted one of the few empirical studies that focused exclusively on teachers' spirituality and revealed a link between health and spirituality. He conducted a study with 98 secondary school teachers from state, Catholic, and other non-government schools in Victoria, Australia. This study revealed spiritual health in four domains: personal, communal, environmental and transcendental (Fisher, Francis, & Johnson, 2000). This study was a precursor to many others, including another study by Fisher in 2007. In this study, Fisher surveyed 820 teachers from state, Catholic, Christian and other independent schools in Victoria to investigate the factors related to teachers' views on spiritual wellbeing in their personal and professional lives. Following this research, spiritual wellbeing has become a commonly known concept in the field of spirituality in education. These studies by Fisher offered a contextual insight for my research as they are situated in Australia and involved different educational sectors.

3.3.1 Connection between teachers' spirituality and stress management

An important aspect of health and wellbeing relevant to teachers is coping with stressful situations. Teaching is a demanding profession that poses a risk of burnout. Teachers are constantly under time pressure with documentation demands and inadequate time for recovery (E. Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). In addition, teachers regularly experience emotional exhaustion (Chang, 2009). To understand teachers' spirituality and their wellbeing, studies have examined workplace spirituality and explored its connection to stress in the workplace (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & Mckee, 2007; Daniel, 2015). This aspect of spirituality in the workplace is discussed in Sub-section 3.4.1. Relevant literature leads us to think that if people find meaning at work and feel connected to their colleagues, they may feel reduced stress at their workplace. Mohammad et al. (2017) studied organisational spirituality and its effects on job stress for high school teachers and found that spirituality in

the workplace decreases job stress. Similarly, Behera and Dash (2015, p. 307) claimed that spirituality as a coping mechanism for teachers, together with the location of the school, had an impact on teachers' wellbeing because they found that although school location was a contributing factor (urban teachers have higher stress levels overall), spirituality as a coping mechanism had an impact on teachers' wellbeing.

3.3.2 Implementing mindfulness practice to support teachers' wellbeing

Studies relating to teachers' mindfulness highlighted the positive impact of this practice on their wellbeing. Mindfulness was originally a part of the Buddhist tradition (Dhiman, 2009; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013). It was popularised by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2015) who defined mindfulness as "moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a specific way, that is, in the present moment, and as non-reactively, as non-judgmentally, and as open-heartedly as possible" (p. 1481). These attributes of not reacting or judging and being open-minded are significant for teachers in two ways: teachers experiencing mindfulness through their own practice and teaching about mindfulness to their students.

Research shows close links between mindfulness practice among teachers and their ability to cope with stress (Hyland, 2016; Reiser & McCarthy, 2018), which could be because through this practice, teachers learn to effectively work with their emotions. Hyland (2016) explains that the practice of meditation trains people's minds to push past the different thoughts and feelings that arise, which prepares the mind to be free from being affected in any way by these thoughts. This freedom of the trained mind relates to reducing stress as found in Reiser and McCarthy's (2018) quasi-experimental study where teachers were provided with a support group where they got to practice mindfulness. Similarly, Roeser et al. (2013) found that stress burnout, anxiety and depression decreased because of mindfulness practices. They asserted that mindfulness training helped in teaching and learning. Guidetti, Viottil, Badagliacca, Colombo, and Converso (2019) found that mindfulness reduced stress and burnout at work. Dewhirst and Goldman (2018) pre-service early years teachers found it a useful and beneficial "useful tool" or "coping tool" (p. 1299). Kerr et al. (2017) worked with 23 pre-service teachers' mindfulness training and found that the negative feelings were low, these teachers were in a better position to respond to stressful situations and their impulsive behaviour was in check. Similarly, Sharp and Jennings (2016) promoted "present-

centered awareness" as a tool to cope with emotional burnout in stressful situations at school. They wrote about present-centered awareness of emotions, "In response to emotional awareness, participants described the ability to zoom out or take a step back before assessing their current situation" (p. 213). This mindfulness practice provided a useful tool for teachers to maintain their wellbeing.

Drawing on Jon Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness practice, in Estonia, Seema and Säre (2019) conducted a mixed method study with 145 pre-school teachers and 225 secondary school teachers and reported a "positive impact on their state" of meditation practice of a religious group of teachers (p. 1). They concluded from this study that to understand the impact of mindfulness, the participants should be trained in mindfulness. Albrecht's (2018) study went a step further and concluded that someone who teaches mindfulness should not only be trained in mindfulness but should be practising it themselves. This finding emerged from a small-scale phenomenological study that used interviews, photos, journals and practice worksheets. Albrecht's participants included eight teachers from Australia and the US who practised mindfulness and were involved in teaching the practice to children. In the Australian educational context, referring to this "contemplative education turn" Ergas and Todd (2016, p. 5) questioned the rationale for adopting and "import(ing)" practices from East Asia and overlooking the Indigenous practices that are already available in Indigenous cultures, thereby presenting criticism of the introduction of mindfulness in Australian schools.

3.3.3 Reflectivity

Reflectivity is another practice that promotes awareness similar to mindfulness or practice of being present, it is closely connected to good mental health and can help teachers avoid burnout in their profession. Reflectivity is making sense of experiences by using one's own beliefs and values, which leads to "generat(ing) deeper insights" (Dixon & Chiang, 2018, p. 18). Concerning teachers, this insight from a personal perspective can support them professionally. Mayes (2002) explained that deeper reflectivity can be powerful in helping teachers develop enriched "understanding of what it means to be a teacher" (p. 699). This explanation is based on Mayes' (2002) analysis of the literature according to Jung's (1970) archetypes, and discussed teachers not as someone imparting information or facilitating learning, instead Mayes has considered teachers as "archetype of spirit" (p. 700). This

spiritual dimension of teacher reflectivity brings forward their "unconscious assumptions to light" (Mayes, 2002, p. 700). This shifts the role of teachers from delivering information to a spiritual level that demands for deeper reflection on their teaching practice.

Reflectivity is vital in educational contexts because reflective thinking fosters open-mindedness in teachers (Hare, 1985). Hare as mentioned before in Sub-section 3.1.3.2, describes open-mindedness as an attitude which involves being willing to form and revise one's views as impartially and as objectively as possible. Being open-minded helps teachers understand the views and perspectives of diverse students in their classrooms, leading to developing a better understanding of various spiritual and religious perspectives of students and colleagues.

3.3.4 Teacher presence

In the primary school education space, usually teacher presence has been a part of effective teaching strategies. For instance, in their study, van Leeuwen and Janssen (2019) found that during Collaborative Learning, teacher presence can improve learning by guiding student interactions. In the online learning space, which is an emerging feature of modern education, the discussion about teacher presence is gaining momentum. A study about university level online courses, conducted by Goh, Ayub, Wong and Lim (2017) supported the presence of facilitators to improve student engagement and provide a sense of belonging to all students. Additionally, Dockter's (2016) discussion about "teacher persona" in online education (p.73) raises the question of what are the different ways to encourage teacher and student connection when they are not sharing the same physical space. This allows students to gain spiritually and teachers presenting themselves in this way also create space for students to grow spiritually without being explicitly taught about spirituality.

3.4 Dynamics Between Teachers' Spirituality and Their Teaching Contexts

To understand teachers' spirituality, it is important to consider their teaching context. Multiculturalism in today's educational contexts provides an additional layer to understanding teachers' spirituality in schools. For those who are spiritual, it is fortunate for them if their spirituality is accepted where they teach because if it is not accepted, the teachers might feel out of place, with their beliefs being marginalised. hooks (2003), an

education commentator and cultural critic, prompts a consideration of the dynamics between teachers' spirituality and their teaching context. Thoughts by hooks (2003) resonate with spiritually-inclined teachers because for them spirituality forms an integral part of their human dimension and it is unreasonable to think that they will leave their spiritual beliefs behind as they enter a classroom. Spirituality as a part of one's being is particularly pertinent in a multicultural setting, where a multiplicity of beliefs/spiritualities might be involved.

In his qualitative case study involving two teachers, Nelson (2010) explored how teachers' dispositions are formed and how the "teacher self and religious self" (p. 335) are integrated into their teaching. This was an excellent example of a study in a multicultural educational context because the student population consisted of predominantly African American children, one of the teacher participants was Caucasian and another teacher was African American, and both these teachers attended a Baptist church. Nelson found that these teachers incorporated their own and their students' religious identity in their teaching. He also found a potential for improving teacher education by providing pre-service teachers with tools to work with their own and others' religious identities.

Similarly, an in-depth interview study conducted by Mogra (2010) involving 13 Muslim teachers working at a public school in England provided an important insight into this topic of teachers' spirituality and their teaching contexts. He found that while spirituality was conceptualised differently by these teachers, it formed an important part of their lives despite teaching in a secular school. Similarly, Ubani (2018) explored where religion belongs in public schools in Finland. In particular, Ubani focused on Islam due to the presence of an Islamic student population at the school.

In the New Zealand context, Fraser (2007) explored the role of "spirituality for teaching and learning in multicultural state schools" by examining teachers' personal and professional narratives (p. 289). Situated in a secular school, this study offered ways of promoting "cultural and social inclusion" that would foster a feeling of belonging in teachers. These teachers came from varied backgrounds concerning their religious beliefs and ethnicity including Christian, agnostic, Māori and Pakeha (European New Zealander), and bi-racial (Māori and Pakeha). In multicultural classrooms, an environment that "fosters spirituality… faith, beliefs & culture" was discussed (Fraser, 2007, p. 289). These and similar studies

highlight how classrooms can become safe places to freely share spiritual thoughts, despite the secular or non-secular teaching contexts.

3.4.1 Spirituality in schools as a workplace

For spiritually-inclined people, spirituality is a part of their being that cannot be left behind at the threshold of their workplace. This is supported by Palmer (1998) when he wrote, "to teach as a whole person to the whole person is not to lose one's professionalism as a teacher but to take it to a deeper level" (p. 10). Neal's (1997) description of workplace spirituality can be applied to educational contexts:

> Spirituality in the workplace is about people seeing their work as a spiritual path, as an opportunity to grow personally and to contribute to society in a meaningful way … It means attempting to live your values more fully in your work. (p. 123)

Considerable research in workplace spirituality has taken place in the management field (Kernochan et al., 2007; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Pawar, 2008). In the field of management education, spiritual pedagogy outlines three foundational values: humility, compassion, and simplicity (Harlos, 2000). These values arise from teachers' own "guiding secular and sacred values" that help "evoke spiritual dimensions in management education" (Harlos, 2000, p. 619). Workplace spirituality has also gained attention in the education field.

Drawing on the prominent work in the management field by Mitroff and Denton (1999), the concept of workplace spirituality was applied to educational contexts by Kumar (2018). In a pilot study involving 81 teachers from public and private school sectors in India, Kumar found that meaningful work, meaningful life, interpersonal relationship and working environment were the main dimensions of workplace spirituality. In an Iranian city of Birjand, Mohammad et al. (2017) conducted a study exploring the influence of organisational spirituality on teachers' stress at work. They described organisational spirituality in relation to concepts such as "meaning at work" and "existence of unity between work and life" (p. 639). Using a questionnaire method with 326 teachers, Mohammad et al. (2017) found that teachers' job stress was influenced by spirituality experienced at work and argued that "organizational spirituality aims at connecting personal life to work together by creating meaning at work and in linking work with individuals' aims" (p. 647). This meaning making

is significant because as some researchers found, feeling of meaning, wellbeing and purpose at work increases the positive attitude towards work.

Rajappan, Nair, Kirupa, and Sivakumar (2017) studied the relationship between workplace spirituality and job-embeddedness. In other words, they tried to understand how feeling connected at work and finding work meaningful would help in staying in the job. Rajappan et al. (2017) through their research established a positive relationship between workplace spirituality and job embeddedness. Similarly, Aboobaker, Edward, and Zakkariya (2019) linked workspace spirituality to employee wellbeing which reflected in their intention to continue working at their workplace. This concept of workplace spirituality points to an interaction between teachers' personal beliefs and their professional contexts, explored in the following section.

3.4.2 Negotiating the personal beliefs in professional contexts

For spiritually-inclined teachers, bringing the personal into the professional promotes the feeling of belonging. Haskins (2009) explains this as, "when the spiritual realm of human existence is acknowledged and encouraged, the human being will rise to her inherent potential" (p. 33). If teachers feel safe to express their spirituality, they will be able to bring their whole self into their teaching, which will mean that they are using their complete self in their teaching and offering education that is true and authentic for them.

The private aspect in teachers' spirituality is frequently researched without fully addressing the professional side despite the significance of alignment between teachers' personal beliefs and their actions in their professional lives (Fisher, 2007). Hartwick (2014) studied the influence of praying in teachers' personal lives. However, in this study, the impact of this prayerfulness on their teaching was not examined. In addition, their teaching context of secular public schools was unexplored.

Studies in teacher education support crossing personal/professional borders concerning spirituality to explore the dynamics between teachers' personal and professional lives (Kung, 2007; Lauzon, 2001), implying the possibility of considering spirituality in teacher education for pre-service teachers. Teachers' perceptions have been studied without considering the perceptions of their own spirituality and how it influences their teaching.

Several studies aimed at understanding teachers' perceptions on topics, including student wellbeing, literacy, gender issues, effective pedagogy, supportive learning environment and the use of technology signify the importance of teachers' perceptions, for example, a study based in the US about teacher perceptions of teacher bullying (Zerillo & Osterman, 2011). Another study looked at the "effects of children's reading skills and interest in reading related tasks on teachers' perceptions of children's literacy skills" (Kikas, Silinskas, and Soodla, 2015, p. 402). Boerma, Mol, and Jolles (2015) in Estonia looked at the effect of teachers' perceptions on reading motivation from different sex perspectives. Wanner and Palmer (2015) in Australia explored flexible teaching and learning through flipped classrooms and attempted to understand teachers' perceptions about this topic. Mitchell, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2010) studied the perceptions that teachers and students have on the school climate as it is important for good academic performance from students. O'Bannon and Thomas (2014) worked with 1095 teachers from the US regarding teachers' perceptions of students using mobile phones, especially in relation to their age. Considering the range of research topics about teachers' perceptions, it is logical to think that teachers' perceptions of spirituality is also a significant area for research.

Among studies aimed at teachers' beliefs, not many have considered teachers' spiritual beliefs (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015; Kagan, 1992; Muijs & Reynolds, 2015). Existing studies relating to teachers' spirituality have focused on understanding students' spirituality rather than teachers. For instance, studies about teachers' perceptions of spirituality relate to their students' spirituality rather than their own. Thus, teachers' spirituality is addressed at the professional level. Fraser and Grootenboer's (2004) study examined teachers' views on spirituality and the implications for the children they taught. Despite the inclusion of spirituality in the secular curriculum in New Zealand schools, the authors claimed that there was limited research on how teachers perceive this inclusion. Similarly, Kennedy and Duncan (2006) studied teachers' perceptions of spirituality in New Zealand schools with 10 teacher participants. Their study also investigated children's spirituality and how the teaching context influenced children's spirituality. The above discussion highlights the need to examine teachers' spiritual beliefs and their impact on their teaching. Teachers should feel safe to voice their spiritual beliefs in their professional lives because they influence their professional lives to some extent. Despite making these unheard voices a part of teaching discourse, previous studies do not offer space for teachers to share

their own spiritual beliefs on a personal level. The majority of current research has viewed teachers' spirituality using external mechanisms such as mindfulness-based intervention or the concept of spiritual wellbeing. Additionally, these studies use questionnaires containing predetermined categories based on the literature.

The literature on teachers' spirituality implicates the inclusion of the spiritual aspect in teacher education and professional development. Rolph (1991) argued for the inclusion of spirituality in teacher education courses based on the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts in the UK. McIntosh, Chen, Villarreal, and Godine (2008) stated that pre-service teachers would express their spirituality given the opportunity. Consequently, teacher education programs must consider this need for multiple expressions of teachers' spirituality. Thomas and Kearney (2008) recommend professional development and teaching education programs for experienced and pre-service teachers to understand cultural diversity. Greenfield (2018) states that spirituality and Wairua need to be "embedded in" the curriculum (p. 287). Wairua is the soul or spirit in Māori language.

There are not many qualitative studies that have asked the teachers about their perceptions of spirituality. The present research aimed to do just that. I did not provide the teacher participants with a survey or questionnaire, nor did I provide them with an intervention program to understand its effects. Instead, I asked them their ideas and my questions were open-ended and followed their line of thinking. The literature review demonstrated that there are spiritually sensitive teachers who are willing to speak about their spiritual beliefs if prompted. This was evident in my own Master of Education thesis. As a spiritual person myself, working at a school that regularly implemented spiritual practices, I had a story to tell. However, I soon realised that there was rarely an opportunity to share this story within a busy and chaotic school day. This made me think that the idea of spirituality as key to many peoples' identities and ways of life is a marginalised aspect of teacher education and research.

3.5 Summary

In the above discussion, I have delineated the meaning of spirituality and religion and argued that there is a scope for co-existence despite these concepts being separate. The second part of the literature review, examining the relevant research on teachers' spirituality,

complements the attempt in Section 2.4 to locate teachers' spirituality in related educational policies.

Empirical studies attend to the professional sphere by exploring teachers' professional beliefs and their influence on teaching. Other studies have examined teachers' personal realm by gaining insight into their spiritual beliefs and how this influences their students' spirituality, thus engaging with the personal sphere. A careful review of the literature regarding teachers' spirituality showed that the significance of teachers' spiritual beliefs for their teaching in the professional sphere had not been adequately explored.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

This research takes a postcolonial theoretical approach to understand the complex dynamics of teachers' spirituality in the Australian educational context. It can be argued that physical imperialism is a historical event that has little relevance in today's lives; however, Cannella and Viruru (2004) suggest otherwise:

> Imperialism continues to be played out in economic structures, societal institutions, and ways that people view themselves, as well as through continued physical occupation in various locations of the world. Further, imperialist thought invades the daily lives of individuals and groups all over the globe. (p. 9)

In this study, the aspect of imperialist thought in everyday lives is significant because I have used this postcolonial lens to understand how imperialism is influencing the educational field concerning the spirituality of teachers.

Postcolonialism was not the predetermined theoretical framework for this research. However, as I collected and analysed the data, I realised that my participants' experiences of living in formerly colonised nations and being a part of a settler coloniser nation brought out nuances about the topic of spirituality that postcolonial theory would allow me to explore further. Another consideration, as stated earlier (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1), was that Australian education is rooted in the colonial legacy of British ideals (O'Donoghue, 2009). Moreover, being an Indian, female teacher and researcher working in Australia positioned me solidly in this postcolonial space.

Through my engagement with the data during the data collection process, these links became more apparent as I began to "co-read" data and theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2017, p. 725), which involved intertwining data and theory rather than one dominating the other. The theoretical concepts and themes generated from the data worked together. Jackson and Mazzei (2012, 2013, 2017) explained how to work theory with data and data with theory. One of the cautions that they mentioned was that it is not a case of placing the theory within the data or finding some examples from the data related to the chosen theory; it is more nuanced than that. Jackson and Mazzei (2017) advised that theory should be considered the

process, which leads to going beyond binaries such as researcher/participant or data/theory. This process of reading data and theory together and reflecting on my own positionality organically shaped the theoretical framework and helped me give meaning to my participants' words, which is reflected in the findings and discussions in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

Postcolonial theory concerns itself with the historical and contemporary effects of imperialism and colonisation. Postcolonialism as Gandhi (1998) articulates brings to the forefront the "matter of colony and empire" (p. 23). This matter mainly relates to the dominant position of imperialists as a result of colonising mission. In this regard, Giroux (2005) made a reference to "the ability of white, male, Eurocentric culture to normalize and universalize its own interests" (p. 111). The thinking of postcolonialism is to critique the hegemonic position attributed to certain concepts or ideas by the virtue of Eurocentric approach (Spivak, 1990).

Looking through a postcolonial lens enabled me to research spirituality in a Western context, namely, the experiences of a group of Western and non-Western primary school teachers. Postcolonial theory "attempts to reform the intellectual and epistemological exclusions" by making way for "non-Western critics located in the West to present their cultural inheritance as knowledge" (Gandhi, 1998, p. ix). The spirituality of oneness has been a part of my cultural tapestry. I remember celebrating festivals worshipping humans, non-humans and transcendence, and connecting with all the elements of nature in this way. Postcolonial theory acknowledges this non-Western thinking and offered me a way to acknowledge the spirituality of my participants. When I examined the data, I kept in mind Gandhi's (1998) caution that "what counts as 'marginal' in relation to the West has often been central and foundational in the non-West" (p. ix). This is true for spirituality in India, where it has been a part of education for centuries (Chandra, 2015; Pandey, 2013). This understanding provided me with an opportunity to engage with my non-white and non-Western participants. Ashcroft (2013) reminded me that the cultures of both the colonisers and colonised have been "resilient and transformative" (p. 2). He argued that both the cultures involved have been transformed and changed through colonisation, highlighting the "transcultural effect of colonialism" (p. 2). This aspect of postcolonial theory helped me

unpack the spirituality of my white Australian participants who had been influenced by non-Western spiritual thinking and had chosen to incorporate it as part of their being.

In particular, I drew on the works of a well-recognised postcolonial scholar and intellectual, Gayatri Chakravorthy Spivak. Spivak's expression of postcolonial theory was an excellent fit for this project because of her close connection with education, which she expresses as "I am an education person, you know, I am a teacher" (Sharpe & Spivak, 2003, p. 615). Her main work relates to teaching at Columbia University as a lecturer and a teacher of teachers in remote villages in West Bengal, India. Spivak is not spiritual and her ideas and theories are located in cultural politics. In one of her interviews with Chakravorty et al. (2006), Spivak explained, "I am not Christian. I am not anything. I am so irreligious I even think atheism is a religion" (p. 38). Spivak provided me with a sharp critical lens to not let my own spiritual experience make me less able to critically analyse questions around spirituality. The remainder of this chapter presents the main concepts used to make sense of my data based on this theoretical framework (See Appendix A). These concepts include marginality, diaspora, binary oppositions, and homogenisation. Finally, a discussion about marginalising and silencing the voices regarding spirituality in education is presented.

4.1 Marginality

Marginality, a "buzzword in cultural critique" (Spivak, 1988b, p. 55), revolves around hearing the voices of people who are not in a privileged position. Marginality could be based on gender, culture, or ethnicity. Centre and margin are two central ideas in Spivak's concept of marginality. A centre is a dominant structure that occupies a hegemonic position and experiences privilege. Additionally, a centre is recognised in reference to its margins. In other words, centre is a centre of power and lack of power relates to margins (Giroux, 2005). From its hegemonic position, the centre shapes its margins based on the explanations it offers. These explanations result in creating norms. Consequently, anything outside these norms constitutes the margins. Such a structure is not fixed, it can change based on the context. Spivak (1990) explains, "In a certain sense, I think there is nothing that is central. The center is always constituted in terms of its own marginality" (p. 40). Therefore, a structure that constitutes a centre changes based on the context.

From the postcolonial perspective, colonisation results in a Eurocentric centre. This is explained by Spivak (1990): "In terms of the hegemonic historical narrative, certain peoples have always been asked to cathect the margins so others can be defined as central" (p. 41). Spivak referred to a Eurocentric centre that identifies others who are not from a European background as requiring a cultural identity leading to a position of marginality. In cultural studies, Spivak (1993) questions this act of identifying the margin to define the centre, "When cultural identity is thrust upon one because the center wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the center" (p. 55). Furthermore, the centre assumes conformity from the margins to the norms it has created for them to be considered a part of the centre. Spivak (2006) wrote about this from her experience of being invited to a conference:

> When all my colleagues were reacting adversely to my invocations of marginality, they were in fact performing another move within the center-margin set. They were inviting me into the center at the price of exacting from me the language of centrality. (p. 144)

More specifically, as an academic in the US, who delved into European literature and French theories and was influenced by European theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Karl Marx, Spivak referred to Eurocentric American academia as the centre (Spivak, 1993). For the present study, the Australian educational context is the centre. The nature of how schools operate influences teachers' work in their everyday lives. These are the structures that the teacher is working within. The teachers that I interviewed were a part of this same structure, from which the educational norms have been derived. The Australian school structure is influenced by the historical phenomenon of colonisation. This is because, as explained in Chapter 2, how schools are structured is influenced by the colonial presence in this country. A prominent feature of school education in Australia when it began was to uphold British values, which became the centre, and Indigenous knowledge and way of learning, which were different, were constituted as margins. For the Western education system, which focused on creating a well-trained workforce, the Indigenous way of education was incomprehensible. During the colonisation period, the colonisers expected people to follow their instructions; therefore, creativity or new thinking was not as valued as productivity (Dirks, 1996). This

centre, through its power and knowledge dynamic, is constantly defining spaces that the margins can inhabit.

For Spivak, margins are not outside the centre; instead, they inhabit a place within the centre. Spivak approaches marginality "not as a positive space outside of the center, but as constituted within the center" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 8). This is the distinguishing feature that makes Spivak's postcolonial marginality fit my study. From Spivak's perspective, margin is not a place of resistance or oppression; rather, it is a place that is inhabited within the centre. Placing margins in the centre deconstructs this centre as a fixed structure, which emerges from Spivak's post-structural thinking and the influence of her prominent work in the form of a preface from her English translation of Derrida's *Of grammatology* which was originally written in French (Derrida, 1976). This deconstructive thinking assisted in critiquing the structure Spivak inhabited in academia.

4.1.1 Diaspora

The word diaspora originates in Greek meaning of spread, scatter or disperse. Spivak (1996) explains diaspora as relating to people who migrate from their country of origin to live or work in another country. Some of my research participants had experienced diaspora because they had left their countries of origin, and they now worked and lived in Australia. Personally, diaspora was one of the most important aspects that drew me to Spivak's work because of my own as well as my participants' backgrounds. By its nature, diaspora is closely tied in with the idea of migrating from home. This concept aligns with this postcolonial framework because as Sahoo and Pattanaik (2014) explain, "international migration on a large scale started during colonial times" (p. 1). Furthermore, the idea of diaspora relates to marginality.

Drawing on her diaspora experience, Spivak (1993) raised an issue about being seen differently in her country of residence and her country of origin: as a woman of colour from the third world in the US and as a member of the intellectual elite in Kolkata India. Within the two structures of diaspora country of origin and country where Spivak worked, her cultural identity was subject to change depending on who was viewing it. Spivak (1990) explained this as "negotiating between these two structures, sometimes, I have to see myself as the marginal in the eyes of others" (p. 41). This marginal position assigned based on

ethnicity can reflect spirituality in the present study. As the teachers of diaspora negotiate these structures denoted by the two countries, these negotiations can be experienced in the area of teachers' spiritual beliefs. In Australia, discussions about religion and spirituality are not a part of social discourse. The spiritual beliefs of some of the teacher participants were formed outside Australia, where spirituality is seen in a different light. This difference in approach towards spirituality for teachers of diaspora could lead to marginalising their spiritual beliefs.

Being a part of the diaspora is closely connected with the feeling of being an outsider because people have come from another country. Additionally, when a person has spent enough time outside their country of origin, they are seen as outsiders in their own country. This is expressed in Spivak's dilemma concerning being a non-resident Indian, of not being "foreign enough and native enough" (Chakravorty et al., 2006, p. 44). This discussion about being an outsider points to another important aspect of positionality that is relevant to marginality. Such positionality leads to the possibility of marginalising the voices of those who, by belonging to more than one place, are not completely accepted in either, making them outsiders in both places. Spivak (1993) makes it clear that comprehending one's positionality is a challenging task:

> No one can quite articulate the space she herself inhabits … it's the thing that seems to be most problematic, and something that one really only learns from other people … [I]t is my conviction that you [Native Indian Intellectual] probably understand the complexities of my space as a diasporic Indian intellectual better than I can. (pp. 68–69)

In the present study, based on the background of my research participants, I mainly refer to diaspora from the Indian sub-continent. From the perspective of postcoloniality, this relates to the East (mainly the Indian subcontinent) and West (mainly British and European) pair. This is discussed in the next subsection regarding binary oppositions.

4.1.2 Binary oppositions

The idea of centre and margin, and diaspora link to the binary oppositions of dominant/non-dominant, hegemonic/non-hegemonic or privileged/non-privileged. Inherent in

these two categories is the issue of power. The existence of binary opposition is problematic because it implies hegemony of one over the other. Hegemony relates to power, control or domination, which is further elaborated by Giroux (2005) as "hegemony is a continuing, shifting, and problematic historical process" (p. 164). From the postcolonial perspective, this historical process relates to colonisation; and hegemony relates to Eurocentrism in various binary oppositions. Binary oppositions are based on the suspicion of marginality (Spivak, 2006, p. 141), relating to two terms in oppositional positions, for example, good/evil, light/dark and, from the postcolonial perspective, West/East.

In structuralist thought, each one in the above pairs has a fixed meaning. However, from the poststructuralist perspective, these binaries do not have a fixed oppositional meaning; instead, the political, geographical and cultural distances between two seemingly oppositional concepts can be traversed. Thus, the main aspect of binary oppositions in the present study is Spivak's deconstructive stance. Shaped from Jacques Derrida, Spivak's deconstruction is about going beyond the binary. Spivak approaches these binaries not by reversing, but by deconstructing. If the public/private binary were reversed, the private would be the dominant sphere, and the public sphere would become the non-dominant, which would sustain a pair of one dominant and one non-dominant idea. This reversing creates an imbalance where one is privileged over another, causing the other to be suppressed or dominated. Deconstructing binaries is removing this hierarchy. Thus, the binary is not reversed; instead, it is displaced, leading to neither of the concepts being in a hegemonic position. This displacement results in diminishing the marginalised position created by such a hierarchy.

The binary oppositions most relevant for the present study were West/East and public/private binaries. In this study, I explored the West/East binary. This binary opposition became relevant for two reasons. As discussed earlier in this chapter, imperialist thought leads to the hegemony of West over East. The Eurocentric mechanism from colonisation privileged Western thought, leading to West/East binary opposition, which is explored in the discussion chapters. Additionally, the present study focuses on public/private binary. Ford (2011) explains, "the public/private distinction is one of the fundamental categories of modern social life" (p. 550). She argues that this divide is being dismantled in modern social life. This new development is attributed to digital advances. This leads to a "new way of

theorizing the public/private distinction as a continuum rather than as a dichotomy" (Ford, 2011, p. 550). This need to retheorise the public and private and dissolving the clear boundaries between the two offered me a new perspective to view spirituality in public and private spheres.

In this study, I consider this binary in the Australian educational context. Examining public/private binary in the schooling sector revealed that home schooling and virtual learning are displacing the binary opposition between public and private schools as students are being educated in their homes (Saiger, 2016). This brings an aspect of these students' private lives, their homes, into their public lives, their schooling. Saiger's (2016, p. 297) argument about virtual learning "eroding" the public/private binary is particularly relevant during the current post-COVID times. Applying the public/private binary to the present study led to teachers' professionalism and their personal spiritual beliefs. There is an expectation that teachers will demonstrate professionalism and possess the required content knowledge and classroom management skills. Bourke, Lidstone, and Ryan (2015) explain the emphasis on professionalism in an Australian context:

> Since public schooling was introduced in the nineteenth century, teachers in many western countries have endeavoured to achieve professional recognition. For a short period in the latter part of the twentieth century, professionalism was seen as a discourse of resistance or the 'enemy' of economic rationalism and performativity. However, more recently, governments have responded by 'colonizing' professionalism and imposing 'standards'. (p. 84)

This binary is based on the understanding that teachers as professionals are expected to work within the educational policies and follow the teaching standards as prescribed by the government body. These government documents are a part of the public domain. In this way, professionalism inhabits the public sphere, which attaches it a certain prominence.

However, spiritual beliefs are part of the private sector. This understanding is based on the theoretical underpinnings of this study. Careful consideration of the public/private binary concerning the spirituality of teachers revealed that their spirituality was positioned in the personal or private realm of teachers' lives, well separated from their teaching in the

public or professional sphere. Spivak (2006) questions the hierarchy that places some activities in the public sector and others in the private:

> According to the explanations that constitute (as they are the effect of) our culture, the political, social, professional, economic, intellectual areas belong as well to the public sector. The emotional, sexual, and domestic are private sectors. Certain practices of religion, psychotherapy, and art in the broadest sense are said to inhabit the private sector as well. But the institutions of religion, psychotherapy, and art as the criticism of art, belong to the public. (p. 139)

This quote from Spivak unpacks cultural explanations around spirituality and religion. According to these cultural explanations, religious institutions, including churches, temples, mosques and monasteries are part of the public domain, and religious practices in the home environment are part of the private realm.

4.1.3 Homogenisation

The term homogenisation refers to making something uniform or similar. In relation to postcolonialism, the colonisers address the colonised using a uniform term without acknowledging any internal differences. As suggested by Spivak (1993), the "Third World" is a "proper name to a generalised margin" (p. 55) given by the "card-carrying, hegemonic and dominant" people (Spivak, 1990, p. 60). For example, it is quite common to use the term Asian in Western countries while in reality, Asian does not mean one homogenous group rather it consists of many smaller ones. Spivak talks about "Asia-s" denoting plurality in the Asia (Spivak, 2008, p. 97). Furthermore, Spivak (1990) stated that "when they (hegemonic people) want to hear an Indian speaking as an Indian, a Third World woman speaking as a Third World woman, they cover over the fact of the ignorance that they are allowed to possess, into a kind of homogenization" (p. 60). It can be argued that uniformity brings oneness and emphasises similarity between people, however, this process of homogenisation carried out by dominant and hegemonic people denies the other people separate identity and as a result may lead to silencing their voice to speak.

Homogenisation can result in either lack of voice as described above or it may lead to representing a certain group at the cost of being oneself. Spivak (1990) has presented "speaking as something" as a problem because it leads to distancing from one's self, whatever the self might be. When people "inhabit" different "subject positions, they might lose touch with who they are (p. 60). For example, when Spivak (1993) presented at a London conference on "Cultural Value" (p.53), she considered her cultural identity depending on the platform where she was speaking from and the audience. As a "well placed Asian academic" (p. 54), her cultural identity shifted from being an Indian in the US to being an Asian in London and being a Bengali in India.

4.2 Marginalising the spirituality of teachers

The voices in the margin are non-dominant, non-privileged and non-hegemonic; these are not always heard. In her essay "Can the subaltern speak?", Spivak drew attention to the unheard voices that are not listened to by those in privileged, hegemonic positions. Subaltern is used here as per Spivak's (1988a) description as a position without identity. This results in people who are subaltern being "removed from all lines of social mobility" (Spivak, 2005, p. 475). Therefore, their voices are not heard by others who are in a more privileged and well-recognised position.

My research participants are not subaltern. They are successful teachers employed to work in Australian schools and hold teaching registration from the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Therefore, my teacher participants are certainly a part of the centre. Despite this, spiritually-inclined teachers might experience no safe space for them to express their spirituality in the educational context within which they teach. This leads to the marginalisation of teachers' spirituality, despite them being a part of the centre, which is the Australian educational schools. Thus, teachers' spirituality occupies the space of the margin in the centre. A diasporic aspect of these teachers' backgrounds adds to this situation, where the beliefs that are held by teachers and the way these beliefs are approached in their teaching environment do not align. The voices of spiritually inclined teachers may not be heard because of this marginality. Additionally, because of the professional/personal binary, the emphasis on professionalism means that teachers' private lives are marginalised, leading to the expectation that spiritually-inclined teachers will leave beliefs, faith, religion, and spirituality at the threshold of the classroom. This marginalising of teachers' inner selves is

problematic because silencing means that teachers' private lives are overlooked despite spirituality being saliently present in the classroom. In my analysis, I was sensitive to the idea that teachers' spirituality may not be 'heard' in Australia. All of the above theoretical concepts contribute to the theoretical framework of this study. The following section explains the working of this framework, which is represented in Figure 4.1.

4.3 Theoretical Framework Used Within this Research

For this study, I considered the Australian educational contexts as the centre. This included the schools, educational policies (see Sub-section 2.3.1) and teachers' obligations towards their profession in the form of their teaching standards, teacher education and professional development as described in Section 2.4. In Figure 4.1, this is represented by the large circle in the centre. Within this centre is a smaller circle that signifies a margin in the centre, which for this research is teachers' spirituality. This marginalisation of teachers' spirituality within the centre reflects the concepts of diaspora (Sub-section 4.1.1) and binary oppositions (Sub-section 4.1.2).

Diaspora refers to both geographical and spiritual diaspora. Diaspora refers to the geographical aspect of being born in one country and living and working in another. This study, however, also explored spiritual diaspora where the spiritual beliefs are formed in one country and practised in another. Considering the concept of diaspora in this study aimed to understand how diaspora influenced the marginalisation of teachers' spirituality. The other concept, binary opposition, related to the demarcation of different aspects as fixed structures. In this study, these binary oppositions were questioned in light of teachers' spirituality, and an effort was made to understand whether binary oppositions contributed towards the marginalisation of teachers' spirituality in the Australian educational context.
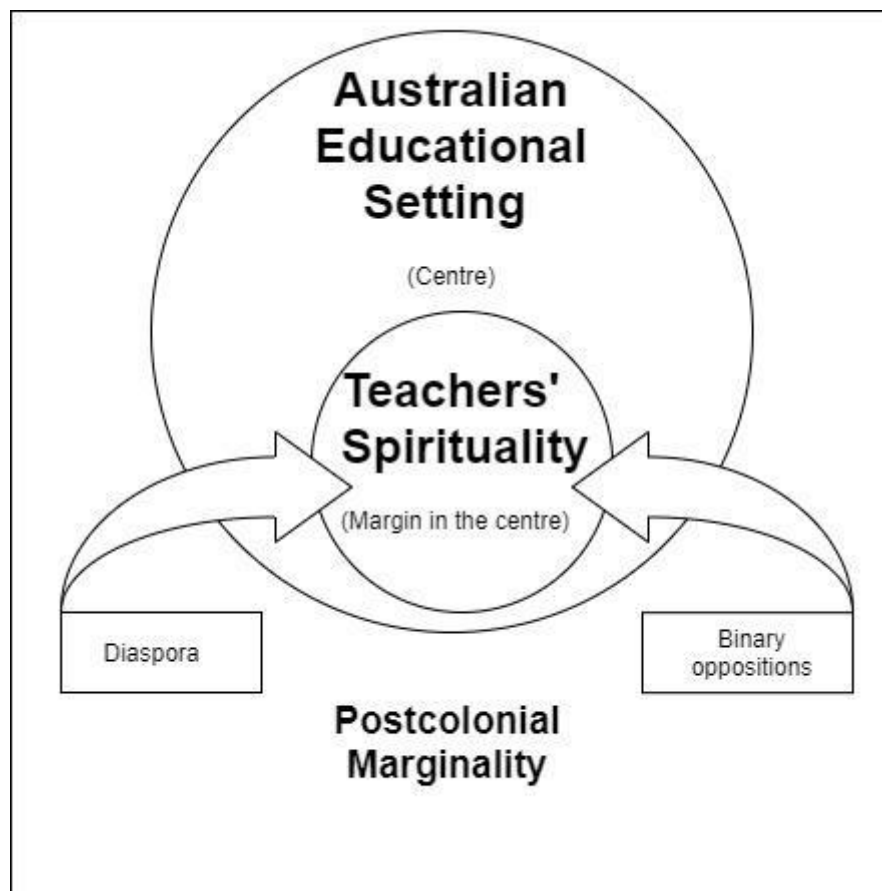
Figure 4.1: Theoretical framework for this study (Created from Spivak's postcolonial critique).

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented the key theoretical concepts of postcolonial marginality such as diaspora, deconstructing binaries, homogenisation, and the margin in the centre. The concept of postcolonial marginality provides a strong framework for understanding how teachers in this study understand and experience spirituality and how it influences their pedagogical practices. The key idea presented in this chapter about the theoretical framework is that teachers' spirituality inhabits the margin in the centre.

Chapter 5: Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology used in conducting this study of teachers' spirituality. I begin this chapter by providing the rationale and justification for the methodological approach of qualitative inquiry and using an interpretivist research paradigm. This is followed by a discussion regarding my own reflexivity and how it became part of the study. I then discuss the case study research design used in the study and how the research participants were selected. This is followed by introducing the five teacher participants: Julia, Amy, Priya, Janice and Samuel. Next, data collection methods and their significance to the research questions are outlined. These data collection methods include semi-structured interviews and visual images of objects as artefacts. In the data analysis section, I explain the rationale behind using thematic analysis (TA) and the reason it aligns with the aim of this study. Finally, I conclude the chapter by considering the ethical issues and trustworthiness of this research.

5.1 Understanding teachers' spiritual perceptions via qualitative research

This study adopted a qualitative inquiry approach to explore how teachers conceptualise their spirituality in the context of their teaching. Situated in an interpretivist paradigm, this research concerned itself with understanding teachers' spirituality. Considering Chandra and Shang (2019), qualitative inquiry deals with the "how and why" (p. 3) of research, with the research questions for the present study being:

> How do primary school teachers in Australia experience and understand spirituality?

> How does their spirituality influence their experience as teachers and their pedagogical practices?

Qualitative inquiry is a relatively broad term encompassing different ways to conduct studies using various theoretical approaches and paradigm choices; therefore, it is important to explain the methodological decisions made concerning this research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Stake, 2010). The following section presents the rationale for using a qualitative inquiry approach in this research.

The topic of teachers' spirituality prioritises experiences, perceptions and understandings of spirituality at a personal level. This research topic lends itself to qualitative inquiry, in which the connection with participants' worldview is central. My research focused on the lives and social interactions of the participants, which aligned perfectly with qualitative inquiry that "relies on human perception and understanding" (Stake, 2010, p. 11). Thus, the focus was more on interpretation at the personal level rather than wider generalisations. My intention to understanding the spirituality of teacher participants within their contextual setting aligned my study with qualitative inquiry "emphasizing a particular experience, dialogue, context, and multiple realities" (Stake, 2010, p. 28).

At the beginning of this research, I was not focused on determining what teachers' spirituality was or "producing a finding" (Chandra & Shang, 2019, p. 3), instead my approach was exploratory. Qualitative research is an "iterative and emergent process" (Chandra & Shang, 2019, p. 3). In my study of teachers' spirituality, I adopted an iterative process, considering data, theory and analysis multiple times. These "multiple back and forth comparisons" allowed me to generate findings in an emergent manner (Chandra & Shang, 2019, p. 3). I engaged with the data collected and let it guide me in terms of the theoretical framework and reaching the findings.

5.1.1 Research paradigm

A paradigm is a "worldview or higher-order way of thinking" regarding how to approach a research project (Ling & Ling, 2017, p. 2). It informs the complete research process from the beginning to the end. The present study was situated in the interpretive paradigm. Interpretive approaches are commonly used in qualitative research (Grant & Giddings, 2002; Merriam, 2009) and are based on the premise that various viewpoints or multiple realities are possible (Creswell, 2007). According to Merriam (2009, p. 8), this philosophical understanding "assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event". Spirituality can be defined and understood differently based on the background and experiences of participants. I was aware that my participants belonged to different age groups and cultural and religious backgrounds, and had diverse beliefs. Therefore, it was unrealistic of me to expect uniformity in their understanding of spirituality and how it affected them as teachers.

Thus, Merriam's (2002) description of qualitative research as "interpretations of reality" (p. 4) made sense. To connect with my participants' reality, I engaged them in face-to-face interviews and asked them to share an artefact that represented spirituality for them. This interaction helped me "understand their experiences and meaning they ascribe to them" (Grant & Giddings, 2002, p. 17). As the philosophical assumption of interpretivism is that the reality is socially constructed, my participants and I, together, created data through interviews and artefacts. Therefore, I viewed this stage as data creation rather than data collection, and it was my interaction with the participants of my study that shaped the nature of the data.

5.1.2 Researcher's reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to "a process of ongoing mutual shaping between researcher and research" (Attia & Edge, 2017, p. 33). During the present study, I was aware that my subjectivity contoured the research process, and the research process influenced me. The entries in my reflective journal were more than "factual descriptions" of the interview process; they included my "feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, speculations, and working hypotheses"; therefore, they were "preliminary data analysis" (Merriam, 2009, p. 131). I situated myself in the research by clarifying that my role as a researcher was influenced by my historical, political, philosophical and social interactions (Biklen, 2011). The topic of spirituality in education emerged from my ethnic background as an Indian and my teacher education from New Zealand. The choice of Gayatri Chakravorthy Spivak's post-colonial marginality as a theoretical and analytical framework was informed by my background as a female, Indian migrant.

As a researcher, I was reflexive when examining my "personal, possibly unconscious, reactions" (Finlay, 2002, p. 224). I maintained a reflective journal throughout the research process (see Appendix B) in "an ongoing and relational process" with "active and continuous engagement" (Mao et al., 2016, p. 1). This journal was created on the computer during the conception stage of the research, and regular entries made me aware of how I reacted to the research process and data. I used these understandings to inform my study further (Etherington, 2004). For example:

> As I began to transcribe the interview, I realised that I have thoughts, ideas as well as memories from the interview, I will be noting these down as they are still fresh in my mind. (Reflective journal)

After making this note, I began to write down my reactions to the interviews immediately after their completion. This was similar to the "subjective entanglement" of Bone (2007) as she believed that her "response to events affected the research process" (p. 65). This introspection of one's own thoughts and actions is similar to the spiritual practice of meditation. Mehta (1995) claims that meditation involves the observation of thought processes. This introspection helped me "know the self within the research itself" (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018). Ensuring the researcher's subjectivity and reflexivity contributes towards an ethical approach to research and increased trustworthiness (Blackman, Kempson, & Blackman, 2016; Hoover & Morrow, 2015).

I was aware of Finlay's (2002) advice regarding the use of "introspection not as an end in itself but as a springboard for interpretation and more general insight" (p. 215). The following example demonstrates how some of my reflective thoughts in my journal helped me fully understand and interpret the responses from my participants.

> My topic of research is spirituality, which is about connectedness but while doing this research, I am forced to disconnect from everyone. I am asking my friends to not ring me during day, I get annoyed if someone invites me for something like a celebration. I get annoyed if someone rings me to say hello. Today I was hiding from my own family to complete work. So, studying spirituality is taking over my spiritual life taking away the peace of mind. (Reflective journal).

This note from my journal helped me to better understand my teacher participants who spoke about their teaching experiences in schools that did not promote spirituality. I could understand that work can interfere with spirituality, leaving insufficient time or space for spiritual activity. Although this reflexivity helped me understand my participants' words. I chose not to include excerpts from my reflective journal in the findings and discussion chapters, because I paid attention to Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) reminder to avoid putting self ahead of participants. While reflecting on my own situation enabled me to connect with their experiences at a deeper level, I included my reflections at the end of this thesis as a part of the Conclusion chapter (see Section 9.1).

5.2 Case Study Research Design

Under the broader concept of qualitative inquiry, I adopted a case study approach to understand the spirituality of teachers and how it influenced their teaching experiences. The

reason for choosing this research design was that this approach allowed for exploration and creativity, which I believe was quite significant for this research topic.

Among three scholars that are well-known for the case study methodology—Robert Yin, Sharan Merriam and Robert Stake—I decided to draw on Merriam's approach to case study because it came closest to my epistemological position of interpretivism . Merriam (1998) holds the view that "the key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (p. 6). This differentiates other approaches where a case study is viewed as the process (Yin, 2009) or unit of study (Stake, 2008). In some ways, the qualitative case study is similar to other forms of qualitative research in that it shares "the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37).

Merriam's (2009) description of a case study is "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40). The present research was led by each primary school teacher as a case or the bounded system rather than the topic of study, which is spirituality. Considering each teacher as a "single entity" meant that the focus was on the person and not on the phenomenon of being spiritual (Merriam, 2009, p. 41). Stake (2006) explained this as "[a] case is a noun, a thing, an entity; it is seldom a verb, a participle, a functioning" (p. 1). Although each teacher in the present study was a case with clear boundaries, these teachers were situated within their external teaching environments. Therefore, there were interactions and connections with their teaching contexts, students and wider school communities. Consideration of these dynamics provided further depth to my qualitative case study research and was supported by Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) assertion that "[I]ndividuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds" (p. 24). Therefore, it was important to take note of their social worlds.

In the present study, I fully embraced my role as a researcher by integrating my own reflexive thoughts throughout the thesis. In addition, I used an inductive approach to analyse the data, providing me with descriptive accounts of the meaning and understanding of spirituality by each of my participants. I was interested in the meaning teachers assigned to spirituality that emerged from their own experiences

rather than a universal meaning of spirituality. This approach to case study aligned with Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) guidance that "[t]he unit of analysis, *not* the topic of investigation, characterizes a case study" (p. 38). This characteristic of focusing on the individual teacher's perception of spirituality rather than spirituality itself differentiated this research design from other qualitative studies such as phenomenology, ethnography, action research, and narrative studies.

5.2.1 Recruiting participants

The aim of the study was to explore teachers' understandings of spirituality and how these influenced their teaching. Therefore, a large sample was not required because generalisation to a broader population was not the aim of the study. I recruited participants using snowball sampling, which is effective for reaching hidden populations. Marcus et al. (2017, p. 635) defined the snowball sampling method as "any type of sample recruitment strategy, whereby all or a portion of participants who are asked to provide data are not directly recruited by the researcher but through other persons who connect them to other persons as participants". I chose this recruitment method instead of random sampling because I believed this might be a sensitive topic for some, and engaging the participants through their friends and colleagues would ensure a level of trust and comfort for the participants.

My own professional background as a primary school teacher and my contacts from previous primary schools meant that the teacher participants were either classroom teachers or working in different teaching roles in primary schools. Initially, I sent a text message to several of my colleagues from my previous workplace informing them about my research and asking them to spread the word in their social and professional networks (see Appendix C). Through this communication, I received five responses from interested participants. All the participants were primary school teachers from government, Catholic, or independent educational sectors and belonged to diverse cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds. I was aware of the limitations of snowball sampling regarding lack of random sampling as well as potential selection bias (Parker, Scott, & Geddes, 2019). However, since my study did not aim to generalise results, random sampling was not required. Furthermore, having received interest from male and female participants from diverse backgrounds meant that selection bias was not a concern for this study.

5.2.2 Introducing the participants

This section includes some initial information about each participant for the purpose of providing some contextual background. All the participants were given pseudonyms, Julia, Amy, Priya, Janice and Samuel. Table 5.1 provides a brief description of their professional backgrounds and teaching contexts.

Table 5.1 Description and background of teacher participants

	Julia	**Amy**	**Priya**	**Janice**	**Samuel**
Type of school	Independent, non-denominational	Independent, non-denominational	Government, independent non-denominational	Government	Independent, faith-based
Role at the school	Classroom teacher/Art teacher	Classroom teacher/Philosophy and Scripture teacher	Classroom teacher, English as a second language/Casual relief teacher (CRT)	Classroom teacher/Special needs teacher with a speciality in the mainstream integration of students	Classroom teacher/ Mathematics coordinator
Places where taught	Melbourne	Melbourne	India, Alice Springs, Melbourne	Ballarat, Melbourne	Melbourne
Country of origin	Australia	Australia	India	Australia	Sri Lanka

Following is a description of each participant, their understanding of spirituality and teaching role. Each of the participants constitutes the bounded unit of a case (Merriam, 2009); therefore, it is useful to know the participants well before engaging with the data interpretation and analysis. Consequently, I have also included further details, including my impressions of them. When we met in a space such as the teacher participant's classroom or their home, I have included a description of things that stood out for me. These observations were not actual data, yet they became an important piece of information that helped me analyse the collected data.

5.2.2.1 Julia: "Spirituality should be the rock"

As I entered Julia's home, I saw that the rooms were decorated beautifully with lots of vibrant colours. I could feel the deliberation and thought that had gone into decorating the house. I noticed the inclusion of several Indian artefacts, with the most iconic piece being *Shrimad Bhagavat-Gita,* one of the most famous Hindu scripture books. With gold pages and beautiful illustrations, it was the most exquisite edition I had ever seen. What was most noticeable was that there was a peacefulness and calm about the space we were sharing. During the interview, Julia's speaking manner was casual, and flowed from one topic to another. I felt that Julia was genuinely interested in the topic of spirituality.

This was evident from Julia's interview because she explained that as a child, she was curious about existential questions and followed her own spiritual path as an adult. Despite being an Australian, she regularly made trips to India to further her spiritual growth. When asked about spirituality and what it means to her, Julia presented a very positive view. Her understanding of spirituality related to knowing that there was a bigger picture; in other words, there was something out there that is true and right. For Julia, spirituality was consistent with the feelings of happiness, love and peace, and being a part of an all-encompassing largeness by feeling connected to everything. She saw spirituality as self-knowledge and being the best she can.

Professionally, Julia had 20–30 years of teaching experience. She began her career as an art teacher at a secondary college. At the time of the research interview, she was teaching art at an independent primary school. Julia had been at her current school for more than a decade and, during that time, she had also worked as a part-time classroom teacher. Julia explained that her school was conducive to including spirituality in education. This helped her view that "spirituality should be the rock" and it created the foundation in education ahead of all other aspects of children's development. However, she also clarified that the focus at her school currently was moving more towards academics. In addition to the significance of spirituality for educating the whole child, Julia was passionate about art. She discussed art as being sacred because it is a part of temples, churches, mosques and the scriptures. She hoped to give her students an experience of silence, beauty and stillness through art.

5.2.2.2 Amy: "My spiritual life is central to everything that I do and infuses all my teaching"

Amy and I met at a quiet location in the common room of her accommodation. With the fireplace in the background, the crackling of the wood created an ambience of peacefulness and comfort. During the interview, I noticed that Amy had a calm demeanour, and her way of talking was gentle but precise. Amy was pleased to answer the interview questions and mentioned more than once that she enjoyed being asked about her spiritual life as a person and teacher. This made her articulate in words what she had always believed.

Amy was from Australia and had a Christian background from her youth. Later, she was influenced by the Eastern philosophy of the Advaitic tradition. Amy went to India to a spiritual ashram (spiritual hermitage) to further her spirituality. Upon returning, she took on regular practice of meditation and, in the presence of her guru's portrait, conducted scripture study every morning. Amy explained the meaning of spirituality, philosophy, and religion and showed how they were interconnected. Amy thought of spirituality as "freedom of the human spirit", philosophy for her was "love of wisdom that establishes connection to spirit" and she thought of religion as a "necessary system for people to anchor their lives". Drawing from her own experience, Amy believed that all religions and spiritual traditions are similar and they are trying to convey fundamentally the same messages. Amy believed in unity among all living and non-living things in the universe, and that there was something that existed beyond all human senses. This constant essence held all things, living and non-living, in unity, which is also a motivation to live well in this world.

Amy had 13–14 years of teaching experience. At the time of our interview, she was working at a non-denominational independent school as a Philosophy and Scripture teacher. In the past, Amy had also worked as a classroom teacher for Years 1–6. Amy told me that she took delight in teaching the subjects of Philosophy and Scripture, and that it was through her lessons that she practiced her teachings about spiritual values. She strongly believed that her spiritual life was central to everything, and it infused all her teaching.

5.2.2.3 Priya: "Spirituality is all about connecting with other people's soul"

Originally from India, Priya had been living in Australia for over a decade. For our interview, she invited me into her home. Priya's home contained an interesting combination of art pieces from the East and West. There was a mural with a scene depicted from Krishna's life, and there were also wood paintings from a New Zealand artist. The home décor was predominantly Western, but the food spread laid out for me was completely Indian. Throughout the interview, Priya came across as an energetic, spontaneous and genuine person, and her friendly manner showed eagerness to answer questions and give her contributions.

Priya had clear ideas about her beliefs. As a religious person, Priya was an ardent believer in god. Here god is not capitalised keeping in line with Priya's polytheistic beliefs. Prayers, offerings, worship and fasting were a normal part of her life. She was born in the Hindu tradition, and she had absorbed Christian values as part of her education in a Christian school in India. She thought that spirituality was about connecting with other people's souls. She told me that she felt most connected when she cooked and fed people and looked after her family.

Priya had 14 years of classroom teaching experience in India. In Alice Springs, Central Australia, she had provided small group instruction for English as a second language to state school Indigenous children. She had been teaching in Melbourne for approximately 10 years, and at the time of our interview, she was registered with an agency as a casual relief teacher (CRT). She taught at various state and independent schools in her local area for daily or fixed-term teaching. Priya was an advocate of Moral Science as a compulsory subject in schools for the character development of students. She also believed in passing on good values to the students for increased social cohesion.

5.2.2.4 Janice: "Having empathy with others… and treating others how you wish to be treated"

In Janice's classroom where we met for the interview, I saw various posters about social skills programs. Activities about building resilience and cooperation were displayed. There was also a photo collage of students from a neighbouring special school, who regularly

visited Janice's classroom. During our interview, I felt that Janice's responses were slightly reserved and tentative. It was quite clear though that she genuinely wished to help the research and thought that this type of research into spirituality had merit.

Janice's spiritual beliefs included humanist values of kindness and care. These were influenced by her Christian upbringing, mainly from her father. She said her father had led her to believe in the Ten Commandments. Not an ardent churchgoer, Janice tried to do her best by donating to charity and leading an ethical life. Janice considered herself a spiritual person by practising good human values such as kindness, taking care of others and leading by example, and showing empathy to others and treating them as one wishes to be treated.

Janice had over 40 years of experience in the teaching field. Janice taught in schools in country Victoria (Warragul and Ballarat), and she was teaching in Melbourne at the time of the interview. She had worked in public schools throughout her teaching career. She had completed a business course before coming into teaching. In the past, she had taught in a tertiary institute; however, most of her working years were spent in primary schools. Janice had also worked in special education. Her passion for special education led her to complete a two-year diploma from the Autism Teaching Institute. She has been actively involved in integrating special needs students into mainstream schools.

5.2.2.5 Samuel: "Spirituality is about believing and connecting with a higher power that we call God and connecting with other human beings"

As I entered Samuel's classroom for the interview after school, I heard the sound of classical music floating through the air. The classroom was neatly arranged with several inspirational posters displayed on the walls. As we began the interview, I noticed that Samuel was articulate in how he framed his answers to my questions. It was clear that he had reflected on these matters and that he was sharing these first-hand experiences with me.

Samuel was a teacher at a religious denominational school. He was originally from Sri Lanka and had lived in different countries before settling in Melbourne. His spiritual beliefs had evolved from his original Christian beliefs. In his interview, he insisted that he was spiritual and not religious. Samuel identified two aspects of spirituality: connecting with a higher power called God and connecting with other human beings. Samuel held the idea of a

connection with the creator. He also referred to existential questions such as purpose in life and reason for existing. His spirituality related to feeling a part of something bigger, and he spoke about unity among all living and non-living things. Samuel believed in the spiritual potential of all, provided their mind was open to receiving new ideas and ways of thinking. He thought that there was unlimited potential in the world to be uncovered by those ready for growth. Samuel was genuinely interested in spirituality because he had been on a spiritual journey and was a very reflective and insightful person. Samuel perceived spirituality as separate from religion and although, he had strong spiritual beliefs founded in his religion, he was sceptical of religious practices. While he saw their potential, he disapproved of the ritual, and said that religion could impede spirituality.

Samuel was a multi-faceted professional. He was a specialist in Mathematics and a member of the Mathematics Association Professional Development Committee. He had presented at various Mathematics conferences, and taught at all primary school year levels. Samuel worked in an international school in Bangkok and completed a Diploma in Psychology. He participated in several community church activities, including music, and he helped run many programs that included large and small groups of children. At the time of the interview, Samuel worked at a Christian school belonging to a worldwide organisation.

5.2.3 Data collection

5.2.3.1 Interview as a method

In the present study, interviews were used as the main method of data collection. This study aimed to receive a nuanced understanding of the spirituality of the participant teachers, which was enacted in their teaching; therefore, it was appropriate to use a method that "works well if the research purpose is to learn about people's beliefs, perspectives, and meaning-making" (Roulston & Choi, 2018, p. 370). Denzin's (2001) description of interviews can be related to spirituality when he mentions that "interviews are a part of dialogic conversation that connects all of us to the larger moral community" (p. 24). I believe that interviewing is a spiritual way of connecting with another person through conversation, as well as sharing space and interest in spirituality. This provided further justification for the method used.

Denzin (2001) wrote that "doing an interview is a privilege not a right" (p. 24). I was aware of this privilege of being welcomed into participants' inner world of spirituality and their world of teaching as I interviewed them. Although Brinkmann (2013) refers to interviews as "knowledge-producing conversations" (p. 1), my approach was closer to Ezzy's (2010) notion of interviews as a "shared discovery, exploring uncovering probing, revealing" (p. 165). Ezzy (2010) approached qualitative interviewing as an "embodied emotional performance" (p.163), and he argued that the emotional side of the interviewer and the interviewee shape the interview.

Undertaking the interviews. In this research, semi-structured interviews were used. As Brinkmann (2017) suggests, all interviews have some structure, but semi-structured interviews allow for more flexibility. These interviews sit on the continuum between completely structured and unstructured interviews, with more open-ended questions that allow the researcher to view things from the perspectives of the participants (Roulston & Choi, 2018).

To ensure that my semi-structured interviews were "researcher-initiated and participant-led" (Roulston & Choi, 2018, p. 349), I created a basic interview guide (Patton, 2002). These open-ended interview questions were drawn from the research questions and the reviewed literature (refer to Appendix D for the list of questions). The semi-structured interview offered an opportunity to deviate in the direction of responses from the participants. I used the interviews in a "flexible and dialogical form" (Brinkmann, 2017, p. 577), i.e. the interviews were conversational rather than strictly questions and answers. This approach helped me create data with my participants.

As my topic related to spirituality, the interviews focused on "descriptions" and their "abstract reflections" on this topic (Brinkmann, 2017, p. 580). My questions initially focused on the concept of spirituality followed by a description of their teaching life. During the interview, I shared my understanding of spirituality and my experiences of being a teacher and a researcher with the participants. I maintained openness in communication and calm demeanour to provide safe space for my participants. This focused the interviews on social interactions rather than strictly question-answer sessions. In this way, "interviews transformed information into shared experience" (Denzin, 2001, p. 24). The conversational nature of these interviews helped me develop a rapport with each participant. I was careful

not to influence the views of the participants, using phrases such as 'I think' or 'in my experience...' when I was talking to them.

I undertook two interviews with each of the five participants, and each interview lasted from 40 to 90 minutes. I aimed to start the conversation during the first interview. At the end of the interview, I invited them to maintain their own reflective journals and bring an artefact to represent spirituality to the second interview, making it clear that this was optional. The follow-up interview allowed me the opportunity to discuss their reflective journals and artefacts and clarify the key concepts from the first interview. Although I did not receive many responses to my request for reflective journals due to time constraints on teachers' schedules, I did receive photographs of objects that represented their spirituality. The follow-up interview offered me a site to discuss these artefacts.

The location of the interviews was based on convenience for the participants. We met at their homes, my home, their classrooms or a restaurant. I followed Delamont's (2012) recommendation and used a digital recorder to record the interview conversation. This removed the pressure of writing during the actual interview and avoided distractions for the interviewee. At the completion of each interview, I transcribed the audio recording. Transcribing each interview provided me with an opportunity to engage with the data and helped avoid distancing myself from it (Mann, 2016). I then emailed the transcripts to the participants for their approval. The follow-up interviews and member checking of the transcripts offered my participants an opportunity to clarify and explain what they had said and join in with the interpretation and data creation processes (Brinkmann, 2017).

Using interviews as the method raised some ethical issues. Interviews and ethics intercept at the point of power and control. Brinkmann (2017) stated that even though qualitative interviews are based on conversations and creating data together, the fact that these interviews are based on the researcher's intention to answer their research question tips the power balance scales towards the researcher. The interview did not explicitly focus on this relationship but the link was clear. I was aware of this ethical aspect in my interviews, and I have acknowledged this further in the *Ethical Issues in Research* section.

5.2.3.2 Visual images of objects as artefacts

Merriam (2009) describes artefacts as "things or objects in the environment" (p. 140). In this research, the term 'artefact' relates to the visual images of things or objects in the participants' environment. Rooted in anthropological traditions (Eberle, 2017), the inclusion of artefacts as a date creation method is loosely based on the concept of image (Margolis & Zunjarwad, 2018) or photo elicitation (Harper, 2002), where visual or photo images are included as prompts in the interviews.

After the first interview, I requested the participants bring to the next interview artefact/s that represented spirituality to them. These artefacts provided a prompt for talking and exploring their understanding of spirituality and its influence on their teaching more deeply. The artefacts also provided evidence of the teachers' spirituality as a physical manifestation of how they enacted their spirituality, which provided further data for the study.

Eberle (2017) stated that "images do not tell a story by themselves- they must be interpreted" (p. 582). Therefore, I interpreted these artefacts to see what they signified and how they connected to each teacher's spirituality. This process is explained in the next section.

5.2.4 Data analysis

The data analysis process included analysing the interview transcripts and visual images by reading and re-reading the data and approaching it in different ways. As I went back and forth with my data, theory and reviewed literature, I began to comprehend Merriam's (2009) caution that as a qualitative researcher, "a tolerance for ambiguity is most critical" (p. 175), making me aware of the different interpretations of the data as I worked through the analysis.

In this research, I used Thematic Analysis to interpret the data to assist me in answering my research questions. While there are different ways a TA can be conducted, I adopted the approach by Drs Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, both scholars in psychology and known for their work with TA, which was initially published in 2006. TA is a "method for identifying, analy[z]ing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative

data" (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297). Because TA is relevant outside the positivist research paradigm (Clarke & Braun, 2017), it suited my interpretive qualitative research. The related readings foregrounded the nuanced ways to code and generate themes compared to the superficial, domain-specific themes connected with the positivist and quantitative approach.

I chose this analytical method over other forms of qualitative analysis because of its flexibility and reflexive aspect. Flexibility is a prominent feature of TA, which is not bound to a particular theoretical framework or research paradigm, and it can be applied across different contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017). TA suits the interpretive paradigm of the present study because I did not begin with a particular theoretical framework from the outset, yet the analysis began alongside data collection. Flexibility is also reflected in the application of TA across different paradigms, including interpretivism. The other important aspect of TA is the consideration of the researcher's perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017), which is actively involved in the coding process and generating themes. This involvement by the researcher is reflected in the generation of themes rather than emerging themes or searching for themes.

I adopted the process of data analysis from the suggested phases of data analysis: "familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report" (Braun and Clarke, 2012, pp. 57–71). I was inspired by these phases and followed the data-driven process, which included these steps: initial data analysis, coding and generating themes.

5.2.4.1 Initial data analysis

I engaged with the initial analysis while the data collection process was underway. This analytical approach suited this research because "these versions emphasize an organic approach to coding and theme development and the active role of the researcher in these processes" (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297). During the transcription phase, I realised that I had thoughts, ideas and interesting observations from the interviews that provided a context for the interview conversations. Therefore, I started transcribing the interview in a tabular form, with the interview transcript on one side and my own comments and thinking on the other side. For example, a participant who spoke about music being significant to their spirituality played classical music in the background during the actual interview. I noted

down this information during transcription as a reminder. During this stage, I also made notes in my reflective journal about the interview process, which helped me refine my subsequent interviews. For example, my notes from the transcriptions of the first two interviews revealed that I spoke more than was necessary, which guided my approach during the next interviews.

In addition to the interview transcripts, I analysed the artefacts. "Virtually any data type can be analyzed" (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 298). This analysis was undertaken by understanding the spiritual significance of the object in the visual image based on the information shared by the teacher and relating it to the research questions. For example, an artefact presented by one of the teachers included a photograph of a felt bird that signified the teacher and a felt egg that signified the students. The participant explained that the photograph of the bird and egg was presented to her by the parents of her students. The bird provided a representation of her connection with her students and nurture and care.

Next, I re-read the transcripts and made notes in the margins relating to emerging ideas. This involved highlighting and commenting on key ideas. At this stage, I was not looking for anything in particular, rather I took an inductive approach (Bhattacharya, 2017; Thomas, 2006). I wanted to see what emerged from the interviews. "TA can be used for both inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven) analyses, and to capture both manifest (explicit) and latent (underlying) meaning" (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 298). The grounded approach to data analysis meant that initial themes were generated through the data and these themes prompted engagement with the relevant literature and theoretical framework, which enriched the overall meaning-making process reflected in the research findings.

In the subsequent reading of the data, I colour-coded sections of the text based on the broad topics. For example, I used red to highlight the background of the participant; yellow for the teacher's understanding of spirituality and blue for spirituality concerning their teaching. Once I had colour-coded the transcript, I organised the data based on the colour. This approach provided an overall understanding of the data. Next, I refined my colour-coding further. During this phase, the information was colour-coded as per the research questions: spiritual beliefs (highlighted yellow) and impact on teaching (highlighted blue). Then, I sorted each person's colour-coded categories, and added red for background information, green for any anecdotal data and grey for any theoretical idea. I brought all the same colours together for each interview and looked for themes. Familiarising myself with

the data at the initial level gave me a broad understanding of the participants' thinking in the three areas summarised in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Revisiting generated themes

Theme 1	
Beliefs and influences (personal)	
Crossing borders between religious and secular spiritual discourse	
Borrowed spirituality	
West/East crossover	
Coming into one's own spirituality as teachers	

Theme 2	
Pedagogy (engaging as an educator)	
Spirituality in curricular and non-curricular areas (pedagogy/enactment)	
Spirituality infuses all my teaching	
Teaching context	
Spirituality infused pedagogy	

Theme 3	
Connections and relationships (with others)	
Dynamics between teachers' spirituality and teaching context (experience/impact)	
Spirituality should be the rock	
Connection	
Creating classrooms of oneness	

5.2.4.2 Coding

In line with Gibbs' (2007) caution to pay attention to theoretical and analytical coding and descriptive codes, I focused on the meaning of the participants' words at the theoretical and analytical levels. For example, the code "influence of more than one belief" was viewed

as "crossing borders between religious and secular spiritual discourse" and "West/East crossover". This was further categorised under the following research finding: "Coming into one's own spirituality as teachers".

I was open to the idea that the coding would change as I progressed with this process as per Glesne's (2006) observation that "coding is [an] evolving process" (p. 154). I further engaged with the data using mind maps to make sense of the data and continued to engage with the literature, in particular research regarding spirituality in education and a possible theoretical frame (see Appendix E). Once the coding was complete, I reviewed the codes to see how they connected and contributed to my research questions. At this point, I revisited my data to ensure appropriate data interpretation (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Terry, Clarke, Hayfield, & Braun, 2017). I was not necessarily looking for generalisations, patterns or themes, but I wanted to understand what emerged from each teacher's individual experiences.

5.2.4.3 Generating themes

As I read the transcripts and analysed the artefacts, I realised that spirituality was understood differently by different participants and their responses were varied. As I connected more deeply with the transcripts, they revealed participants' stories emerging from their varied backgrounds and influences.

Themes were generated by looking at the meaning behind the coded data rather than the frequency of the codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As expressed by Gibson (2009, p. 1279), "thematic analysis refers to the process of analyzing data according to commonalities, relationships and differences across a data set". The importance of each theme was not based on how many times it was expressed; rather, how the themes related to each other and the significance of each theme was examined. Thus, theme generation was relational.

5.3 Ethical Issues in Research Relationships

> The wish to conduct research with the best intentions might seem obvious, but tension lies in remaining aware that best intentions do not guarantee an ethical approach. (Bone, 2005b, p. 2)

In the above quote, Bone (2005b) emphasised the importance of being aware of one's ethical commitments. As I began this research, I was aware that my responsibility towards my research and participants was beyond receiving ethics approval from the university (Cullen, Hedges, & Bone, 2009). Brinkmann and Kvale (2008) warn of the dangers of assuming qualitative research to be ethical by its nature, and they bring the researcher's attention back to the importance of ethical considerations in this type of research. This research project was conducted according to the ethics approval process guidelines (CF16/868-2016000437) and followed the established ethical protocol of Monash University to protect the rights and safety of all participants undertaking the study. In line with the requirements of ethics for human research, each participant received an explanatory statement (see Appendix F) and provided me with their written consent to participate in the study (see Appendix G).

During the research process, I followed the institutional protocols for ethical research. In addition, I made my own ethical decisions along the way (Cannella & Lincoln, 2018). These decisions related to ethical aspects such as "respect for persons, informed consent, voluntary participation, respect for privacy and confidentiality, and social and cultural sensitivity" (Cullen et al., 2009, p. 109). These ethical decisions were embedded in the way I approached the research.

For example, my approach towards the ethics of the relationship with my participants was influenced by my spiritual belief that there is oneness in all. I attempted to avoid privileging my position as a researcher by including the following in the explanatory statement: "The research is not about any particular spiritual or religious system, it is open and I am interested in working with teachers who consider the spiritual dimension to be relevant to them." This established a respectful relationship with my participants.

In addition, I ensured that they had signed a consent form before we began the interviews. It was clearly explained that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. The participants were provided with a transcript of the interview recording for their approval before it was analysed and any excerpts were included in the write-up of the research. They understood that the information provided was confidential. As there was a possibility that the

participants would be apprehensive about being recorded, I explained that they could opt out of recording and that the recording was only for research purposes.

The names of the participants have been kept confidential, and pseudonyms have been used in the write-up of the research. The explanatory statement included detailed information regarding the safe storage of data and maintaining confidentiality of participants. When some teachers demonstrated discomfort about being recorded while interviewing, I made them aware that their interviews will not be available to anyone other than those involved in this research project. Additionally, I reassured them of the physical safety of the data by storing it on a password-protected laptop and backing it up on an external hard drive.

Academic writing involves writing analytically about the data; therefore, I wondered whether my participants would feel criticised for their spiritual beliefs. Thus, I considered my interview questions carefully as I wondered whether it was ethical to ask people about their deep beliefs for academic research. However, since this study was purely exploratory, all beliefs were welcomed and respected. Teachers shared visual images of objects from their spiritual worlds with me. These materials represented their school, social and home lives, and I became a part of their world through these materials. However, I was aware of engaging with them responsibly, by acknowledging what these images signified for the participants and speaking respectfully about them. For example, one participant shared a picture of a rock she was given by a hermit that she used as motivation for her spiritual studies. Instead of viewing it as a rock, I acknowledged its spiritual significance for the participant and referred to it respectfully in our discussions.

5.4 Trustworthiness

Are these findings sufficiently authentic that I may trust myself in acting on their implications? (Lincoln, Lynhamand, & Guba, 2018, p. 138)

The above caution presented by Lincoln et al. (2018) brings the issue of trustworthiness of research to the forefront. To increase the trustworthiness of this research, I applied the concept of "crystallization" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963) as opposed to the more commonly used data triangulation. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 761), "[M]ultigenre crystallization is Ellingson's postmodern influenced approach to

triangulation". Triangulation relates to "the combination of different data sources that are examined at different times, places and persons" and the aim of triangulation is "convergence of results" (Flick, 2018, p. 446). Applying triangulation to ensure the trustworthiness of this research was problematic because, in spirituality, the convergence of truth could lead to an assumption that a common understanding of spirituality is possible. As the present study did not aim at generalisations, an alternative to triangulation was desired. Crystallisation, representing "multidimentionalities and various angles of approach" through the "imagery of crystal" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963), allowed for the flexibility and openness of spirituality by helping me uncover individual spirituality as experienced, felt, and expressed by each of my participants (Ellingson, 2009). In this research, crystallisation was achieved by "combining multiple forms of analysis and genres of representation into coherent text" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 761).

Thus, through crystallisation, the same data were viewed and analysed in multiple ways, leading to a deeper understanding of the topic. Crystallisation was evident at the analysis stage where the same data was analysed in a more nuanced way using TA (see Sub-section 5.2.4). The analytical process consisted of noting key ideas emerging from the data, followed by organising the data concerning the research questions and key theoretical concepts.

Concerning representation in research, Richardson (2000) stated that "crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves creating different colours, patterns, arrays casting off in different directions" (p. 934). Just as the data were approached from multiple angles, the findings are presented using multiple genres (Ellingson, 2009). This includes description of findings from individual teachers regarding the research questions, visual images of objects that represent the spirituality of the teacher participants, and narratives constructed from teacher anecdotes shared during the interviews.

In this interpretivist qualitative research, it was important to situate myself. As a researcher who plays an important role in interpreting data, my reflexive stance increased the trustworthiness of the present study (Grant & Giddings, 2002). Acknowledging my position as a researcher meant that my subjectivities were made more visible. After the interviews, I referred to my reflexive notes to connect my own thoughts, beliefs, assumptions and

experiences to those shared by the participants in this research. It was also a way to increase the trustworthiness of this study, as it explicitly made my position clear during data analysis.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I present the research design of the present study. This study sought the experiences of five spiritually-inclined teachers who engaged with this research project. Being qualitative research, my focus was on the experiences of the spirituality of individual teachers rather than aiming for generalisations. More specifically, through the use of post-colonial critique, I probed into the influence of teachers' spirituality on their teaching. Using a case study research design allowed me to gain deeper insight into the personal and professional accounts of participants' spirituality. Integrating my reflexivity as a researcher aligned well with this study because this acknowledged my subjective engagement in interpreting the data.

In this study, I attempted to draw attention to teachers' spirituality in their teaching. Chapters Six, Seven and Eight present the findings and discussions that led me to answer the research questions that were central to this study.

Chapter 6: Coming into One's Own Spirituality

> If you have your spirituality and the rest of your life separate, then you
> don't know what life is. (Sadhguru, 2010, p. 176)

The above quotation by Sadhguru, an Indian mystic and spiritual teacher, highlights the significance of one's spirituality and its relevance in one's life. Sadhguru is actively engaged in education and has established a residential educational institution in India. The aim of the school is recognition of one's spirituality. When Sadhguru wrote that to know one's life completely, one must connect with life's spiritual aspect, he has emphasised that spirituality is implicit in everyone's life. In line with this idea, I refer to the spirituality of my teacher participants as being an integral part of their lives in this chapter. However, as this is the first findings and discussion chapter out of three, I begin by outlining the structure of these chapters, followed by an introduction of Chapter Six.

In this thesis, Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight present the findings and discussion from the study, resulting from analysing the data through a postcolonial lens. The thematic analysis of the data from my teacher participants: Julia, Amy, Priya, Janice, and Samuel, whom I introduced in Chapter Five, helped me in interpreting the meaning behind the words of my participants. My interpretation was based on recognising the themes within my data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, the complexities within these aspects were highlighted by employing the postcolonial theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight combine findings with the discussion, and each chapter highlights a different aspect of teachers' spirituality. Central to Chapter Six are influences that shaped the experience and understanding of spirituality for the participants in this study. Chapter Seven focuses on how spirituality is reflected in a teacher's role and explores the interaction between teachers' spirituality and Australian education and teachers' professional contexts (see Chapter 2, Sections 2.3 and 2.4). Finally, Chapter Eight addresses teaching practices that I present as a spirituality infused pedagogy.

The present chapter explores the formation of teachers' spirituality as a significant part of their personal realm. This chapter answers my first research question, 'How do primary school teachers in Australia experience and understand spirituality?' In this chapter, I

argue that the experiences of the participants from their childhood and travel are significant influences on their spirituality. Furthermore, these beliefs are internalised and embedded in their personal lives. The main theoretical concepts presented in this chapter involve participants' spirituality as part of the private domain, which is in line with the explanation in cultural politics, the field from which the theoretical framework for this study is drawn. Accordingly, I have examined the spirituality of teachers as "certain religious practices" (Spivak, 2006, p. 139).

In addition, the concept of diaspora is presented in relation to spirituality (Spivak, 1990, 1993, 1996). The concept of diaspora is aptly described by Sen (2013):

> Seeds scattered away from the parental body of the homeland, do not assimilate completely but rather manage to reproduce in new sites of settlement, a social formation, a culture and an identity that remains linked to the homeland. (p. 387)

This description of maintaining ties with homeland, as mentioned by Sen (2013), was evident in the engagement of some of my participants with their spirituality. Throughout the chapter, I draw on the concept of diaspora and examine the suspicion of marginalisation of these teachers' beliefs because of their position within the diaspora. Through analysis of my participants' words, I take this concept of diaspora, which is based on geographical boundaries, and extend it into the area of spirituality. I do this by presenting a discussion on spiritual diaspora. This relates to moving away from a spiritual homeland and adjusting to a spiritually new site (see Sub-section 6.1.2). This chapter begins with exploring different influences on the experience of the participants and understanding of spirituality, followed by the presentation of findings and discussion about participants internalising their beliefs to form their individual spirituality.

6.1 Influences on Spirituality

My analysis in this study pointed to different factors that helped shape the spirituality of my participants. Some studies highlight spirituality as an aspect innately present in all humans. These include studies that refer to "innate spirituality" (de Souza, 2009, p. 1127) and

spirituality being an "inherent property" (Zhang, 2012, p. 39). However, my analysis revealed that despite the strong possibility of spirituality as an innate trait in children, some environmental factors influence the evolution of one's spiritual beliefs. This is supported by Halafoff and Gobey's (2018) study of young Australians and how the choices regarding their spiritual beliefs were made individually, as they were highly influenced by socialising agents such as their parents, peers, schools, and the media. The two prominent influences significant to the present study are childhood experiences and travel to promote spiritual growth. These are discussed in the following sub-sections of this chapter.

6.1.1 Childhood experiences and spirituality

The spirituality of the participants in this study was influenced by their childhood experiences from their home and school. Spirituality and childhood are connected because for some adults their spiritual questioning and wonder begin in their childhood. Researchers who have worked with children have found that their spirituality was expressed through connectedness, awe and wonder, and feeling that there was something bigger (Coles, 1990; Hay & Nye, 2006; Hyde, 2008b). Some of these moments of experiencing spirituality become a part of their childhood memory. For my participants, their spirituality as adults and teachers was anchored in their childhood experiences, including their family's religiosity and educational influences.

Priya's parents presented Priya with Hindu beliefs at home. Priya's childhood memories from India demonstrate how the Hindu religious practices of her parents influenced her. For Priya, the ritualistic aspects of praying, fasting, and giving offerings to God were inherited from the practices of her parents. In particular, Priya mentioned her mother, father and grandmother's expectations for her to subscribe to Hindu beliefs and carry them out for herself as an adult:

> I [have] followed what my parents taught me … I don't remember when I
> started … prayers were offered and everything was offered to God … It
> [has been] imbibed in me ever since I was a child. I have seen my grandma
> do it, my mum do it, and they expected me to do it.

By using the word 'imbibed', Priya described the strong effect that her family's religiosity had on her. She received these beliefs in India from her parents and grandparent and retained them in her adult life in Australia. These sets of beliefs through her rituals and Hindu beliefs were a part of Indian culture and, when passed on to Priya, these became a part of her "cultural meanings" (Rossiter, 2010, p. 131). She carries these cultural meanings in her life in Australia. In other words, Priya's rituals that were passed on to her were her "cultural representations" (Eckersley, 2007, p. 55). These rituals embedded in her family's traditions became a part of Priya's spiritual story that she shared with me (Champagne, 2019)

Having a strong background of Hindu context at home, Priya experienced Christianity at school. Priya's family provided a strong foundation for Hindu religious beliefs, and they enrolled her in a convent school, which was a Christian faith school. The fact that Priya had the freedom to incorporate both beliefs made things easier for her. "Any religion which does not bestow us the absolute freedom is more like a ritualistic organization or system which distracts and disconnects us from our real nature of peace" (Jha, 2016, p. 3). Priya refers to this religious freedom below:

> *Singing the hymns every day at assembly, I felt connected to Jesus as well.*
> *But when I came home, it was again this (Hindu)God and none of the*
> *religion stopped me from following the other. My parents never said,*
> *"Don't go to the chapel. Don't sing the hymns", or things like that. And at*
> *school they never said, "Don't follow your religion". So, it was balancing*
> *both.*

This background influenced Priya's ability to be tolerant and accept differences in terms of spirituality in her teaching as discussed in Chapter Seven, Section 7.2.

Therefore, Priya's spirituality evolved through the co-optation of new beliefs into the existing religious influence. In Priya's childhood in India, her family's Hindu religious beliefs were at a hegemonic position because her entire family subscribed to them. Gandhi (1998) cautioned that 'marginal' in the West have been central in the non-West. In this situation, Christianity was assimilated into the existing Hindu beliefs.

From a historical perspective, the presence of Christianity in school environments in India relates to the missionary work in colonised countries. In this sense, the East (in this study, refers to countries from the Indian subcontinent) was exposed to the West (in this study, refers to the European influence resulting from colonisation). In a country where Hinduism occupied a prominent space, Christianity was introduced to the educational system to uphold British values. Priya's spiritual beliefs revolved around values such as being honest, respecting elders and showing courage, and cleanliness. Priya's education in a convent school in India had a strong emphasis on values that were transferred through a separate subject called "Moral Science". This subject stipulated the values that the school system hoped to instil in their students. Priya recalled that these values were provided to students in a workbook. As a child, Priya remembered that education in her home and school focused on certain common principles that made it easier for her to follow both religions at home and school: "I went to a Catholic school … everything was different at the same time as they never expected me to convert my thinking because the principles were the same". These principles were, in fact, values promoted at her school. However, the presentation of values in the manner mentioned by Priya is problematic because they were presented to students without any room for discussion or dialogue between the teachers and students.

In contrast to Priya's single religious background at home, in her childhood, Janice was influenced by a variety of religious traditions because her immediate family members belonged to Judaism, Protestant Christianity and the Anglican church. One of the childhood memories Janice shared was regarding her Jewish grandmother celebrating Christmas for her children and grandchildren who belonged to various religious traditions. Although the Jewish religion does not recognise Christmas, she celebrated Christmas because it is a cultural and religious festival. As discussed above, "spirituality and culture overlap considerably" (Ortiz, Villereal, & Engel, 2000, p. 32). This was reflected in Janice's grandmother's effort in creating a perfect Christmas memory for her family:

> *When my grandmother was alive, my Mum's mother, would have a Jewish*
> *New Year as well as our normal New Year… and we had the best*
> *Christmas. I thought Christmas was AMAZING! [This was] because my*
> *Jewish grandmother [and] all her children married out of the religion.*
> *(When) she started to celebrate Christmas for her grandchildren, well it*

was bigger than Ben Hur. I'd have Christmas with her one year and then I would go up to my father's family. What my father's family did was quite normal but what my grandmother did was over the top. So that [was an] interesting learning experience. She wanted to tick all the boxes, I guess.

By elaborately celebrating Christmas, Janice's grandmother demonstrated how different beliefs can co-exist and that religious differences exist even within the same family.

The educational experience can offer neutral ground for the plurality of religions at home. Janice attended a secular school with Jewish and different Christian influences at home. Having a strong and varied religious background within her family, Janice attended a non-denominational school. Janice had different religious influences within her family and she suspects that the multiplicity of these influences was the reason why her family decided for her to attend a non-denominational school:

My mother was Jewish. I am Jewish by birth. But I went to a Church of England Sunday School because my father was, his mother was Church of England. And he was a congregational a bit of a mix but that's why I would have gone to a non-denominational school.

As Janice implied, her parents' decision as to which school to send her to might have reflected their thinking to find a neutral ground because non-denominational schools do not subscribe to any particular religious belief, maintaining a secular educational context. As a teacher, Janice chose to work in government schools throughout her teaching career, reflecting her background of attending a non-denominational secular school as a child.

A secular educational setting that is perceived as neutral overlooks religious diversity in the school community. This might be a good thing for equal educational access for everyone; however, it might also mean that religious and spiritual voices are not heard. For instance, various religious influences that Janice was exposed to in her home environment could not be discussed in her school because of the secular environment. The possibility of pluralism in religious beliefs in the classroom is problematic. Regarding the pluralist solution to religious diversity, Gall (2001) argues:

It (the pluralist solution) does away with the reality of religion and the richness and diversity of religions by insisting that all is (ultimately) one. On the other hand, it fails to deal with potential conflict among coexisting religions by failing to acknowledge the differences and diversity of those religions. (p. 44)

The above discussion highlights the complexities of different educational contexts. Secularism neutralises all individual beliefs and pluralism overlooks diversity by homogenising all religions (Spivak, 1990, 1993). In both cases, the religious and spiritual voices are not heard. This situation opens up the possibility for post-secularism, with King (2009) suggesting that this is a "phenomenon of renewed openness to questions of spirit" (p. 5). Thus, the focus is on the "co-existence and co-presence" of the religious and non-religious (Hashemi, 2016, p. 464). This will bring to the forefront a discussion about religion and spirituality that is overlooked in a secular society.

These findings show that both Priya and Janice's families were religiously active and undertook religious activities at home, which influenced the spiritual beliefs of both these teachers. Regarding the religiosity of parents, Moore, Gomez-Garibello, Bosacki, and Talwar's (2016) found that children from highly spiritual and religious families performed better on their spirituality tests because they had been exposed to religious beliefs through the religious activities of their families. Moore et al. (2016, p. 8) wrote, "children who have more opportunities to interact in highly religious and spiritual contexts, may have a spiritual life that is being more intentionally nurtured and supported". This support from families was evident in Priya and Janice's stories.

In addition, their experiences draw attention to the sentiments of diasporic populations who leave their country of origin yet might be thinking of returning to their roots. Cultures are deeply ingrained in the geographic location, and because of this deep connection with cultures, those belonging to diaspora bring their culture with them. "In this process, members of this population retain their cultural practices. Religion can be prominent and influential in people's accepted cultural meanings" (Rossiter, 2010, p. 131). This retaining of one's culture in another part of the world can be likened to Spivak's thoughts in her interview, "I can now see myself as a person with two fields of activity, always being a critical voice so that one doesn't get subsumed into the other" (Landry and Maclean, 1996, p. 81). The common meaning of subsume is to absorb one thing into another. Viewing Priya and Janice's

interview excerpts through the words of Spivak, 'two fields of activity' relate to their place of origin and their place of work, study or residence. In these two fields where these teachers operated, they maintained their culture to not subsume it in their new environment.

6.1.2 Travel and spirituality

Exposure to different cultures and places through travel influenced the evolving beliefs of the teacher participants. Consideration of travel is significant to understand the development of spirituality among people. Usually, a spiritual journey is transformational and evolving, as people attempt to seek answers to their questions or understand their purpose in life (Eck, 2003). Even if travel is associated with outward movement from one place to another, for those who are open to new ideas, travel takes them on an inner journey as well. Dandelion (2013) articulates this idea as "travel still takes us 'somewhere else' inwardly as well as outwardly" (p .124). This connection to transition through time relates to the idea of a spiritual journey and evolving spiritualities in people's lives. Both religion and spirituality are influenced by the places where an individual may live and travel.

Teacher participants who grew up in the West travelled to the East for their spiritual growth. This relates to colonisation, India being a formerly colonised country would mean easier access for people who live in the West because it is not as foreign as some other parts of the world. In this study, Australian-born teachers travelled overseas for their spiritual journey, and thus had their spiritual home outside of Australia. I refer to this as a spiritual diaspora because Amy and Julia lived in Australia and travelled to India in search of spirituality. They lived on Australian land in a geographical sense, yet their spiritual home remained in India. Consequently, in Australia they were a part of the spiritual diaspora.

The literature confirms that spirituality is connected with travel because travel exposes people to a new life, new ideas, cultures and traditions and new ways of doing things (Dandelion, 2013; Norman, 2011). Amy and Julia travelled to India as they were drawn by their spiritual inner calling. The spiritual journeys experienced by these teacher participants showed that their spirituality was not constrained by geographical boundaries.

Amy and Julia's travel to India for spiritual growth linked land and spirituality through their travel. This aspect aligns with Indigenous spirituality (see Section 2.1) and

emphasises a connection to land (Bouma, 2006). In the Australian Curriculum, the subject of Humanities and Social Sciences includes a cross-curricular link that explores the spirituality of Indigenous Peoples through their connection to land. The curriculum mentions "the exploration of the cultures of the Indigenous Peoples by referring to long and continuous strong connections with Country/Place and their economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value of place, including the idea of custodial responsibility" (Australian Curriculum, n.d.). This consideration highlights the significance of land for spiritual growth.

From a spiritual perspective, mountains provide a conducive place for spiritual growth and development because some mountains have spiritual significance attached to them (Sadhguru, 2010). In India, some temples are situated at higher altitudes away from the cities and towns, where devotees must make a very determined and special effort to climb. Further, the Miao people in China believe that "the spirits naturally live in the mountain" (Wang, 2011, p.119). In Australia, a prominent site for spiritual significance is Uluru, the monolith, which is a natural wonder in Australia (Bickersteth, West, & Wallis, 2020). This site holds immense spiritual significance for the Traditional Owners of this land.

During Amy's spiritual journey within India, she came across a hermitage and mountain as a spiritually significant site. Near the ashram, on the sacred mountain of Arunachala, where Shri Ramana Maharshi used to meditate regularly, Amy received a rock. This was given to her by a hermit who told her to "take this with you". This rock was significant for Amy because it reminded her of Arunachala:

> *I meditated in his cave for a couple of hours while I was there. It was dark. On Arunachala and I came out of there and I was absolutely completely disintegrated. That's the word. Just totally disintegrated. Very shaken and I sat down. I didn't know what to do with myself and I realised that everything that I ever thought was wrong. And from that kind of huge, complete disintegration I felt like there was an opportunity to find out '[w]ell who are you then?'*

This experience demonstrates the life-changing and transformative element of a spiritual journey, and it highlights the significance of a spiritual site, in this case, a mountain. Such an

experience draws attention to offering meaningful sites around school premises that are conducive to the spiritual aspect of education.

Another aspect of this type of overseas travel for spiritual gains can be seen as spiritual tourism (Norman, 2011). This relates to Westerners going to a country such as India in search of self and getting involved in activities, including meditation, spiritual discourse or yoga. In this sense, Amy and Julia could be seen as Westerners indulging in spiritual tourism. Concerning spiritual retreat tourism, in her New Zealand-based empirical study, Bone (2013, p. 304) found "conceptions of community, escape, landscape and spirituality" to be important aspects for spiritual tourists. Willson, McIntosh, and Zahra (2013) presented a phenomenological portrait of their research participant who discussed her travel to Peru as "'spiritual' because she found herself 'inspired', 'uplifted', and 'energised' by certain things she saw, and was able to experience empathy and peace" (p. 160).

Pilgrimage has had a strong focus in religious and spiritual growth. Griffin (2007, p. 16) described it as "journeying to a sacred place or shrine as a devotee". Going on a pilgrimage involves travelling to a place of significance, usually walking or climbing to these places and paying respect to the temples or shrines at the end of the journey, "in the search for unusual experiences, slow travel, contemplation of the landscape, learning about history and culture, and meeting new people" (Lois González, 2013, p. 8). This slow and deliberate walk or climb creates a perfect contemplative space to reflect on oneself, and visiting a different country or city promotes cultural exchange. The fact that many devotees and tourists are on a journey towards the same destination brings a community feeling among them. Recently, however, such a pilgrimage has become more like a recreational holiday with some religious or spiritual benefits. Tourists from overseas arrive to benefit from yoga, meditation and other cultural experiences and approach these places as spaces for spiritual tourism rather than pilgrimage (Bansal & Gangotia, 2010). In their research, these authors found that, "leisure, recreation and holidays are the biggest purposes for the tourist" (p. 62). For example, in Chote Char Dham many adventure sport activities have been created to cater to tourist interests.

Amy and Julia were two people from the West travelling to an Eastern country. This movement of the Western person/people to an Eastern country made me consider travel from a postcolonial perspective. Colonisation involved travel and living in new places, yet it did

not involve the transformation of beliefs or a widening of knowledge. Travel is a salient feature of colonisation, although the purpose was this travel was not as cordial. What I understood about the travel by my participants was that it was completely different from the postcolonial movement towards countries in the East, in this case India. Instead, it became a mechanism to access Indigenous knowledge, and redistribute it from a Eurocentric perspective. Smith (2012) explains this as:

> Whilst imperialism is often thought of as a system which drew everything back into the centre, it was also a system which distributed materials and ideas outwards … [k]nowledge was also there to be discovered, extracted, appropriated and distributed. (p. 117–118)

This quote presents the aspect of colonisation that prompted Westerners to travel to Eastern countries and access their knowledge and beliefs to interpret and disseminate it by adding a Western perspective to it. The attitude of the teacher participants towards their travel was to learn something new and internalise it as their own for their spiritual growth. This is different from examining non-West spirituality as a study object by the West (Said, 1978) or appropriating these beliefs at the surface level because this spiritual philosophy was embedded in these teachers' being and it infused all their actions, including teaching (see Chapter 8).

Drawing on Spivak's (1993) concept of centre and margin, where centre or West is in a hegemonic position, spiritual tourism can be viewed as the centre taking from the margins (non-West) in the form of spiritual beliefs. Spivak's (1990) criticism can be applied to spiritual tourism:

> The desire of the European consciousness to turn towards East … if one reverses the direction of this binary opposition, the Western intellectual's longing for all that is not West, our turn towards the West - the so-called non -West's turn towards the West is a command. That turn was not in order to fulfil some longing to consolidate a pure space for ourselves, that turn was a command. (p. 8)

This quote questions the accessibility for Eastern consciousness by the West to be seen as "longing to consolidate a pure space" while East adopting Western ways as a "command" by the West (Spivak, 1990, p. 8). India is a postcolonial country and has already had a great European presence; therefore, it provides an easily accessible destination for spiritual tourism by a Westerner. Although my teacher participants thoroughly adopted the Eastern philosophy and were dedicated towards their spiritual beliefs, Spivak (1990) provides a critical lens to view these acts of spiritual tourism through postcolonial marginality.

6.2 Internalising Beliefs

Participants in this study internalised their beliefs and made their spirituality uniquely personal (Tisdell, 2006). Their spirituality was an integral part of their inner being and thus inhabited the private realm (Spivak, 1993). Individual spirituality is discussed in the existing literature (Hoppe & Speck, 2005; Natsis, 2016; Watson, 2000). This internalisation aligns with the idea that spirituality and religion are moving inwards and outwards, respectively (Dhiman, 2016; Woodhead, 2010). Rossiter (2010) summarised the changes in the understanding of spirituality from a traditional to contemporary view when he wrote about this change as "a more traditional religious spirituality to something that is more secular, eclectic and individualistic" (p. 129). The individual nature of spirituality is conducive to shaping one's belief system by adapting it from various religious and spiritual traditions and their spiritual journeys (Kale, 2004). For some teachers, their parents' religiosity provided a springboard for their future spiritual journeys and these influences from parents and grandparents exposed some of them to a multiplicity of beliefs. This individual aspect promotes people to choose relevant beliefs that suit them best (Davies & Freathy, 2014).

Boundaries between different religious and non-religious influences dissolved in the internalised spiritual beliefs of the participants. Once the beliefs are internalised and become their own, the surroundings become immaterial. Once the beliefs of my participants were internalised, geographical borders were crossed and cultural boundaries were traversed. On a personal level, spirituality is fluid and can go beyond boundaries. The spiritual beliefs of the teachers became a part of their lives that they brought with them. When one leaves their country of origin, life appears harder because of being away from families, cultures and traditions. Therefore, their beliefs support them in such situations and give them comfort.

Samuel's connection with God demonstrated his active role in internalising his own beliefs, and how Samuel decided to have agency of his own spirituality. Rather than depending on his parents and religious institutions to tell him about God, he chose to find out for himself by establishing his own communication with God. Samuel explains that as an adult, he realised that he did not actually own these beliefs. Rather, he temporarily subscribed to them until he knew more about his own beliefs. He said, "I wouldn't call it spirituality because it was more 'borrowed spirituality'". Samuel refused to accept the faith of his parents passively. Instead, he dismantled the faith he was given part by part, dwelling on the possibility of God and then taking that away. He critiqued it with questioning and reflection:

> *Deep down inside I always knew there was a God, but I didn't want to seek help through anyone because I believed that if there truly was a God that exists, he can speak to me directly. I will not need to go through any medium, I do not go through any denomination or church or organisation to get to God because I believe that if he is out there, he is open.*

This quote by Samuel shows his effort to find out what God was from his own experience rather than what had been prescribed by religious institutions. Therefore, for Samuel spirituality was something personal rather than institutional. Samuel then rebuilt his spiritual beliefs from his own experiences. These experiences involved feeling God's existence in his day-to-day life. He believed in this existence rather than the one that his parents and religious institutions asked him to believe all his life. Samuel effectively carved out his own belief that looked similar to his parents and religious institutions because it was about a connection with God and other people, yet the God that Samuel was referring to was a God of everyday life, like a friend or a mentor. A God that was involved in your daily life rather than a God that was distant, separate from everyday life that needed to be appeased.

Amy had seen her parents go to philosophy group meetings besides her Christian upbringing. These were challenging for Amy at first. As an adult, Amy tried to understand this philosophical fusion of West and East by attending the philosophy groups that her parents attended. Apparently, Amy was more conservative than her parents. These group meetings made her think differently about what she had known as a Christian throughout her life. Amy vividly described her experience with the classes as "very uncomfortable, very

challenging thoughts". Amy believed that these classes "took (her) outside of my Christian 'box'". At one stage, she was even scared of blasphemy because her existing Christian beliefs were challenged. Amy explained that "it was that confronting … I was so afraid of blaspheming. I was actually going to do something hugely offensive to my God or my understanding of God. So, I felt that I was on very dangerous ground". Amy felt that by listening to these philosophical ideas outside her form of Christianity, it was akin to being unfaithful to the religion that had been passed on by her parents. Despite this tension, Amy continued attending these meetings out of her curiosity and determination to find out what these new beliefs meant.

By continuing on the spiritual journey until she found her answer, Amy came across a "turning point" during one of the church services. As she listened to a passage in the New Testament, she felt that it spoke "very strongly" to her because of her life situation and internal conflict at the time. The passage related to when Jesus was out fishing with his disciples. When they had caught nothing in their fishing nets, Jesus asked them to throw their nets out in the deep. This passage resonated with Amy:

> *I have to throw my net into the deep. And see what comes. It was very conscious, and it was tricky for me and I just persisted and then at that moment, I realised there is nothing contradictory [as] [both beliefs] are all the same … there is nothing to be concerned about. It is all the same.*

After persisting with the meetings and making a conscious effort to understand this new way of thinking, one evening Amy connected with this new understanding in an almost euphoric moment that she recalls vividly. As Amy expressed it "I stuck with it until I got answers about the philosophy of unity". Amy opened up her mind from strict Christian views to include other philosophies. Amy concluded that, "Spirituality to me is about the freedom of human spirit. About the truth of the self."

Janice's exposure to multiple religious traditions prompted her to select the Ten Commandments as a way of life that intercepted different beliefs around her. Through her belief in the Ten Commandments, which were instilled in her by her father, Janice drew on the moral principles that inform Judaism and Christianity and could be seen as a bridge between the traditions of the two religions. When speaking about her personal life, Janice

refers to being "brought up to live by the Ten Commandments … that's what my father led us to believe. Live by the Ten Commandments". In this way, Christianity became a part of internalised individual spirituality via rituals and a connection with God and people (Boeve, 2003; McLoughlin, 2007; Ramshaw, 2010).

The nature of multiculturalism in Australia has been discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2. In a multicultural and multi faith country like Australia, to be a fair and equitable teacher, open-mindedness is very important (Bouma, 2006). This experience of feeling open-minded is clearly articulated by Samuel who was exposed to Hindu, Christian and other spiritual beliefs during his spiritual journey:

> *It's like you just feel your body breathing and let your mind calm down on*
> *hearing some of the great texts from the scriptures of the other religions …*
> *so, it was constantly making my mind to be open.*

The attribute of open-mindedness is important to a teacher as it relates to a willingness to move into the unknown, try out a new belief and move onto it with curiosity, perseverance and courage. In educational contexts, a teacher who is curious, courageous and open to new ideas is ideal for creating an inclusive classroom (Forno & Garibaldi, 2015).

Julia and Amy were drawn to the spiritual beliefs from India. Both of them travelled to India in search of spiritual development and found that the 'Advaita philosophy' resonated with them. Both Julia and Amy committed to follow this belief in their own lives. As the place of origin for Advaita philosophy is India, it can be considered Julia and Amy's spiritual home. An experience of being at home can be perceived only in relation to an experience of being outside. A 'home' exists when there is an 'outside' (Spivak, 1996). On returning from India, both Julia and Amy practised the Advaita philosophy in Australia. This situation can be understood using Spivak's (1996) concept of diaspora. These teachers could be considered spiritually diasporic because they are spiritually connected to the land in India.

The feeling of having internalised beliefs is like being at home everywhere. Therefore, the external boundaries do not matter. This chapter has highlighted the flowing nature of teachers' spirituality that is not bound by geographical/cultural/political boundaries. Spirituality is always feeling at home, i.e. displacing the home/outside binary so that the

distinction between them dissolves. Pava (2007, p. 288) attributes "the feeling of always being at home everywhere in this vast universe" to the spirituality of an individual. In Sanskrit (the ancient language of India), Aniketa means no permanent residence (Digital Dictionaries of South Asia, 2016). Aniket is the name of Lord Shiva and means the 'wanderer' and someone who does not have the constraints of a physical home and has a free spirit. This sentiment of being at home everywhere was explored by Spivak during an interview, "I don't worry or think about 'home' because I am at home" (Chakravorty et al., 2006, p. 141).

These teachers maintained their connection with their spiritual home by embedding their newly adopted spiritual beliefs in their life in Australia. As one of her artefacts, Amy shared a photograph that she brought back from India. It was a picture of her guru, Ramana Maharshi (Figure 6.1). She referred to him as "my master". She had visited his ashram in India several times. Every day in her home in Melbourne, Amy pulls out the picture of Ramana Maharshi during her daily scripture reading time. Amy's other artefact was a rock. While in India, Amy also visited Arunachala (translated as unmovable) mountain where Ramana Maharshi's ashram is nestled. There, a hermit gave her a rock. For Amy, the rock and the photo are "concrete reminders" of that place and her profoundly spiritual experiences:

> *There is a photographic portrait of Shri Ramana Maharshi, who is my master. He is quite clearly that for me. I had travelled to his ashram a number of times. I push his portrait up when I study scripture in the morning and so he is always there. As an anchor and really as a reminder.*

Figure 6.1: Artefact by Amy displaying the portrait of Shri Ramana Maharshi and the rock that Amy received on a mountain in India

When Julia returned to Melbourne, she searched for another place that she could associate with her understanding of spirituality that was developed in India. This opportunity came about when she joined a philosophy group:

> *Going to the philosophy group one night, I walked in and I walked out thinking I was home again. That's where it's all really, I found what I was looking for. That's Vedanta philosophy… I almost felt that I was a part of humanity. I was a part of the river of life or whatever I felt, I was something in this. I really felt that I was connected with absolutely everything. That I wasn't on my own.*

Attending the philosophy group gave Julia an assurance that she was not alone and other people in Melbourne followed the same spiritual belief of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy that she had found in India (see Chapter 1, Sub-section 1.1.2).

Priya adopted these practices in her adult life, as was evident from the artefact that she presented. It was a picture of a small temple in Priya's home (Figure 6.2). This temple has statues and pictures of various Hindu deities and is surrounded by spiritual paraphernalia, including different lamps and incense holders. The burning incense and lighted lamp in this picture show that Priya actively worships and prays as expected by her parents and grandmother.
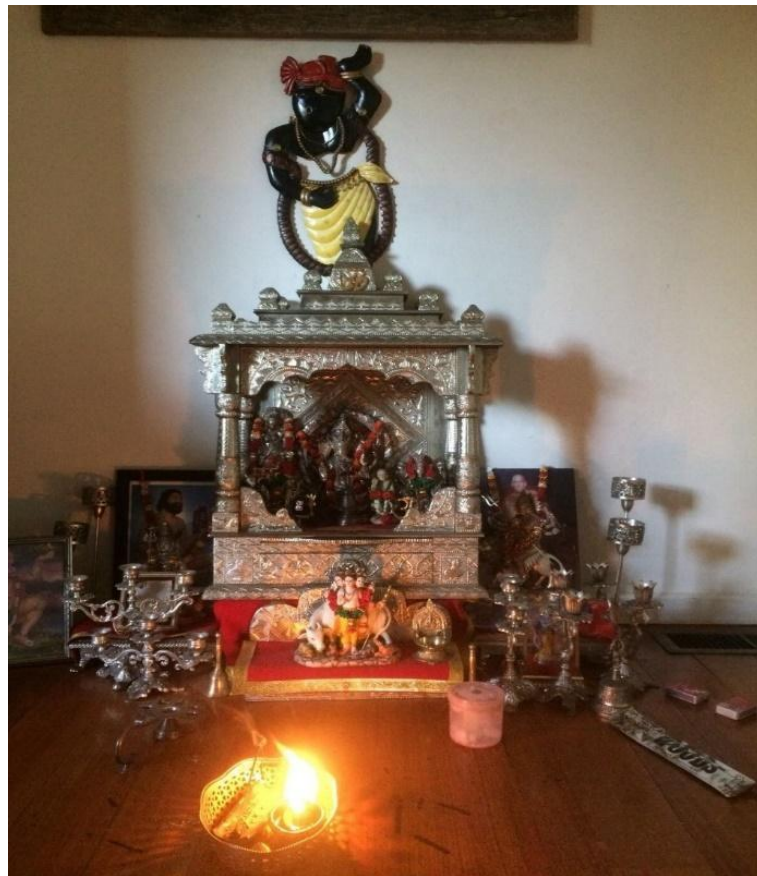
Figure 6.2: Artefact from Priya displaying a temple in her home.

6.3 Summary

This chapter presented the origins and processes of the evolving spirituality of my participants and highlighted the flowing nature of teachers' spirituality that is not bound by differences of West/East and religious/secular. The concept of diaspora shed light on the idea of a spiritual and geographical home for teachers who are a part of Australian schools.

This development of spiritual beliefs was influenced by childhood experiences and travel. The spiritual beliefs of participants were internalised and became embedded in who they are as people. This is a significant point because these internalised beliefs evolved in their individual spirituality, which later influenced their role as a teacher and the dynamics experienced in their professional contexts as discussed in Chapter Seven. In addition, these beliefs influenced the pedagogical practices of these teachers as presented in Chapter Eight.

Chapter 7: Teachers' Spirituality in Their Teaching Contexts

> I am awed by all these people who teach at places where spirituality is
> accepted. Most of my teaching experience has been in climates that are
> totally, utterly, and completely hostile to spirituality. Where colleagues
> laugh at you if they think that you have some notion of spiritual life.
> (hooks, 2003, p. 612)

The above quotation by bell hooks, an education commentator and cultural critic, draws out the tension faced by spiritually-inclined teachers in places that are unsupportive of the notion of spirituality. Her words "I am awed" offer insight into the emotions of spiritually-inclined teachers like hooks and their desire to feel accepted in their place of work. This reflection prompts a consideration of the dynamics between teachers' spirituality and their teaching contexts.

The previous chapter showed that the personal spirituality of the teacher participants was internalised based on the influences from their childhood experiences and also developed via travel (see Chapter 6). This chapter presents an analysis of the influence of teachers' spirituality on their experiences as teachers. The next chapter discusses this 'spirituality infused pedagogy' that demonstrates how teachers incorporate spiritual principles in their pedagogical practices. The present chapter presents findings and discussion that answer the initial part of my second research question, 'How do the spiritual beliefs of teacher participants influence their experiences as teachers and pedagogical practices?' Based on my data analysis, I argue that the individual spiritual beliefs of the teacher participants influence their experiences as teachers by determining how they see themselves as teachers and how their spiritual beliefs interact with their teaching contexts.

Educational policies, documentation and established school systems prioritise the professional aspects and marginalise the personal. However, the findings in this study demonstrate that teachers are informed by their personal spirituality in their professional life (Day & Sachs, 2004). As Palmer (2007) noted, "Teaching is always done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life" (p. 18). This public/private binary is displaced because of this spiritual connection in the professional and personal lives of teachers.

The teaching approach of my participants was shaped by their spirituality and presented a different way of thinking about the role of teachers and their interactions with the professional setting. The norm in their teaching contexts questioned the notion that teachers were professionals, whose personal spiritual beliefs did not belong in the professional sphere (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4). Spivak (1993) argues that the explanation by the centre defines the margins. In this study, the centre is constituted by the Australian educational system, which is guided by educational policies. The Australian educational policies at national and local levels place a strong emphasis on quality teaching for improved student outcomes (Council of Australian Governments, 2012; Department of Education and Training, 2018). Therefore, quality teaching is discussed in the professional space and is clearly separated from the personal lives of teachers. By drawing on their spirituality, these teachers are bringing the personal into the professional realm. These teachers are employed in the school systems; therefore, they are a part of the centre. However, according to the explanation of professionalism provided within all educational documents, personal aspects such as spiritual beliefs are marginalised. Consequently, the spirituality of these teachers is placed into a margin in the centre. As Spivak (1993) explains, this margin is not like the one on the sides, rather it is the one in the middle of the centre, similar to the median strip on a road.

In the rest of the chapter, I will elaborate on how teachers' spirituality inhabited the margin in the centre. The first part of this chapter examines the findings and discussion about how the spirituality of my teacher participants underpins the way they view their role. The findings in the second part of this chapter relate to negotiations by teachers of their spiritual beliefs regarding the educational context of their work.

7.1 Teachers' Role Underpinned by Their Spirituality

The individual spiritual beliefs of the teacher participants underpin how they view their role as professionals. The findings presented in this chapter are about my teacher participants going beyond the understanding that the role of a teacher is limited to a professional realm. Instead, these teachers draw on their spirituality. Analysing the words of my participants helped me uncover two spiritual aspects that contributed to their role as teachers. The first one was a relational aspect that these teachers experienced when they undertook their daily teaching routines. By acknowledging relationality in teaching, my participants brought their spiritual beliefs into their profession. The second spiritual aspect

that surfaced during the thematic analysis of my participants' words was the significance of presence. This presence goes beyond being physically present in the room, rather it is about the authentic and centred presence that the students can draw from. Next in this chapter is the presentation of my findings and discussion about the spiritual aspect of relationality and teacher presence in teaching.

7.1.1 Relational aspect within the teaching role

My participants referred to the relational aspect of teaching. Being aware of this relationality and connecting with others because of this awareness is a spiritual attribute. This notion of spirituality is supported by de Souza (2014):

> Human spirituality may be perceived as a raised awareness/consciousness
> of oneself as a relational Being, that is, an awareness that Self is part of the
> Whole which also comprises Other. (p. 45)

These words by de Souza draw attention to the awareness of oneself in relation to others. Being conscious about self as a part of a bigger consciousness or the whole as described above encourages one to view the world in a connected way.

My participant Julia's spiritual beliefs include having knowledge of something bigger than ourselves. She believes in making connections with the world around her, including her immediate surroundings such as trees and birds in her garden. During our interview, Julia expressed her despair at not allowing enough time to make these connections with where we live. This thinking from her personal life is translated into her teaching context where, as a teacher, Julia believes in creating awareness among her students to connect widely with what is around their immediate environment. Julia said:

> *It's (education) bigger than just sitting at the desk. They (students) are part*
> *of the universe. And that's the most important part for a child.*

This thinking presents scope for a different approach that is not founded on outcome-based education that revolves around capabilities and achievement standards (ACARA, n.d.), rather it connects students to the wider world. Regarding her approach to teaching art, Julia brought in the classic, quality artwork across the various world traditions so that her students felt a

wider connection with their art. This approach by Julia is further elaborated in Chapter Eight, Sub-section 8.2.2.

Samuel demonstrated this connectedness and relationality in how he approached his work commitments. He touched on an important consideration that working with people in a range of contexts requires a "basic appreciation of people". Although this would apply to most teachers, for Samuel, being appreciative of people went beyond a socio-emotional commitment, it was his spiritual commitment. This is because in addition to establishing a personal connection with God, his spiritual belief was concerned with maintaining relationships with people in the world (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2). In Samuel's words, "connecting with fellow humans" is a way to experience spirituality. This thinking about connection with people reflected in the multiple responsibilities that Samuel fulfilled as a teacher. These commitments included working as the mathematics coordinator, classroom teacher, participating in music activities through his church and representing the Mathematics Council. According to Samuel, all his roles were interconnected because these required him to work with people. The overt actions of Samuel are not different from other teachers who fulfil multiple responsibilities within their school contexts, yet Samuel's approach towards this multiplicity of roles is different because it is informed by his spirituality.

Furthermore, Samuel explained, "[the] platform is the same I am working with people and knowledge can be shifted depending on where you are and in what context you are in". This quotation by Samuel highlights the importance of interaction with people as a platform and knowledge as something to be adapted to different contexts. Therefore, Samuel focuses on making connections with people along with his teaching knowledge. The knowledge required for each role is adapted to each context; however, the focus on respectfully working with people remains constant.

In addition to connecting with people, Samuel's spirituality extends as a connection with transcendence. In his teaching, Samuel saw this as "I see myself very much as a conduit". His own spiritual belief involves maintaining a connection with God and, as a teacher, Samuel thinks of himself as a conduit or a channel connecting students with a higher power:

I don't see myself as a repository of knowledge. I think every teacher needs to be deeply spiritual. Not because of any connotation with religious organisations; but I think as a person you need to have a very open mind about knowledge and information and the world and the higher power out there.

In the above excerpt, Samuel referred to teachers' spirituality and asserted that being spiritual will prompt teachers to view education with an open mind because teachers will look beyond the immediate curriculum needs and focus on connecting with the world beyond and even transcendence. Although Samuel might have inherited some of this thinking from his own religious background and his experience of teaching in a religious school, his words "not because of any connotations with religious organisations" show that Samuel is thinking from his own spirituality and not replicating his institutionalised beliefs.

Amy believes in knowing one's true self and she incorporates this in her teaching. Spirituality means going inwards and religion is going outwards (Dhiman, 2016; Woodhead, 2010). Amy discusses that she sees herself as engaging with her students to promote them to go within and reflect on themselves. Amy perceives this as her role as a teacher:

The whole point to me is to help young people see themselves as pure, perfect, eternal and complete - to know their true Self so that they can be happy, be able to weather all the things that the world will throw them as they grow up, and to be able to interact wisely with life and with others.

Amy's focus for her students is on building positive self-esteem by knowing their true selves. She believes in helping them become resilient so that they can face any challenges and difficulties in their lives.

This spiritual perspective of my participants contrasted with the review of the literature demonstrating the role of teachers in a professional realm rather than a spiritual realm. Teachers are perceived as professionals that are engaged in students' learning mostly in the cognitive space as an instructor or a guide and in the socio-emotional space as a collaborator and facilitator. For instance, teachers have been viewed in their instructional capacity (Vygotskiĭ, 1997) and as facilitators or guides (Gilakjani & Rahimy, 2020). In both

these approaches, the role of a teacher is in the cognitive realm (Walshaw & Anthony, 2008) and a collaborative space (Webb, 2009). My participant responses go beyond the dominant representation of a teacher's role of a guide, facilitator and content knowledge expert. Furthermore, I found that teachers perceive their classroom presence at a deeper level and it is more insightful than being physically present in the class.

7.1.2 Presence as a spiritual aspect within the teaching role

My teacher participants perceived that their presence was capable of impacting everyday teaching situations at a deeper level. Syrnyk (2012) outlines some of the characteristics of relational teachers as the ones who "present oneself as an open, trustworthy, secure role model, and ultimately as a person with whom relationships can be built" (p. 149). This thinking by Syrnyk links the discussion in the last section to this one. In the last section, I explored the relational approach by teachers to their teaching role. This quotation explains that to promote a relational aspect, one has to present it in a way that is approachable for others. The attributes of this relatable presence include being open to different and new ideas, being trustworthy where others can confidently reach out and being a good role model. I found that teachers who believe in the relational aspects also recognised their presence as being an important aspect of their role as teachers.

The centred and authentic selves of teachers are presented to their students in the shared learning space. Amy believes that a teacher will radiate their underpinning beliefs by their mere presence, thus communicating what they stand for to their students. In the following quotation, Amy reflects on the significance of spirituality in her life. Amy hopes for her students to pick up on this subtle spirituality:

> *The children simply know what you stand for and they pick it up very*
> *subtly. And when they have a question, they will come and ask you because*
> *they know that it interests you and you would like to speak with them about*
> *it. But you can't just serve up spiritual knowledge like a generic vitamin*
> *pill because it won't be taken in well, or even at all by them. Number one is*
> *to live it and live it before them – and sometimes, the less words you use,*
> *the better.*

Expressing a similar idea of presence to Amy, Julia focuses on the space that a teacher creates by their mere presence and insists that a teacher's own disposition plays an important part in how students respond to their teachers:

> *If you have somebody very centred in front of you, how easy is it for you to listen to them and give your attention to them? I think that's how you learn. You've got a good teacher that hasn't got [only] the knowledge [but rather] has got that space. Children only learn in certain spaces.*

The presence that Amy and Julia are referring to is their natural state of 'being' that is informed by their spirituality rather than a deliberate practice. According to my participants, teachers build students' self-esteem and prepare them to face unfavourable situations in life, have an open-minded outlook and be in touch with the world and the higher power. My findings point to a much broader role of the teacher that goes beyond the mundane and with the possibility of the otherworldly.

Teacher presence in the professional field has been acknowledged for guiding student interactions (van Leeuwen & Janssen, 2019), facilitating in learning spaces (Goh, Ayub, Wong & Lim, 2017) and as someone who supports online learning (Dockter, 2016). However, none of these approaches to teacher presence relate to it from a spiritual perspective to promote relationality and spirituality in learning spaces. While there is not much discussion about this type of teacher presence in the educational field, Sharp and Jennings' (2016, p. 213) idea of "present-centered awareness" comes close.

'Present-centred awareness' is a part of mindfulness practice that refers to the ability of teachers to stop and assess the situation in their classroom before reacting. This practice helps teachers recentre themselves and become aware of their presence in the classroom. Amy and Julia advocated awareness of presence but not from the perspective of assessing the situation and reacting, rather from the perspective of having this presence that radiates spirituality and being centred as a natural way of being that students can sense and gain from. This presence is also conducive to the relational aspect that these teachers stand for in their personal lives. This discussion regarding teachers as relational beings with authentic and spiritual presence leads to the next part of this chapter, which discusses the interaction between these teachers and their teaching contexts.

7.2 Teachers' Spirituality Within Their Teaching Contexts

7.2.1 Belonging in spiritually conducive environments

Teachers feel a sense/feeling of belonging and assurance when their spirituality is aligned with their school's philosophy and ethos (Kumar, 2018). Furthermore, the individual spiritual beliefs of teachers, when aligned with their teaching contexts, influence their feelings of job retention and job satisfaction (Pawar, 2017). My participants expressed their feelings of belonging in their teaching experiences that originated from the alignment of their spiritual beliefs with their teaching contexts.

The philosophy of truthful and holistic education at Amy's school aligned well with her understanding of her role as a teacher (see Section 7.1). Amy's school beliefs are based around the spiritual principles of knowing oneself and aims for holistic education integrating the cognitive and spiritual aspects of students' development. Amy explained her school's vision when they started about 20 years earlier:

> [It is] to help young people know their true Self and to teach the great
> spiritual truths. The academia was in there as well, definitely - excellence
> and so forth… the vision of the school is still pretty strong - that we want a
> truthful education, one that educates the whole child.

Amy explains her joy of teaching at the school that holds similar spiritual beliefs to her own and how it encourages her to continue her work at this school:

> It is because it [school's spiritual principles] resonate so strongly with
> where I am coming from [and so] it's just where I want to be [teaching].

This alignment of Amy's spiritual principles with those of the school makes Amy's teaching experience rewarding and fulfilling; therefore, she feels a strong bond with the school and wants to be a part of it.

One prominent example that Amy shared in this relationship was her scripture and philosophy lessons at her school. Amy strongly believes in the significance of stories and scriptures from different world traditions. In fact, Amy considers that it is her 'legacy' to

search for appropriate, traditional literature for her students. (The use of literature relating to the holistic education of students will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8). Her school incorporates teachings from different philosophical and religious traditions worldwide using stories, proverbs and psalms. The school also provides teaching materials such as stories and passages from the Judeo-Christian Bible, including the Old Testament and the New Testament, stories and passages from the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita and Australian Indigenous culture. Consequently, Amy feels comfortable, and at home, when she teaches within her school environment.

As a CRT, Priya works at different schools and teaches in different teaching contexts. At one point in her career, Priya worked at a non-denominational independent school. Priya's school promoted the spiritual principles similar to Priya's upbringing, she felt that she "fitted in very well and connected very well with the teachers and with the students". She enjoyed teaching at this school because the practice of singing hymns and shlokas in Sanskrit was similar to her own upbringing and she felt "immediately connected with everybody around there … [so it] was just like being at home for me". Priya reflects on her connection and past experiences:

> *My heart was at peace, my heart was happy. Spiritually, I was in a very*
> *good environment and I felt I was at the perfect place at the perfect time.*

Due to this teaching experience, Priya has realised that this is the type of school environment, with similar spiritual principles to her own, where she feels very comfortable. This experience has led Priya to thinking that she only wants to teach at this particular school.

Similarly, Julia expressed her love for her work because of the 'spirituality content' at her school. Julia's spirituality is reflected in her art classes, which is discussed in Chapter 8, and her ability to practise spirituality in her teaching has been an incentive for her to remain at that particular school. Samuel thinks about being in the right place when surrounded by 'like-minded' people:

> *You feel at home and you know that someone understands you and you can*
> *share what's in your heart.*

All these examples from Amy, Priya, Julia and Samuel show the feeling of connecting from the heart, and the feeling of happiness and wanting to work at schools where their personal background and beliefs connect with those of the schools that they worked in. The literature in this area of spirituality in the workplace supports the idea that teachers feel at home when their spiritual beliefs are affirmed in their school environment (Kumar, 2018; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Pawar, 2017). The willingness of these teachers to continue working at their school because of the workplace spirituality that they experienced within their school environment showed job-embeddedness (Rajappan, Nair, Kirupa, & Sivakumar, 2017). Thus, being in a spiritually conducive environment influenced the feeling of wanting to continue teaching at their schools and reinforced a sense of belonging.

Relevant studies confirm that this recognition of employee spirituality at their workplace leads to employee wellbeing (Aboobaker, Edward, & Zakkariya, 2019) and job satisfaction (Makwana, 2015). Therefore, understanding about the dynamics between teachers' spirituality and their teaching context is significant for teachers' wellbeing and their job satisfaction, which will eventually mean more teachers remaining in their teaching jobs. In the next section, I will present findings and discussion on the differences in spiritual belief within teaching contexts and my understanding of its influence on teaching and learning.

7.2.2 Dealing with differences in spirituality

When the beliefs of the teachers conflict with the school's or institution's beliefs, they feel that their voices are not heard and their perspectives not understood within their teaching contexts, prompting teachers to negotiate and find ways to work within their schools. In contrast with the previous section, this section relates to the non-alignment of teachers' spirituality within their teaching contexts. This consideration is important because of its implication for silencing voices of spirituality of these teachers and placing teachers' spirituality on the margin in the centre (Spivak, 1993). This idea of teachers' spirituality being a margin in the centre is presented in the theoretical framework (see Chapter 4), discussed at the beginning of this chapter and will also be elaborated within the following discussion.

The teachers in the study negotiated their beliefs in reference to their teaching contexts. Julia mentioned that the school where she taught was moving away from spirituality

and towards academics and outcome-based learning. This could be a result of schools prioritising other commitments over spirituality. As explained by de Souza (2003) in the Australian educational contexts, "there has been a general trend in the learning and teaching process to ignore the inner reflective life" (p. 271). When explaining this situation in her interview, Julia said, "spirituality should have been the rock". This expression by Julia revealed her disappointment towards overlooking the spiritual aspect in education. Julia elaborated this further:

> We only teach today, mind and body. Not the body so much. But we teach the mind. So, we are teaching a third of a human being. We don't look at the spiritual side that is most important because everything else will take care of itself. That's why I reckon we are really missing out on education [of] mind, body, and soul.

This excerpt shows that Julia's belief in spirituality is not aligned with her school's shifting focus. The centre in this situation is Julia's school that determines the educational focus. Julia witnessed the separation of mind, body and spirit at her school (Buchanan & Hyde, 2008; Pettersen, 2015). Julia's contestation about this separation can be understood using Spivak's (1990, p. 43) caution, "you can't just keep with one side of binary opposition … because then what you are ignoring is the other side". In the present study, the binary opposition was between mind on one side and body and spirit on the other. Based on Spivak's (2006) reminder, by essentialising these categories and focusing on the mind or cognitive development alone, there is a risk of overlooking the affective/spiritual development.

In schools, this separation between cognitive and trans-cognitive aspects is reflected in treating curricular subjects differently in terms of their perceived importance. Ferrer, Romero, and Albareda (2005, p. 306) address this "cognicentrism" or the dominance of cognitive aspects in education. They give the example of literacy and numeracy taking precedence over art and music. In this way, literacy and numeracy are both placed in the cognitive domain. In an Australian context, de Souza (2003) states:

> In the Australian education system, which is focused on a content driven curriculum that addresses rational/cognitive outcomes while it has largely

ignored the affective/emotional and spiritual/inner reflective dimensions of learning. (p. 272)

This mind-body-spirit separation is linked to postcolonialism. For example, Chan, Ying Ho, and Chow (2002) express that Western traditions consider mind-body and spirit as separate entities, whereas Eastern traditions take a more holistic approach. This integrated and holistic approach to education is supported by Ferrer et al. (2005):

As many holistic educators stress, the pressing challenge today is to break away from dichotomizing tendencies and explore integrative approaches that will allow intellectual knowing and conscious awareness to be grounded in and enriched by somatic, vital, emotional, aesthetic, intuitive, and spiritual knowing without losing their power of clarity and discrimination. (p. 324)

Where there is mind-body-spirit separation, the holistic approach to education does not reflect in teaching contexts. Yet, educational policies promote all aspects of development in students. Examination of Standard 1 (Focus area 1.1) APST shows that teachers are expected to demonstrate understanding of students' physical, social and intellectual development (AITSL, 2017). However, APST exclude the understanding of students' spiritual development, despite its inclusion in Goal 2 of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, which states that all students being educated in Australia must "have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, cultural, spiritual and physical wellbeing" (Department of Education, 2020, p. 6). Doetzel (2014) recommends administering both a spiritual and scientific perspective to educational leadership, and "mind intelligence and heart wisdom should function as an interdependent dynamic" (p. 88). Ferrer et al. (2005) recommend involving the body, heart, mind and spirit as aspects of child development. The authors believe that all these human aspects should be involved in learning and inquiry. Julia's teaching experience as discussed above relates to a non-denominational educational context. Next, I discuss Samuel's experience in a religious school environment.

Having reflected on his borrowed spiritual beliefs (see Chapter 6), Samuel realised that he wanted to move away from the conventional religion that was prescribed by his

religious organisation. When Samuel moved away from a conventional religious belief of his church and adopted a more spiritual approach, he faced difficulties of being unable to speak about his new beliefs that he considered his own. Additionally, his teaching context was not conducive to his spiritual beliefs because Samuel taught at a religious school that was affiliated with the church:

> *Religion is based around rules ... You become quite legalistic; whereas if*
> *you look at God as a friend, you are not trying to please God, you are*
> *trying to have a relationship.*

Samuel's evolved spiritual beliefs of relationality with God differed from the more legalistic religious beliefs of his institution (Turner et al., 1995). The connection with God that Samuel witnessed around him at his religious school involved God being judgemental and there was an aspect of fear of God and the desire to appease God. Liu and Froese (2020) concluded from their study that this type of connection with God originates from a low sense of control. However, when the connection is about closeness, it reflects in secure attachment with God. Samuel's connection with God was a friendly presence. Based on Liu and Froese's (2020) findings, this relates to a higher sense of control. Samuel also demonstrated a dependence on God in his thinking that there is divine intervention in day-to-day activities. This belief positively impacted on the sense of control (Liu & Froese, 2020).

Samuel commented on the lack of responses from the members of his religious organisation, despite him trying to communicate with them concerning his change of thinking and feeling of exclusion:

> *They [members of his religious organisation] always seem to think that*
> *there was something wrong with what I was doing.*

Samuel found that he could not express his beliefs openly as they were different. In the following extract, Samuel discusses how he copes with different opinions in his teaching context:

> *From experience, I have learnt that you can find common ground with*
> *people and if the people are open and they are willing, you can discuss with*

> *them and can share a little bit. But otherwise, it is very difficult, and it is*
> *best to maybe don't say anything at all.*

Samuel also negotiated this space by focusing on the common ground between him and his colleagues and working together using the same resources. As an example, he highlights some of the shared principles inherent in the pedagogy of religion and spirituality:

> *We have a Bible based curriculum; we all are on the same page with the*
> *stories we share with children. The [common] theme that runs through*
> *[these stories are] the moral lessons for life [like] how to treat other people*
> *… We have shared resources in that area. We know that we are all*
> *marching to the same beat.*

Samuel changed his perception of spirituality based on his own experiences rather than engaging with rationalised debate and change of cognition because of that. Drawing on the discussion by Agadjanian (2006) (see Literature Review, Chapter 3, Sub-section 3.2.1), Samuel's shift to this new spirituality can be viewed as a shift from institutional religion to experiential spiritual, indicating the move from a public to a private sphere. The notion of religion as a grand narrative originated in 19th-century modernism and it was "full of strong symbolic content available for collective identity quest" (Agadjanian, 2006, p. 179). By reflecting on beliefs that were established by his religious organisation, backed up by his family and imbided in him throughout his childhood, Samuel questioned the "grands récits or great narrative" (Spivak, 1990, p. 18). Until that time, he had taken this grand recite for the truth. This may have been because as Spivak (1990, p. 19) explains "[as] the narrative takes its own impetus… one begins to say that it's not a narrative, it's the way things are".

By the 18th century, this thinking led to the belief that a transcendent God was the immanent creator and needed to be pleased if his order was disturbed in any way (Taylor, 2011). Spivak (1990, p. 19) reminds us that "when a narrative is constructed, something is left out". For Samuel, the great narrative defined God as someone to please while leaving out perceiving God as a friend. Samuel's act of moving away from a religious God based on fear can be explained using Krishnamurti's (1987) thinking. Krishnamurti believed that religions are created to relieve us of any insecurity and to keep hope that we are looked after. He was certain that the basis of all religion and invention of God is fear. Krishnamurti (1969)

observed that people look around and experience different religions, organisations and teachers to find happiness and peace in the face of despair. This shift came when Samuel was prepared to move from what was thought to be certain and truth in his life, into a place of vulnerability that allowed for a "change of mindset", which supplanted a rationalised debate with the religiously minded by privileging personal experience, and can be viewed as a "transformation of consciousness" (Spivak, 1990, p. 20).

I found that teachers retained their beliefs and found ways to voice and express their spiritual beliefs in unfavourable environments. For Priya, food is a medium of connection for her, others, the world, and God, or transcendence. Priya mentions that "[f]or me, it is with cooking and feeding and looking after the family. That's where I feel connected." Sharing food forms a part of Priya's cultural tradition and her spirituality,

Priya's connection with food can be linked to the ritual of offering food to gods. Priya had seen her mother and grandmother do this in India, and she also practised it in her Melbourne home. As part of her culture, Priya was accustomed to offering food to whoever visited her home. She also mentioned the feeling of being connected to gods and other people through food. Priya said that she experienced spirituality when she fed people nutritious food that gave them happiness. In interpreting Priya's interaction with food, I realised that religion, culture and spirituality are all closely connected through food as a common thread. Priya practised this connection in her teaching contexts when she brought in morning tea for all her colleagues.

Priya enjoys cooking for her friends and family and likes connecting with her work colleagues through the medium of food. In her work as a CRT, Priya takes special morning teas or lunches into her school as she works "in a school [where] at morning tea, there is food served. There is a smile on everybody's faces including the teachers". Priya's photographs in Figure 7.1 demonstrate the spread of food that she brings to share at work with her colleagues.
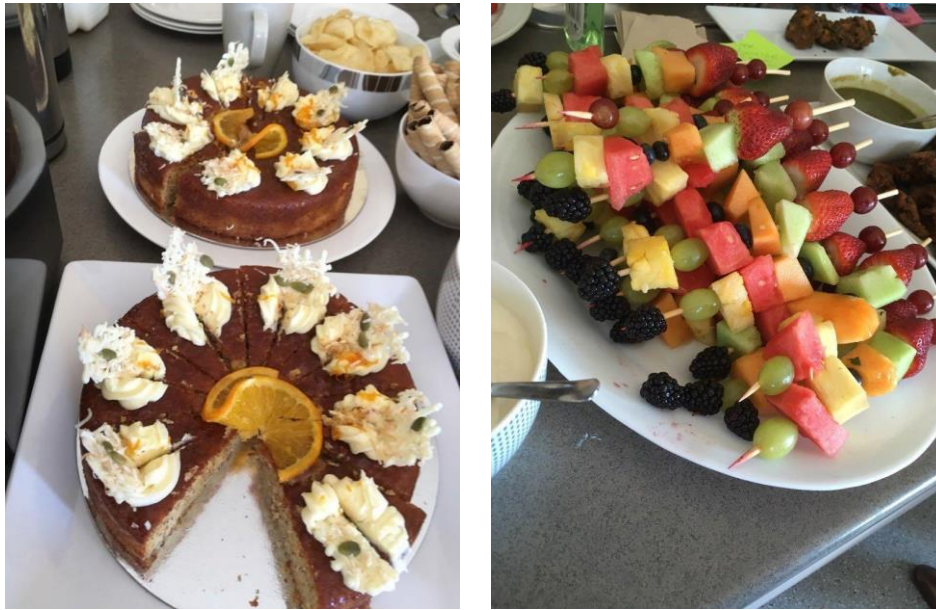
Figure 7.1: Priya's artefact that shows visual images of food that she shared during a morning tea at her school.

In her teaching experience at an Australian government school, Priya witnessed students throwing food out from their lunches because they did not like it. Priya was shocked to see such food wastage. She expressed the impact it had on her using the words: "[T]hat just touched my heart".

Priya felt that, despite her efforts, she was not heard. In terms of students throwing out food, when Priya explained to her students about people living in underprivileged countries who did not have enough food and were suffering from malnourishment, they did not understand the significance, so the wastage of food continued:

> *I tried to tell them [the students] … They never connected to me … I tried*
> *to tell them that we are fortunate to get food on our plate[s]. Be thankful…*
> *and they never got it. No matter how many times I tried to tell them.*

When Priya noticed that her students were throwing out food from their packed lunches, she tried to educate them about not wasting it, but her students told her that they did not like the food. Priya approaches food from a spiritual perspective as she believes that through cooking and feeding, she can connect with people. In her study, Bone (2005a) also viewed food from a spiritual perspective. The phrase 'breaking bread' implies feeding the

body and soul, having space to share and time for appreciation and social interaction and an opportunity for spiritual renewal (Bone, 2005a). In Priya's culture, eating is referred to as anna (food) and grahan (receive) as a spiritual act of nourishing one's body, mind, and soul. This indicates the respect and gratitude that is evident throughout Priya's interview and this aligns with "food customs and types [that] often correlate with religious, spiritual, and other domains of a particular culture" (Mangalassary, 2016, p. 120). In India, the issue of poverty and malnutrition is rampant, and some people find it hard to fend for themselves (Jena, 2012). All these factors, but mainly Priya's spiritual connection with food and feeding others, might have contributed to the fact that she has found it hard to deal with food wastage and so throwing food away has conflicted with her practice of offering food to the gods. These beliefs, as well as the attitude towards food that Priya holds so close to her heart, are not shared by her school environment. For example, in Priya's school environment, sharing food among children is not encouraged and throwing out food was not restricted. Despite Priya being a teacher at the school, her repeated instructions about not wasting food were not understood by her students. This gave her a feeling of not being heard.

Teachers are confined to the language of the centre to negotiate their spiritual beliefs. Spivak (1990) highlights an important aspect of being silenced because of competing narratives:

> It's a view where we see the way in which narratives compete with each other, which one rises, which one falls, who is silent, and the itinerary of the silencing rather than retrieval. (p. 31)

Thus, the itinerary of silencing refers to the critique of the phenomenon when one narrative is prioritised over another. When faced with conflict and tension, a voice is silenced. In the present study, the competing narratives emerged from the spiritual narratives of the teachers and the narratives of educational contexts of their schools. The following discussion presents the negotiations as a result of the itinerary of silencing teachers' spiritual voices.

Priya had to reconsider her religious language to suit the secular environment she was in at the time. Priya is a religious person and she has a strong faith in God. Praying and remembering God is a part of her daily life. She mentioned that she

prays and chants shlokas as she sits in her car every morning. When Priya moved countries and came to Alice Springs from India, she was surprised to find that mentioning God or religion was inhibited in the school environment.

> *I adjusted myself to that surrounding. I did not fight with the circumstances and I did not want to bring about change because it was huge, and I would not [have] be[en] able to do that.*

Secularism views spirituality separate from religion (Roof, 1993; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). Priya tried to change her approach and not use the language of religion or mention words with religious connotations and even a commonly used word like 'God'. Instead, Priya decided to incorporate her religious identity by drawing on the values that are at the basis of religion and teaching these. In the following, Priya discusses respect for others who did not share the same views as hers when she was previously employed at a secular government school:

> *I have to respect ones who do not follow a religion. There is nothing wrong with their thinking, though I felt a bit different.*

Priya could cope with her situation, by adjusting her teaching practice:

> *[I tried to] teach through my beliefs … without getting religion in between and focus on honesty, listening to their souls, consciousness and hearts, [encouraging them to] be brave.*

In this way, Priya changed her dialogue to suit the language of the school environment. In a secular school environment, Priya's sacred spiritual beliefs placed her on the margin in the centre (Spivak, 1993). Priya found it hard to understand people who did not believe in God. Priya landed in a teaching that was in conflict with her spiritual/religious beliefs, putting herself on the margin in the centre.

Janice found her multicultural school environment challenging because there were students in her class from various cultures and ethnicities. Consequently, this invited special consideration in relation to prominently Christian traditions that were previously a part of secular government schools:

> *We have to be very careful. It's tricky because it's a really small minority*
> *that don't want to [celebrate Christmas]. Most people are inclusive but*
> *there are just so few people who aren't.*

Janice shared her experience of changing the language from Christmas to celebration while retaining the practice of having a Christmas tree and presents. Janice discusses how celebrations are conducted within her school environment:

> *We are allowed to put out a Christmas tree and things and it's called a*
> *celebration. We exchange presents with the children and if people don't*
> *want to do that they are allowed to be excluded.*

Here, religious language was changed in favour of the secular school environment. In Janice's school, the celebration of Christmas had to be augmented due to the inclusion of other cultures who do not celebrate Christmas. Janice's school changed the language of the centre to the language of margin. Here, the centre was the structure of the school and the margin was the migrant population, implying that multiculturalism is challenging the domination of Christianity as a default position in Australian schools.

7.3 Summary

This chapter draws attention to the dynamics between teachers' spirituality and their school contexts. The understanding of teachers bringing their spirituality to their teaching context is developed through the concept of postcolonial marginality (Spivak, 1988b). This chapter highlights how teachers' spirituality inhabits the marginal space in the centre (Spivak, 1993). The findings in this chapter are significant because they provide an insight into teachers' inner worlds.

A prominent idea in this chapter relates to the realisation that the teaching contexts determining the spiritual and religious orientation of their teachers is problematic. There are multiple ways in which teachers' spirituality evolves and these individualised spiritual beliefs influence their teaching experiences. The teacher participants felt the need to negotiate their spiritual beliefs in their teaching contexts. These teachers aimed to prepare students for facing life and they achieved this through being present as their whole selves and showing students

their authentic selves. The next chapter focuses on the pedagogical implications of teachers' spirituality.

Chapter 8 Spirituality Infused Pedagogy

> Teaching that impacts is not head to head, but heart to heart. Hendricks (2011, para. 6)

The above quotation draws attention to the affective and spiritual realm of education. The head is usually associated with intelligence and cognition, while the heart refers to emotions and spirituality (Sipos, Battisti, & Grimm, 2008). This quotation suggests that when teachers appeal to students at a deeper emotional and spiritual level, their teaching can have potential to change lives. The exploration of such practices that extends beyond the cognitive realm led me to the understanding of how teachers' own spirituality infuses everything.

This chapter relates to how my teacher participants drew on their spiritual beliefs when teaching and the influence of this on their experiences as teachers. This chapter answers my second research question regarding how the spiritual beliefs of the teacher participants influenced their teaching experience and pedagogical practice. After deeper engagement with the theoretical literature relating to these findings, and the analysis of my data, I found that the personal and professional lives of teachers were connected, and I am naming this connection between teachers' spirituality and their pedagogy as 'spirituality infused pedagogy'.

I included this study's framework in Chapter 4 and here I present the revised framework because applying this framework to the empirical data from this study accentuated the multiplicities and complexities. As represented in Figure 8.1, the Australian teaching context is the centre. The teachers in the study inhabit this centre because they are registered as practising teachers with the Victorian Institute of Teaching and are employed by the school. This important aspect of the main contribution of the study relates to the place where the centre and margin in the centre meet and is discussed in the next section.

The centre in relation to this study is constituted by the international, national, local and school policies. The centre is bound by all these and creates an explanation for how teaching should be. For teachers, the centre also relates to teacher education and professional development. It also sets parameters for what determines quality teaching through APST and what content will be taught via the Australian Curriculum. A detailed description of the

legislative aspects of the centre has been presented in Chapter 2. The centre establishes the explanation under a school's privacy policy that the religious and philosophical beliefs of individuals are considered sensitive information (Victoria State Government Education and Training, 2020). Therefore, this information cannot be extracted by the school. I found that in teaching contexts these teachers negotiate their spaces for the invocation of their spirituality because their spiritual beliefs cannot be overtly visible in the Australian educational context.
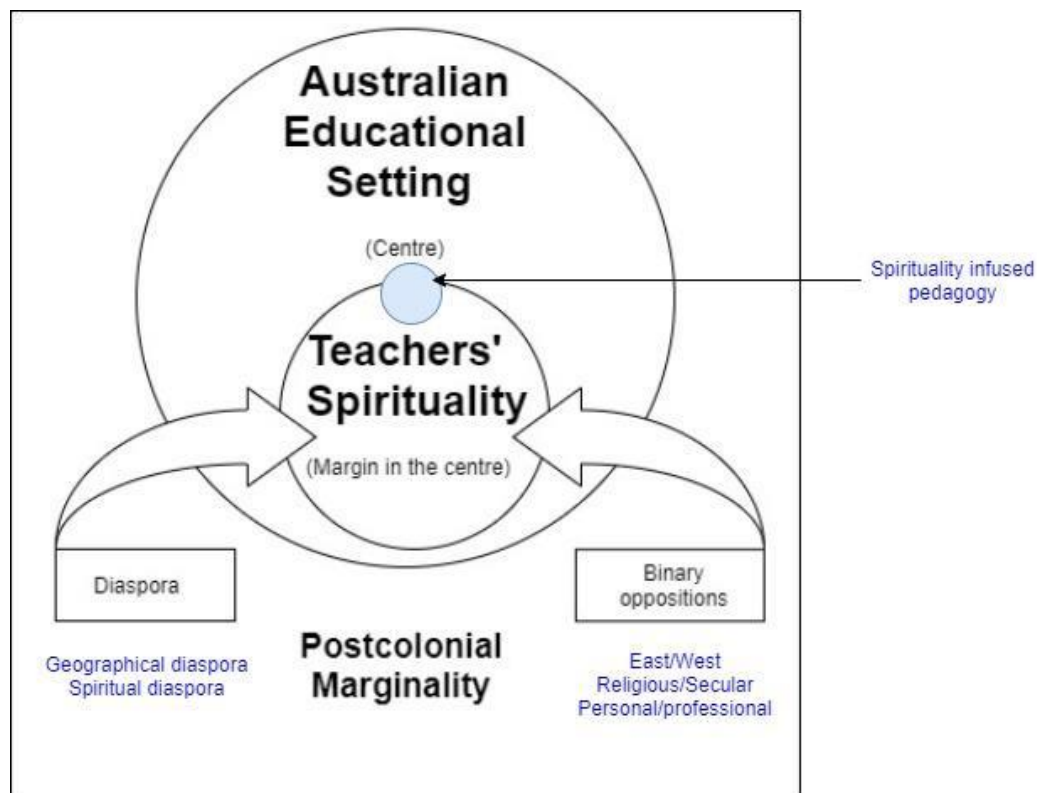
Figure 8.1: Spirituality infused pedagogy: Contribution to knowledge (theoretical framework created from Spivak's postcolonial critique).

This situation of teachers bringing their spiritual beliefs into their teaching contexts is further problematised by the nature of teachers' spiritual beliefs. Findings from the present study illustrate how the beliefs of teachers can be either shaped outside Australia and brought into Australia or have evolved from different religious and non-religious influences during their lives in Australia. In either case, these spiritual beliefs are different from Christianity,

the dominant religious presence in Australia as evidenced by the 2016 Census data (ABS, 2018). Having come across various cultural influences because of their diasporic background, the spirituality of these teachers is uniquely individual. Consequently, the beliefs of the teacher participants do not fit within established codified religions. From a Eurocentric perspective, non-West religions are referred to as monotheistic and polytheistic codes (Spivak, 1990). Examples of religions with codes include Hinduism and Islam as these religions comply with certain structures that allows for clear identification and labelling by the West.

Spivak (1990) reminds us that the centre by virtue of delivering an explanation assumes a hegemonic position. In other words, the centre determines the workings of things and during this process shapes the margin. By providing an explanation about what belongs, it makes clear what does not belong in the centre, making it marginal. In this case, various educational policies and teaching standards explain the professional role of teachers by marginalising aspects of the personal lives of teachers outside this explanation. However, as evidenced by the findings, the lives of the teacher participants are infused by their spiritual beliefs. Spiritual beliefs of the teacher participants are not mentioned in any of the policy documents and the religious/philosophical beliefs of all within the school community are considered sensitive information. Because teachers belong to the centre, lacking in clear definition, label or identity, the spiritual beliefs are present as a part of the teachers' whole self. Consequently, teachers' spirituality inhabits a margin in the centre. This discussion about centre and margin in the centre leads to the key contribution of this research: 'spirituality infused pedagogy'. I will discuss in the next section

The personal spirituality of the teacher participants was inherited by family and childhood influences and developed through their personal spiritual journey (see Chapter 6). Further, their personalised spiritual beliefs influenced their role as a teacher and influenced their interactions with their teaching contexts (see Chapter 7). These spiritual beliefs were then brought into the public sphere of their professional lives at school, leading these teachers to focus on the spiritual aspects in academic subjects and incorporating spiritual principles into their pedagogical practices. This chapter discusses this 'spirituality infused pedagogy' and includes the elements of spirituality infused pedagogy: ahimsa (no harm), connectedness, and silence and stillness. This discussion is followed by consideration of a spirituality infused

pedagogy in curricular subjects. Theoretically, this final findings and discussion chapter connects the deconstruction of the personal/professional binary and the dynamic between centre and margin. I also reflect on the influence of diaspora, as defined by Spivak (1996).

8.1 Elements of Spirituality Infused Pedagogy

This part of the chapter relates to the elements of spirituality infused pedagogy. These elements are not universal, rather they are contextual to this study of five teacher participants. Spirituality infused pedagogy is a concept rather than a framework or program. As a concept, spirituality infused pedagogy is subjective and prone to change, depending on teachers' spiritual beliefs and their teaching contexts. In the present study, teachers incorporate in their pedagogy the spiritual principles of ahimsa (no harm), connectedness, and silence, which align with their spiritual beliefs.

8.1.1 Ahimsa: No harm

Teachers who participated in this research embedded the principle of ahimsa within their pedagogy. In this discussion, I will use the encompassing term 'ahimsa' to refer to this concept of non-violence or no harm. Himsa in Sanskrit means harm; therefore, ahimsa refers to the absence of physical violence and the absence of violence in any other form, including through thoughts, speech or intention (Jerryson, 2018). The pedagogy of my teacher participants was informed by their spiritual beliefs, and I argue that the spiritual principle of no harm is infused within their pedagogy.

The process of including ahimsa in teachers' pedagogy provides a way to critique the dominant position of educational policy documentation. This documentation is created and established by the centre (Spivak, 2006), which relates to the Australian educational context (see Chapter 2). The reason for taking this critical stance lies in the centre's efforts to homogenise the role of teachers as professionals by overlooking their individual spirituality. Homogenisation is explained by Spivak (1993) as a way by the centre to generalise margins, or the people who inhabit the margins. Homogenisation gives the centre a way to refer to the margins with a collective name at the expense of their individual voices.

Regarding teacher participants drawing on their spirituality to integrate ahimsa in their pedagogy, I am reminded of Spivak's (1993, p. 121) quotation, "deconstruction can

make founded political programs more useful by making their in-built problems more visible". The political programs refer to educational policies such as APST (AITSL, 2018), the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework and Bullying No Way resource (DESE, 2020). All these documents are political programs that influence how teachers work in schools. The in-built problem here refers to the hegemonic position of professional aspects of teaching and marginalising the personal lives of teachers. When teachers used their spiritual beliefs to practise ahimsa to nurture and protect students, resolve problems within students and resist changes within the school, they performed a deconstructive move that shifted the hegemonic position of professionalism. This is because instead of a top-down implementation of these policies, these teachers brought in their personal beliefs and traversed the personal/professional boundaries.

Ahimsa can be practised at the physical level. Recognising that everything in this universe shares the same essence underpins Amy's way of living in this world, offering care and protection to those who need it. As evidenced by Amy's childhood memory around the age of five, she performed an act of non-violence that is aligned with her description of spirituality:

> *Out in the back garden she [Amy's mum] was hanging up the washing and*
> *there was a snail crawling across the pathway. She went inside, because*
> *she is a gardener - a very keen gardener - and she brought out a kettle just*
> *boiled and she went to pour the boiling water on the snail because it was*
> *going to ruin her garden. And I wouldn't let her. I said, "You can't…you*
> *can't do that. That's one of God's creatures".*

As a child, Amy was appreciative of all lives and her attitude of care and respect towards other living things were enhanced by her belief that everything in this universe shares an essence. Amy's action shows ahimsa working as she was employing the principle of 'no harm' and challenging her mother who probably just wanted to get rid of the snail. As a child, Amy showed empathy for other living things.

As a teacher, Amy's practice of ahimsa was reflected in her emphasis on nurturing and protecting her students. This spiritual belief from Amy's childhood that she practised as a

teacher, was recognised by the school parents. For example, as a classroom teacher, Amy received an end of year gift of a handmade bird from a student's parents (Figure 8.2):

It's a handmade felt bird. It's sitting like a swan on the water actually. In its wing on its back is an egg. Little felt egg. And they said, "[t]his is what you've been for our child. The egg is this child and you have held her and carried her and nourished and protected her.

This bird was a special present that made Amy realise her role was not taken for granted and that the teaching role during the primary years is sometimes like being a mother:

That's my role for teaching as well [and] I feel like ok you are entrusted with the young people and they're delicate as an egg for goodness-sake and everything is possible from that egg but it's delicate. So, you have to treat it with great love and care and constancy and responsibility.

Figure 8.2: Pictures of Amy's artefact, a felt bird with an egg.

By demonstrating herself as a nurturing and caring teacher, Amy once again involved herself with practising ahimsa towards another life, in this case, a student. This act of ahimsa was more implicit as it included the protective aspects through the nurturing of students in Amy's care.

Amy's childhood memory made me think about how Amy's appreciation of life links to various world traditions. The principle of *ahimsa* to all creatures is considered a "central, moral tenet" (Dundas, 1992, p. 13) or an ethical imperative (Bone, 2007; Cort, 2000) in Jainism and Buddhism. Amy's act of saving the snail can be likened to Jain monks and nuns committing themselves to strict non-violence towards all creatures, including microscopic organisms (Dundas, 1992). At the same time, Amy referred to the snail as "God's creature". This supports the 'everything in the One' principle that is a part of the spiritual and in practice values everything. In believing this, Amy displaces the binary between Western and Eastern beliefs (Spivak, 2006). This idea of one God as creator belonged to her Christian upbringing. It resembles the Judeo-Christian-Islamic theism (Buckareff & Nagasawa, 2016; Mawson, 2005) and the Hindu tradition of Lord Brahma as a creator of the universe (McLoughlin, 2007). In this way, in Amy's spirituality and act of ahimsa towards a small creature, the boundaries between religious beliefs collapse into oneness.

Amy's spiritual belief of protecting another creature was anchored in her own belief and aligned with religious traditions from the East and the West. I would like to reiterate here that for the present study, I am referring to the Indian subcontinent as the East and Christianity influenced European influence as the West. The reason for this approach lays in my choice of theoretical framework, which was Spivak's postcolonial marginality. Moreover, the religious and cultural backgrounds of my participants together with my subjective position played a part in this specific view of East and West.

Amy embodies the notion of ahimsa and she emphasised that "love, care, constancy and responsibility" are prominent aspects of her role as a teacher. The above four aspects are quite significant and are implied in the APST and assumed in professional development courses, yet they are rarely discussed in teachers' professional discourse. Syrnyk (2012) describes a nurture program that required teachers to adopt the role of "nurture teachers", which was implemented in special schools to support social, emotional and behavioural issues of students (p. 146). However, this was a whole school approach that worked 'top-down' rather than emerging from teachers' spirituality as was the case in this research. In my analysis, the notion of ahimsa is more powerfully connected to spirituality and encompasses nurture and compassion for all living things.

8.1.1.1 Ahimsa and the heart

One way to promote *ahimsa* or non-violence is at an emotional level. Priya believed that spirituality is connecting with others who also have what she called a "clean heart". She also believed that it was easier to connect with someone who was spiritually on a similar level. Most importantly, for Priya, connecting well with others was a spiritual belief. Priya operated at an emotional level of ahimsa to deal with verbal bullying rather than rely on the school system protocols. For instance, Priya encountered an incident where one student was teasing another about weight:

> It's not good to hurt someone by their physical appearance … I said, 'Look,
> (at) your physical appearance, whatever you are tall, short, fat, thin, fair,
> dark (it) does not matter, it's the heart, that is of most importance. What do
> you mean by heart? Can you see your heart? You can't see your heart. But
> the feelings, you say something good to a person, you bring a smile on their

face. You say something sad to the child, it hurts the heart. So, by doing this

do you think what have you done? Bringing a smile on their face or

bringing tears?' 'How would you feel?' So, I made that child feel through

the heart.

Priya decided to have a chat with them and make them understand how it might feel to be teased. Priya explained "I can just think that there was a case like children tease each other. Take care of her emotions as well as to teach this child that when the feeling is hurt, and the heart is hurt". The word hurt used here related to harm. This approach by Priya was about not harming others by taking care of their feelings. What Priya tried to do was similar to what Rosenberg (2004) suggests in Non-Violent Communication:

> The spiritual basis for me is that I'm trying to connect with the Divine
>
> Energy in others and connect them with the Divine in me. (p. 10)

In this instance, Priya encouraged students to look beyond the physical appearance and think from the heart and aim to make others happy. Priya used it as a teachable moment and she intervened and worked with both the students. Physical appearances in this instance invite teasing from one student to another. Priya intervened when one of the students was teased about being overweight. Priya asked the children to think about making each other's hearts happy. By handling student conflict in this sensitive manner, Priya openly brought the affective domain into her practice and showed ahimsa in her student interactions in the public sphere.

8.1.1.2 Ahimsa for spirituality

Ahimsa at a spiritual level led to resistance for Julia. This is because the practice of ahimsa does not mean being passive. Julia described her spirituality as "it's right, it's right it's true. I know it's true". Julia felt compelled to stand for something that she believed was right for the education of the students at her school and it was attention to spirituality. The school was moving more and more towards an academic focus:

> *I fight for it. You know I got to fight for it. I put down what I think is right. I*
>
> *won't compromise. I just won't. You know because probably, it's not many*
>
> *of us left who are willing to stand up to education. It's something I will*

fight for really fight for in that school. And if I lose my job over it, I
wouldn't care less. Because when somebody starts something with a good
intention, like Mr. (the school founder), you have to honour that. Those
people are rare coming into the world like that, you know. Absolutely rare.
He gave his life. His life's work was for that. So, you honour that.

Resisting violence is a way of practising ahimsa, and Julia "resisted oppression at the risk of violent death" (Martin, 2011, p. 25). The violent death in this case was being asked to leave the school and in a sense the death of her professional life. Thus, Julia talked about fight, about losing her job and resisting the current situation. All this was in the interest of preserving spirituality within the school because the school was focusing on academic progress over the spiritual development of the students. Viewing her actions from the perspective of no harm reminded me of global leaders who made non-violent protest a powerful force. For example, leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela asked their people to do. Martin (2011) proposed that this form of resistance can be likened to the Buddhist-led Tibetan independence movement against totalitarian rule of the People's Republic of China. Tibetan Buddhists devote their lives to non-violence and compassion; however, Martin (2011) states that when faced with oppression the question of using "violence against violent occupiers" arose (p. 25). Julia's belief that spirituality should be the basis of students' education especially in her school gave her courage to stand up for the right and true education that their founder had envisioned for their school.

Spirituality is not always about being positive, and talking softly meditating; sometimes it means speaking up and taking a stand against what is not right. Julia, in her conversation, has used the imagery of war. This is not very uncommon when connecting resistance to spiritual beliefs. For example, in Jainism, Jina is the "spiritual warrior" (Long, 2009, p. 13) or "spiritual victor" (Jaini, 2002, p. 141). This demonstrates how the Jain principle of no violence does not mean there is no action, helping others is taken for granted where there is something you can do to help others then you should do that (Jaini, 2013). In this way, the common conception that spirituality and violence are separate and situated in an oppositional position is challenged.

8.1.1.3 Ahimsa and pedagogy

The pedagogical approaches of these spiritually inclined teachers extended beyond

systems and protocols. Despite educational policies recommending the creation of a safe environment, wellbeing, and resilience (DESE, 2020), it is not always possible for teachers to attend to these matters due to restrictions of time and the prescribed curriculum. My teacher participants were strongly convinced by their spiritual beliefs, which encouraged them to stop and use these teachable moments to connect with the spiritual aspect of no harm to their pedagogy.

The above discussion presents an "extension of a principle of nonviolence" (Dundas, 1992, p. 198). Involvement of no harm in the area of philosophy refers to "intellectual ahimsa" regarding "tolerance and relativity" (Cort, 2000, p. 324). This intellectual ahimsa relates to treating different perspectives with respect and no harm. Intellectual ahimsa is a way forward to make the founded political programs useful. Through intellectual ahimsa, teachers can share their spiritual voices in a tolerant environment that is full of respect and no harm. This environment can be provided through educational policies that acknowledge the individual spiritual beliefs of teachers and provide space for them to voice these in a safe environment. This will help teachers acknowledge spirituality infused pedagogy and the various spiritual elements involved.

8.1.2 Connectedness

Teacher participants promoted connectedness within and beyond classrooms. Connectedness has been identified as a spiritual principle (Bone, 2010; de Souza, 2003, 2012). Connectedness means feeling connected to others in the universe and beyond, and is connected with relationality (de Souza, 2003, 2012). The relational aspect is critical for a positive classroom environment. Going beyond Western individualism, this promotes connectedness within the school community (Hay, 2000). This principle of connectedness is strongly supported by Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (DESE, 2020) as it clearly underscores the support from the Australian Curriculum to aim for an interconnected world via local and global community interactions. Additionally, the declaration mentions for students to have "a growing understanding of their place in the world" (DESE, p. 13). Therefore, it advocates for students to possess knowledge about the bigger picture that goes beyond their classrooms, which aligns with the spiritual principle of connectedness.

In this study, both Priya and Samuel's spiritual beliefs included connectedness with others and connectedness with God or transcendence. By bringing their personal spiritual beliefs regarding connectedness into their professional teaching practice, through spirituality

infused pedagogy, these teachers displaced public/private binary (Spivak, 2006). In addition, viewing these practices through a theoretical lens uncovered the postcolonial complexities. The spiritual principle of connectedness in teachers' pedagogy is discussed through a non-white perspective, privilege and religious context.

8.1.2.1 Connectedness and a non-white perspective

Priya shared her experience of connectedness with Indigenous students when she worked at a government school in Alice Springs, Northern Territory. Having formal English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching qualification, Priya was placed in a small group instruction for students from Indigenous backgrounds. When working with these students, Priya believed that her physical appearance of being non-white was a significant contributing factor in forming a connection with her students. She recalled her experience:

> *Indigenous children who connected to me because of my brown skin. They [students] listened and they obeyed, I could relate to them and I could understand them.*

Priya felt that the physical appearance helped her establish a positive connection with children from an Indigenous background. On the surface, the connectedness was because the Indigenous students and Priya were both non-white. Reflecting deeply on this connection made me consider the historical background of Australia (see Chapter 2, Sub-section 2.1.1). Australia being a settler colony, Indigenous Peoples have shared a problematic history with white European settlers. This might be the reason Indigenous students felt a connection with Priya who was non-white.

Priya's non-whiteness also positioned her as an outsider because the commonly perceived image of an Australian is a white European person. Srinivasan (2014) raised a discussion about identities of "Australian/non-Australian" being associated with skin colour (p. 55) by challenging the "whiteness" and image of "white Australian" (p. 72). Thus Australian/non-Australian binary based on skin colour was within Priya's awareness. Being a part of Indian diaspora, Priya positioned herself as an outsider to this country. She said, "I am an outsider coming from a different country". In her teaching practice, through her spiritual

inclination of feeling connected, Priya overcame her positionality as an outsider and made connections with the students who belonged to the Indigenous communities.

Priya had worked in small groups with Indigenous students for lessons in ESL. This act of teaching and learning English emphasises how the centre expects the margins to speak its language. In this study, the centre relates to the Australian educational context. Priya as a part of Indian diaspora and these students who were from native communities by virtue of being postcolonial and settler colonised, respectively, are considered the margins. The ESL lessons involved learning English as the language of the centre. While the schools acknowledged the home languages of Indigenous students and used these as a tool to access and learn English, it was through English that these students could access the curriculum. A description of ESL for Indigenous students included the following:

> This will ensure your child gains English and other learning skills to be
> able to access the curriculum by listening, speaking, reading, viewing and
> writing in English. (NT.Gov.Au, 2015)

This quotation from the Northern Territory government website confirms that the students access to the curriculum was offered through the English language. This is similar to Spivak's (2006) observation when her colleagues from Western academia expected her to speak the language that they all spoke so that she could be included in the centre. In offering access to the curriculum through the English language, the government school in the Northern Territory expected the Indigenous students to "exact the language of centrality" (Spivak, 2006, p. 144). However, this common language of the colonisers created a bridge between Priya and her students to establish a connection. In this way, English as a prime tool for colonisation (Nichol, 2011) became the means of connectedness.

In her interview, Priya told me how the group work proceeded. In these ESL groups, the students shared their home problems with Priya at the beginning of their session. After Priya listened to these and responded, the actual learning activity would begin. Priya's students placed their trust in her and felt comfortable sharing their home problems with her and Priya found it crucial to hear them out. Priya's action of listening to these problems and showing compassion created space and time for these students to bring their personal life problems into an educational context. Priya explained that "they would ask for their solution

to their problems that they were facing. That is where the connectedness came". Warren's (2015) findings show that white teachers are willing to help students of colour. Although beneficial for the students, this willingness emerges from a position of privilege and an underlying assumption about the abilities of students of colour and the belief that they need to be helped (Roediger, 1994; Warren, 2015).

However, Priya's perception was that her, Indigenous students felt that they could open up about the problems they were facing at home. This enhanced their access to education because once they shared their problems and felt like they were heard by Priya, they felt they could engage with their learning:

> *If they are blocked with all these things in their heart and they are not open about it, then this will keep troubling them and nothing else will get through, so it was very necessary for children who are having and lot and lots of them were having family issues so it was very important to connect there.*

Priya drew on her spirituality of connectedness with her students and brought her own spirituality in her profession, demonstrating that personal and professional are not in opposition, rather they are connected and in some way helpful to attain the educational goals set out by the national policies like the Alice Springs (Mpartwe) Declaration (2019) that states "primary school is critical to further develop foundational skills which form the basis for ongoing learning throughout school and beyond" (DESE, 2020, p. 13). The spiritual aspect of connectedness is supported by APST because the professional knowledge area has a standard that requires teachers to know their students. Furthermore, Sub-section 1.4 of APST Standard 1 relates to teaching Indigenous students by developing an understanding of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander cultures (AITSL, 2017). The most relevant teaching standard for Priya's ESL group is APST Standard 4.1 that involves teachers supporting student participation and engagement in classroom activities in an inclusive manner.

Government documents such as the Alice Springs (Mpartwe) Declaration (2019) and APST are a part of the centre that is the Australian educational context. These documents explain teaching as a professional activity that is bound by these legislations. By establishing a personal connection of trust among her students, beyond the professional, Priya drew on her

personal spiritual belief of connecting with others, thereby displacing the public/ private binary in her spirituality infused pedagogy (Spivak, 2006).

8.1.2.2 Connectedness and privilege

My teacher participants aimed to create connections that extended beyond the classroom. These connections included volunteering programs discussed by Samuel and Priya. These programs encouraged students from Australian schools to collaborate, connect or work with students overseas. These activities expanded the horizons of students because this learning took them outside their immediate classroom environment and helped them to think on a global platform. From a spiritual perspective, these activities resulted in connecting with the world and making connections with people.

Samuel and Priya belonged to diaspora; therefore, they live in a country other than their country of origin (Spivak, 1990). Priya was originally from India and presently lived in Melbourne. Samuel was originally from Sri Lanka and had lived in South Asian countries before coming to Australia. These two teachers may have spoken about the underprivileged countries because it is a part of their experiences.

Samuel thought highly of Christian organisations such as the Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance. Samuel's altruistic school projects are an example where institutions of Christian faith establish projects to help people in developing countries. The project activities included raising funds, helping with building houses, canals and wells, and teaching students for about a month. Samuel believed that the intent behind these altruistic projects was spiritual as it related to serving others and working towards the common goal of achieving a bigger good. Yet, when talking about the charity project in Burma (Myanmar), he recalled:

> *Children that we help in less fortunate countries and so we learn to pray*
> *for them. And in whatever way we can, we try and help…Children*
> *(Samuel's students) get involved in for them to go there to have an impact.*

While this does benefit other communities, it might come from the place of privilege and hierarchy rather than a place of oneness and unity where all are connected and on the same level, and the help is offered through this connectedness of being one. From a postcolonial perspective, these altruistic approaches are hinged on privilege, which is closely

connected with hegemony. For instance, Griffiths (2015) pointed to the possibility of volunteering programs limiting themselves with the neo-colonial idea of talking about the issues or challenges of the underprivileged. Griffiths (2015) drew attention to the effective influence of helping others on the volunteers themselves. Samuel's quote explains the benefits that volunteers receive because of their altruistic mission:

> *So, you change the focus from yourself to others… I notice as the time goes by. They become more proactive. They take the initiative.*

While Samuel discussed students making global connections through altruistic activities, in her interview, Priya discussed connecting with people worldwide. She specifically mentioned developing countries. She thought that awareness about these countries and how people live and make the most of their resources would help students of privileged countries (in this case Australia) appreciate what they have:

> *If they are taught certain things, taught about different countries, how people are living and through that real-life stories, there are so many African countries, Indian countries, China wherever Cambodia. So, when real-life stories are taught to them they will connect to it.*

The countries that Priya mentioned are "collectively described as 'Third World', 'periphery', and 'developing'…" (Lea, 1988, p. 3). Third world is also a "proper name to generalized margin" (Spivak, 1993, p. 55) that in contemporary times is referred to as developing nations.

Samuel and Priya promote connections beyond classrooms through altruistic activities. The privilege in these examples was based on the nationality of the people involved. Depending on the nation, whether developed countries or developing countries, a privileged/underprivileged binary came into play. These binary oppositions, anchored in a nation's hegemonic position, produce the discourses of dominance. Priya and Samuel both talked about the altruistic aspect of education that connected students with people outside their immediate classroom environment. The discourse of dominance resulting from the privileged/underprivileged binary can result in the distancing of students based on differences rather than bringing the students together in harmony.

8.1.2.3 Connectedness and the religious context

Samuel worked at a religious school in Melbourne, Victoria. He explained that the focus at his faith-based school was to help children "build a connection with God" and "to build a relationship with God, spirituality is for them to explore and to develop their own lines of communication and their own connections with God". His school did this through the scripture and stories with moral values:

> *We aim to do is to have the connection with people. That lasting connection with people and hopefully we will help them develop the lasting connection with God. So, we're not just preparing them for the short term to get a job and then find your way. We're concerned about their course. Their entire life courses.*

One of the aims of education at Samuel's school was to help students make connections with fellow humans and connect with God. Samuel himself believed in God being a friend rather than someone strict who made people follow the rules or he would punish them. Samuel felt that he had successfully created this connection with some students when he received a note from one of them. This letter (Figure 8.3) was consistent with this approach. Samuel thought this particular letter was special because the student thanked God for making Samuel her teacher. The letter also showed how Samuel had developed a rapport with his students. As Samuel put it:

> *It is not a Christian child. She is actually thanking God that she got me as her teacher. I was really touched by that. It's actually absolutely beautiful. You see it through these sorts of things, growing in their faith and they are trusting in the father up there. So that's absolutely beautiful.*
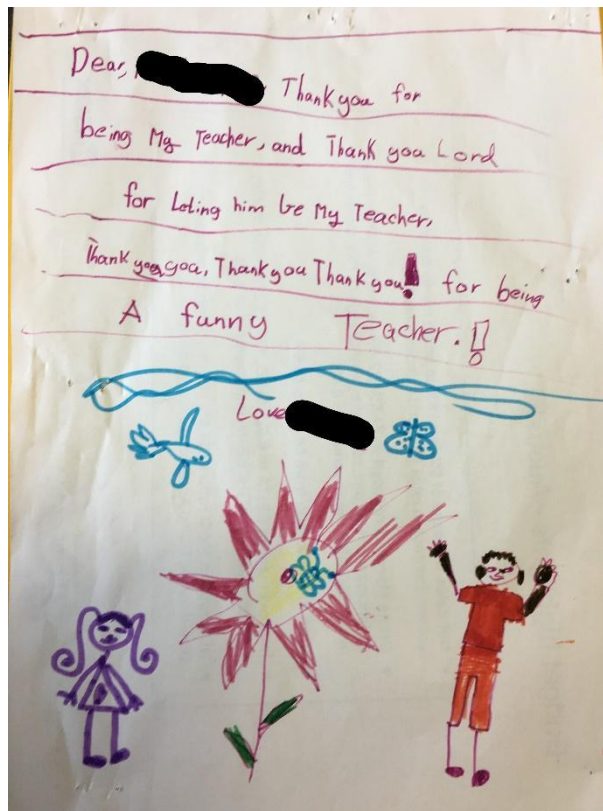
Figure 8.3: A picture of Samuel's artefact, a handwritten letter by one of his students.

Here, Samuel's student seems to be speaking the language of the centre. The religious school context encouraged their students to connect with God. Saying grace and thanking God for goodness in life is a common practice in the Christian faith. By being immersed in this environment, this student from outside the Christian faith spoke the language of the centre, with this language promoting a connection with God. This letter shows the student's connectedness with their teacher and with God.

Interestingly, the child from outside the Christian faith was being educated in a Christian school. As noted by Evans and Ujvari (2009), parents choose religious schools to ensure their religious beliefs are reflected in those of their child's school (see Chapter 2, Sub-section 2.3.2). This dynamic between the students' home backgrounds being different from their educational contexts demonstrates the multiplicity of spiritual and religious beliefs shaping one's spiritual beliefs. This across borders evolution of beliefs is discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.2. This student's words "thank you Lord for letting him (Samuel) be my

teacher" suggest an influence of the school's religious context that surfaced in this student's connectedness with his teacher and God.

8.1.3 Silence and stillness

Teachers in this study created time and space for students to practise silence and stillness. Despite the limitations imposed on teachers' time because of the outcome-oriented curricular demands (Haskins, 2009), teacher participants dedicated time and space for activities that allowed students to reconnect with themselves in silence. In their personal lives, these teachers practised being silent and still through meditation, prayers and other reflective practices (see Chapter 6). Bradbury (2010) argues that reflective practices were on the margins of professional education and the increasing use of these practices has brought them into mainstream professional education. This part of the chapter presents the findings and discussion regarding reflective practices of silence and stillness being infused as part of teachers' pedagogy.

Priya mentioned that she uses meditation with younger children to help them settle as needed. Priya shared a photograph of a meditation activity at her school (Figure 8.4).
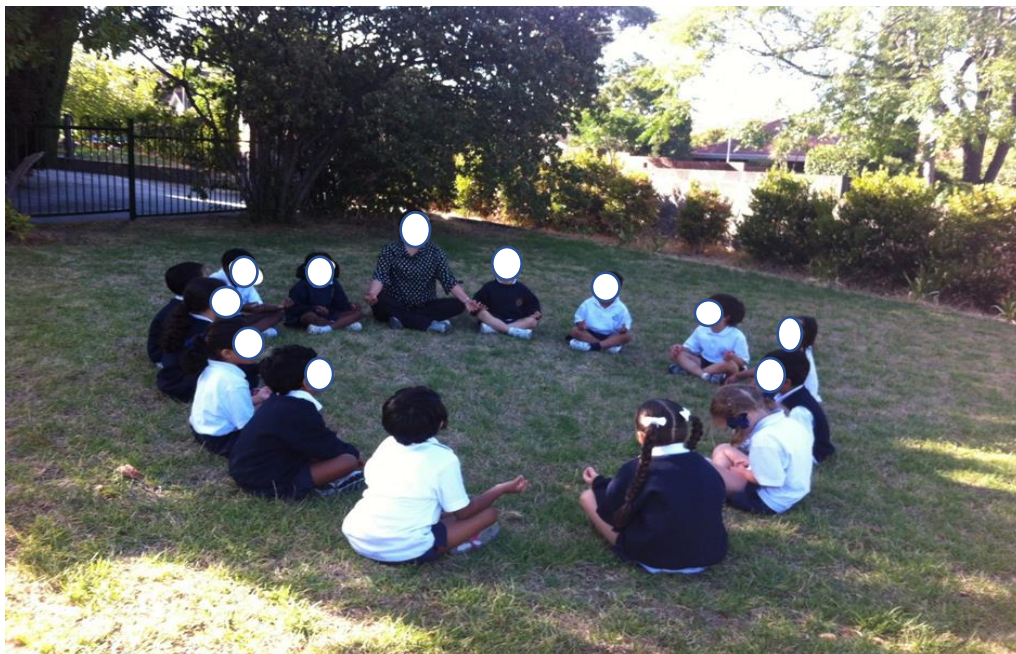

Figure 8.4: Artefact from Priya displaying meditation activity.

In this activity, students sat in a circle with Priya and closed their eyes to focus on their thoughts and just watch these thoughts go past. By focusing on awareness of the present without associating it with any words or images is similar to mindfulness practice (Ergas & Todd, 2016; Kane, 2018; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Despite originating from the Buddhist tradition, its association with neuroscience has adopted religious practice into mindfulness, which aligns with the context influenced by secularity (Dhiman, 2009).

For Priya, this meditation was introduced as a neutral practice into silence that could be adopted in different educational contexts. For instance, Priya's classroom practice of *square breathing* resembles breath meditation (Hyland, 2016). In her teaching practice, Priya has implemented the use of breathing techniques for students with behavioural problems. These students, as Priya described, were asked to remain still and draw an imaginary square in the air while breathing slowly. Priya sees the potential of these techniques for the entire class:

> *You can use these (breathing) practices for transition time as well as to*
> *help with attention.*

Having seen the benefits of breathing exercises for students with behavioural problems, Priya considers this an effective transition practice, promoting learning of mainstream subjects. Julia described a pedagogical practice from her school, which is referred to as 'pause'. The teacher, at the beginning and end of each lesson, initiates this 'pause'. During this practice, students are invited to leave their desks or tables and asked to sit on the mat. The teacher either joins them on the mat or sits on the chair and the entire class is encouraged to sit still. Students are then invited to close their eyes and wait for their teacher to say a phrase or an invocation that denotes the beginning or end of the session. After this, the students and teachers open their eyes and move to the next planned activity. Julia believes that this 'pause' provides a "good space" to begin.

My teacher participants appeared to be prioritising certain areas in education that are intangible and cannot be measured, evaluated or assessed on any scales or achievement yardsticks. Adarkar and Keiser (2007) clarify that teaching from the perspective of compassion and mindfulness poses challenges for teachers regarding testing and accountability based on the "dominant quantitative paradigm" (p. 246). This is because

compassion and mindfulness focused teaching cannot be assessed like some other subjects; therefore, it is difficult for teachers to be accountable.

Amy created a dedicated place for her students to conduct meditation activities, and she promoted silence to help her students experience peacefulness, calmness and focus. Amy performed daily meditation practice with students in Years Five and Six. This involved being silent and sitting still for a certain amount of time each day. This activity occurred at the beginning of each day. In a classroom that has been transformed for meditation practice, Amy arranged the chairs in the room into a circle with a large candle placed in the centre. Amy emphasised the importance of connecting with the circle in this activity and explained that "the whole point of the circle is the centre." The candle was then lit using a match rather than a lighter. As Amy describes, "they [students] need to strike a match and feel the fire and have a real flame happening." Amy then invited students to close their eyes and meditate for a certain amount of time. She has found that this activity is "quite powerful" after witnessing the responses from her students.

Amy experienced this spiritual significance through her profound spiritual experience on the mountain named Arunachala. Her experience included her feeling disintegrated after meditation on this mountain. This experience made such an impact on Amy that she brought back a stone from a hermit on the mountain and placed it on her meditation table in her home. Based on her experience of this mountain as a spiritual site, Amy in her pedagogical practice included a daily practice of meditation. Being a spiritually inclined school, the regular meditation practice was a part of her school's directive. However, her own experience of daily meditation provided a deeper insight for Amy and she aimed to create a place that was conducive to silent activity such as meditation.

Julia provided her art room as a space that was restful and felt special for her students:

> I [Julia] had a boy in there [art room] the other day. [He was known to be
> a] naughty boy but one of the teachers brought him and left him in the
> room and I was there by myself. And he worked really quietly; usually he is
> very noisy in the class … as he was leaving, he said thank you for letting
> me share your space.

Julia feels strongly about her students being silent when they are creating something and believes that it allows them to be happy and feel a sense of achievement as "[s]ilence, that's the only place you learn". This strong belief in the significance of silence is reflected in Julia's pedagogical practice that she performs in her art room. During Julia's art lessons, she asks her students to carefully observe their paint brushes and pay close attention to each part of the brush: long brush stem, silver part at the end, and a little knob in the silver part. Once the students are focused on their brushes, Julia asks them to experiment and determine the most effective holding position. Julia anticipates that the children will find this out for themselves in a silent space, while also connecting with themselves, when attending to their paint brushes:

> *There's a quiet space in there ... It's a silence in a way because they are actually attempting to find out something [and observe]. It's as simple as that. We've got to get the child to work it out for themselves ... [and] discover what's inside them.*

Being an art teacher provided Julia with an opportunity to help students connect with themselves when creating art in silence (Campbell, 2003).

Spivak (1988) has written widely about silencing voices relating to "can the subaltern speak?" If people in a position without identity talk, they are usually not heard by others and the act of speech remains incomplete, leading to the silencing of their voices. Therefore, people who do not hold a certain reputed position in society are not acknowledged and their issues, concerns, and opinions are not heard by others. This type of silence is about oppression and neglect. Despite the negative connotation associated with silence, the activities for silence included here relate to a positive space of contemplation, relating to self and reenergising oneself (Bone, 2007). This clarification is important because the theoretical framework for this study relates to marginality, which is about silencing voices. In contrast, silence as mentioned here is about the stillness of mind and being a productive space for creation. Teachers providing time and creating places for silence and stillness in class is not about overlooking dialogue and conversation, which is the backbone of Western education. Rather, this pedagogical practice by teacher participants involves producing creative and calm moments in the busy and hectic school day (Nisbett et al., 2001).

The silence as a spiritual principle is positive. This is a place for peace, production and creativity. Rather than bringing in oppression it brings about empowerment. As one contemplates, reflects, and creates in silence, they connect with themselves and work from their inner self. This silence is conducive to Csikszentmihalyi's (2014) concept of flow experience that relates to functioning at the optimal level of one's performance via intrinsic motivation and focused attention. When one is in flow, time passes quickly and there is oneness with the person and their activity. This is the type of silence teacher participants in this study promoted. Creating a space and time for silence enabled their students to feel peaceful, connected with themselves, and create more authentically.

I have discussed the aspects that in my analysis make a spiritually infused pedagogy. The notion of ahimsa, connectedness and stillness or silence all came forward in my participant interviews and constructed a spiritually infused pedagogy. In the following section, I will present findings and discussion about how a spirituality infused pedagogy infiltrates subjects in the Australian Curriculum.

8.2 Spirituality Infused Pedagogy in Curricular Subjects

Spiritually inclined teachers view the curriculum through a spiritual lens. My teacher participants approached the curricular subjects by acknowledging the spiritual aspects within these subjects, which are one of the learning areas in the Australian Curriculum. I am referring to the Australian Curriculum here because of the different teaching contexts of my teacher participants, which included government schools, a religious faith-based school and a non-denominational independent school. The explanation of these school sectors has been previously mentioned in Chapter 2, Sub-section 2.3.2. Moreover, as per the government directive, all schools regardless of sector are expected to follow the Australian Curriculum.

The Australian Curriculum is divided into eight learning areas: English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts, Technologies and Languages. Out of these eight learning areas, the ones that these teachers mainly acknowledged for spiritual aspects included mathematics, art, and literature. A close examination of the curricular document confirmed that spirituality is not explicitly integrated in the Australian Curriculum (see Chapter 2, Sub-section 2.3.3). However, substantial support is provided for this integration of spirituality in teaching practices through the Alice Springs

(Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019). For instance, this declaration includes encouragement for the curricular learning areas to develop "deep knowledge within a discipline" (DESE, 2020, p. 15). This depth of knowledge in the form of the spiritual aspect within the learning area was reflected in the pedagogical approach of the teacher participants.

Another significant indicator in the Australian Curriculum document relates to the ability of teachers to integrate three aspects of the curriculum: learning areas, cross-curricular priorities and general capabilities (see Chapter 2, Sub-section 2.3.3). The document mentions, "[G]ood teachers are able to integrate the cross-curriculum priorities and the general capabilities appropriately and authentically into their teaching of the learning areas in a seamless way" (ACARA, 2016, para. 10). Similarly, in this study, I found that being spiritually inclined meant that in addition to integrating the three aspects of curriculum, these teachers seamlessly integrated their spirituality as it is a part of their authentic self (see Chapter 6). What follows is the presentation of findings and discussion about spirituality infused pedagogy in mathematics, art, and literature.

8.2.1 Mathematics

The teachers in this study understood the connection between mathematics and spirituality via an appreciation of art, nature and patterns. This connection between mathematics and spirituality is not a recent phenomenon. Historically, mathematics has been a medium to connect to God or the universe that is created by God. For example, Galileo and Kuyper saw mathematics as a way to connect to the divine (Watson, 2019). Another historical example can be drawn from the life of the Indian mathematician Ramanujan. His knowledge of mathematics as an untrained mathematician was on par with established Western mathematicians. Ramanujan believed that his insights into mathematics came from the visions from his family Goddess Namgiri (Ono & Aczel, 2016). In addition to these historical key figures, there is evidence in the scholarly literature about the connection between mathematics and spirituality.

For instance, the application of the principles of mathematics to enable people to live spiritual lives was explored by Meiyappan (2017). Moreover, experiencing spirituality while doing mathematics was discussed by Kessler (2019). While there is evidence for a connection between mathematics and spirituality in the literature, general abilities within the Australian

Curriculum (ACARA, 2018) offer spaces for mathematics to connect with different learning areas as advised.

Further, in an Australian context, teacher education resources focus on technique, proficiency and student outcomes, and do not mention spirituality for the successful attainment of mathematical skills (Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers Inc., 2020). In teacher education, efficient teaching of mathematics is connected to pedagogical content knowledge (Nason, Chalmers, & Yeh, 2012). Chan and Wong (2014) alerted to the influence of teachers' religious beliefs on teaching mathematics and concluded that this research area is under-developed. Considering the observation by Chan and Wong regarding limited empirical studies, these findings of spirituality infused pedagogy in mathematics will be a significant addition to this existing literature.

The teacher participants in the present study believed that mathematics and spirituality were linked via art, nature and understanding of patterns, and Kessler's (2019) assertion that "spirituality enters mathematics through beauty and study of patterns" (p. 49) aligns with this belief. Samuel revealed that he perceived spirituality to be an integral element of mathematics, and believed that the spiritual idea of a "higher power" or a "higher intellect" underpins mathematics and the workings of it. He said, "Rather than mathematics and spirituality being different areas, they actually perfectly complement each other." Moreover, Samuel thought that "There is a blueprint for everything that we see". This blueprint relates to specific mathematical patterns and ratios, which are evident in nature such as "the formation of a fern leaf and the manner in which it unrolls and rivers flowing into the sea in a specific manner". This understanding that patterns found in nature connected to the spiritual dimension of mathematics was also reflected in Amy's thinking. She had a similar idea about nature and mathematics being connected and discussed the Golden Mean that is found in the shell pattern:

> *Just [as] the natural world follows a particular geometric pattern, if you magnify and look at the atoms in the plant and so forth the way it grows, [it] follows a law, which is all to do with geometry and mathematics.*

This consideration of mathematics and patterns led to another way in which spirituality is reflected in geometry. Amy spoke of geometric patterns that were used outside

classroom settings such as sacred designs and patterns in Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist cultures. When discussing the topic of mathematics, Julia described the principle of Sacred Geometry as being spiritual:

> *[M]athematically perfect forms [are] the essence of everything in the universe ... this is Sacred Geometry.*

In addition to viewing spirituality in mathematical patterns, Amy and Julia focused on the connection between art and mathematics, in particular Sacred Geometry. Amy describes her passion for Sacred Geometry by making links to mathematics and her experience of art. Mathematics and art are linked through 'beauty', which is one of the spiritual aspects (Kessler, 2018). This artistic beauty that is created through geometrical shapes is attributed elsewhere, for instance, the architecture of sacred places and the artwork in religious places as mentioned by Amy:

> *[A]ll of these ancient, sacred, geometric forms, the Muslims were really big on. Look at all their artwork, tilework, mosques and architecture; and the ancient Christians and mandala work with the Hindus and Buddhists.*

Three teacher participants acknowledged spirituality within mathematics. This understanding of spirituality highlighted the interconnections between mathematics and spirituality through art, nature, and various patterns.

One way of explaining this discrepancy between these findings showing the connection between mathematics and spirituality and educational documents overlooking this connection could be explained using the cultural explanations that are critiqued by Spivak (2006). She wrote, "the economic and intellectual areas" inhabit the public sector and "certain practices of religion" occupy the private sector (Spivak, 2006, p.139). The understanding that mathematics is based on critical thinking was inspired by an enlightenment movement (Ariso, 2019). Applying this cultural explanation to a mathematics/spirituality pair suggests that the curricular subject of mathematics belongs to the public sector by virtue of its role in economic and intellectual areas.

However, individual spirituality aligns with certain religious practices and belongs in the private sector as the nature of spirituality is relational (Hay & Nye, 2006). This implies

that mathematics and spirituality could be perceived as a binary oppositional pair in teaching contexts (Morton, 2007). Critical thinking relates to forming judgement based on objective analysis, whereas the relational aspect refers to connectedness among objects and people. Mathematics is considered objective and analytical; therefore, it is usually seen as being separate from relationality (Lim, 2015). This common perspective towards mathematics confirms the binary opposition between mathematics and spirituality. When teachers in this study practise spirituality infused pedagogy connecting mathematics and spirituality, they are producing grounds for deconstruction between the public/private binary (Spivak, 2006). This is significant for the holistic education of students extending beyond outcome-based education.

8.2.2 Art

A teacher in this study drew on their spiritual beliefs to help them acknowledge the spiritual aspects within visual arts. The connection between spirituality and art has been explored in academic literature. For example, Binder (2016) wrote, "The influence of spirituality on the arts is apparent through the artists/scholars/teachers who weave their spirituality through art making, be it visual arts, performative work, dance, or poetry" (p. 294). Despite this acknowledgement about teachers weaving spirituality in art, the curriculum document remains at a more practical level of creating art pieces and responding to art critically. As stated by the curriculum document, "Students learn as artists, by making art works that communicate to audiences. They learn as audiences, by responding critically to the Arts" (ACARA, 2011, p. 5). This curricular focus does not articulate the connection between art and spirituality. Yet, Julia incorporated a spiritual dimension in her art lessons and drew on her own spirituality.

During one of her art classes, Julia presented a picture of the Mona Lisa and asked each child to draw this portrait (Figure 8.5). Julia was fascinated after receiving their completed work as she said, "[t]hey are all different, but they are all one as well [and] that's what I love about this … every single one of them has consciousness in them." Consequently, Julia can connect with her students by connecting with the consciousness that was behind the creation of her students' artwork.

How Julia connected to her students' work is quite significant. She could look beyond the pictures in front of her and connect with the consciousness of her students. This approach cannot be taken for granted or trivialised. As demonstrated by the anecdotal reflection by Atkinson (2008), it is not a simple task to look beyond the tangible, in particular to go past the Western perspective set within one's mindset and become open to what is outside. Atkinson (2008) wrote about his experience of 'othering' when interacting with his non-Western students' work:

> Their sense of proportion and composition was so different from, for example, Western projection or representational systems. They were highly decorative and rhythmical. I think that I failed to respond adequately to these drawings and to boys who made them. Because of barriers relating to language and other cultural practices. (p. 228)
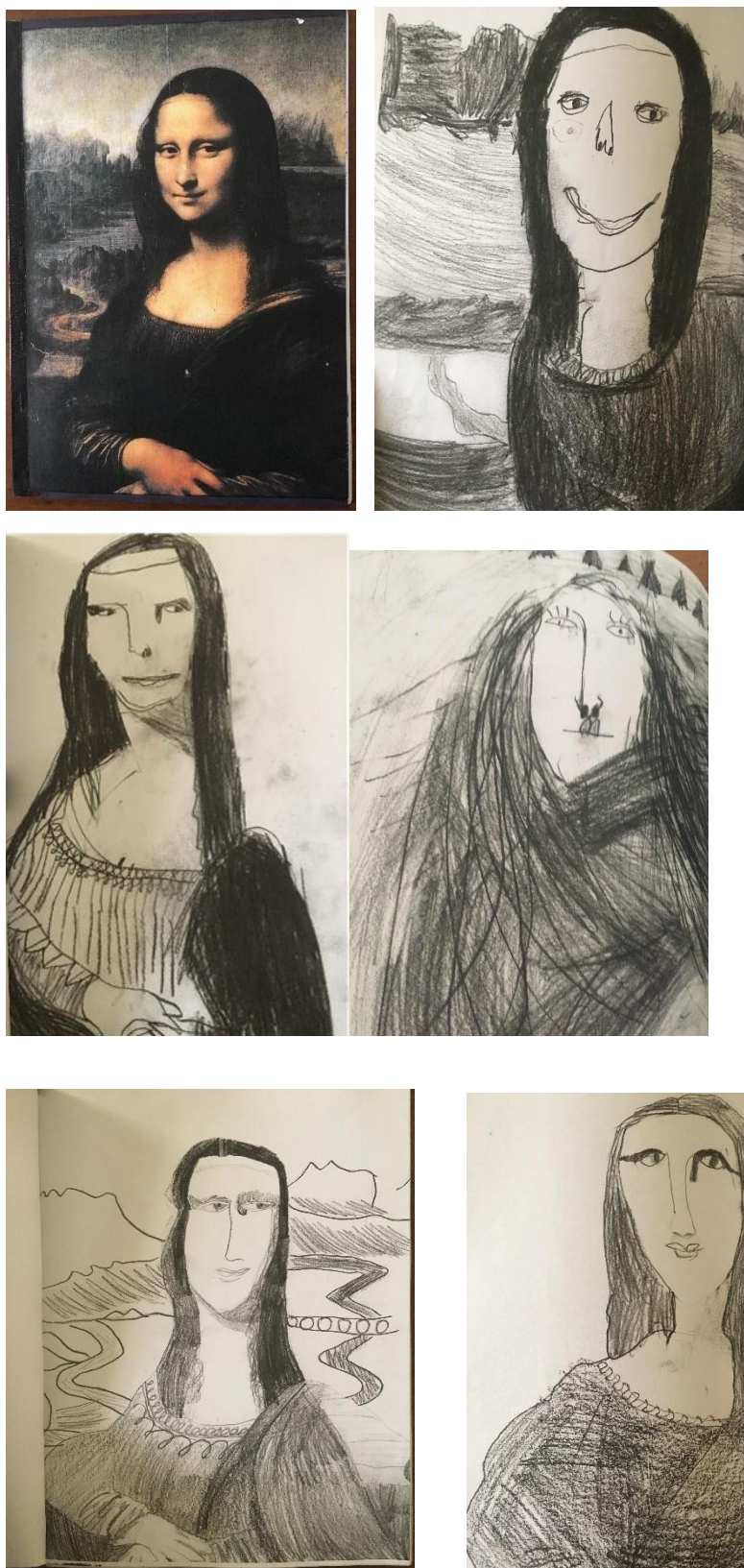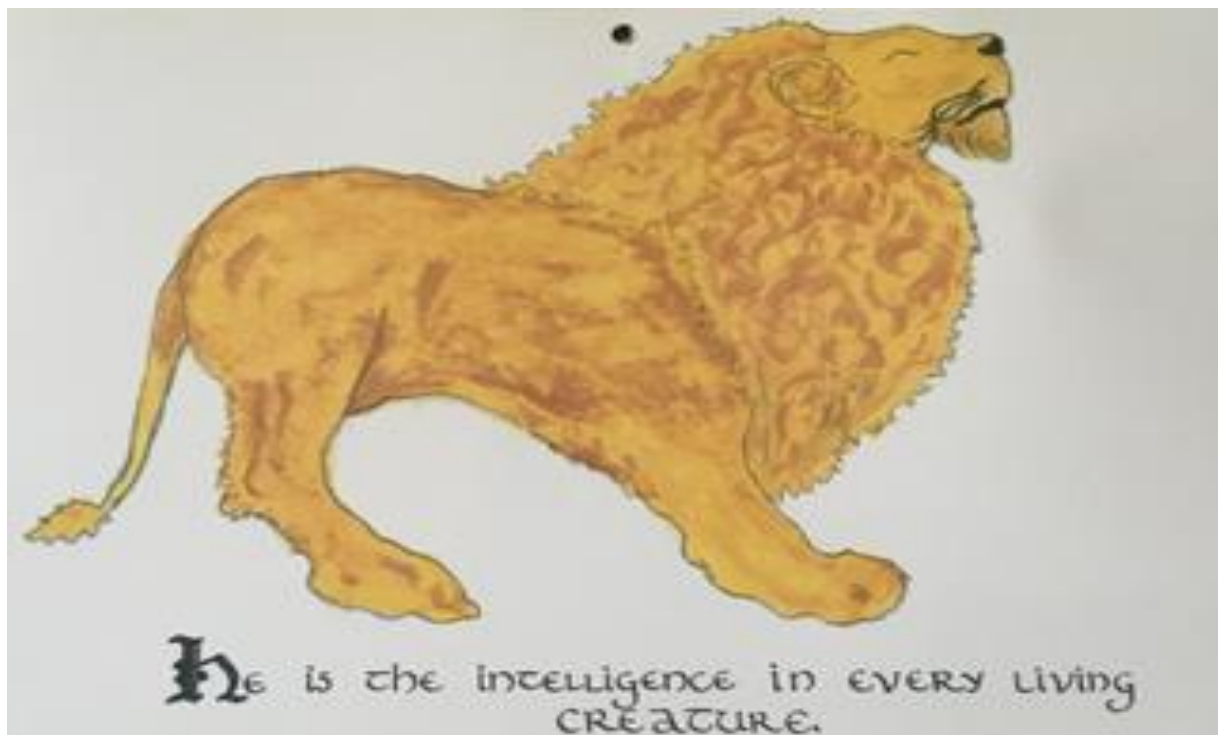
Figure 8.5: Artefact from Julia, Mona Lisa picture and students' Mona Lisa portraits.

Julia's pedagogical approach to the curricular subject of art was infused by her own spiritual belief and this approach helped her to connect with her students on a spiritual level. In her personal life, Advaita philosophy, has been a prominent influence on Julia as an adult (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2). This philosophy considers a permanent self (Atman) as being one with all-encompassing consciousness (Brahman) (Sharma, 1995). Advaita means non-dual, no two. Applying Spivak's (2006) deconstructive stance to the concept of Advaita leads to the displacement of the self/other and self/God binary because if the humans, animals and everything else in the world has the same essence, the boundary between self/other diminishes and opens up a space of mutual connection. This Advaita philosophy was internalised in Julia's everyday living. Julia's spirituality was shaped by the Advaita philosophy when she went to India. When she returned to Melbourne, she joined a philosophy group that followed this philosophy and applied it to their daily lives. Julia had been a part of this group for over 20 years and she brought forward her personal beliefs of spirituality into her professional role.

By perceiving the consciousness in each of her student's artwork, Julia went beyond the binary of professional/personal (Spivak, 2006). This is because in Julia's Mona Lisa portrait lesson, at a professional level, Julia examined the ability of her students to draw the portrait of Mona Lisa. This aligns with the description in the Australian Curriculum, "describe the influences of artworks and practices from different cultures, times and places on their art making" (ACARA, 2018). While doing this professionally, on a personal level, Julia connected with her students' consciousness through their artwork by sensing their presence in their artwork. Referring to these portraits, Julia said, "somebody's whole being is in it". This approach by Julia aligned with her belief that the all-encompassing consciousness is one with self.

Another example of spirituality infused pedagogy concerning art emerged from Julia's artefact of a calendar from her students. This calendar activity unfolded when Julia selected some sentences from traditional Eastern and Western scriptures and gave each child a sentence to reflect on. After the children had some time to think and really absorb the meaning of the sentence, they were asked to draw a picture that depicted their sentence (Figure 8.6). In these examples, the passages from the Bible, Upanishad as well as Confucius and Spinoza are visible. There is a combination of Eastern and Western, religious and

philosophical passages or sentences. They are presented as paintings by the children, and seven schools from various places around the US, England, Ireland and Australia collaborated to make the calendar. Creating these pictures was spiritual because each child sat in silence with the sentence and expressed themselves through the art form. This activity occurred in all Western countries but it included Eastern scriptures. This opened up the discussion about the impact of the East on Western thoughts because I could see a cultural exchange that aligned with the transcultural aspect of spirituality (Ashcroft, 2013). The transcultural aspect refers to the influence of colonisation when the colonised and coloniser are both impacted and cultural exchange occurs during colonisation. The integration of Eastern philosophy in Western schools indicated the transcultural aspects.

He is the intelligence in every living creature.

Follow just and perfect men faithfully as the moon follows the path of the constellations.

The sage's quest is for himself, the quest of the ignorant for other than himself   CONFUCIUS
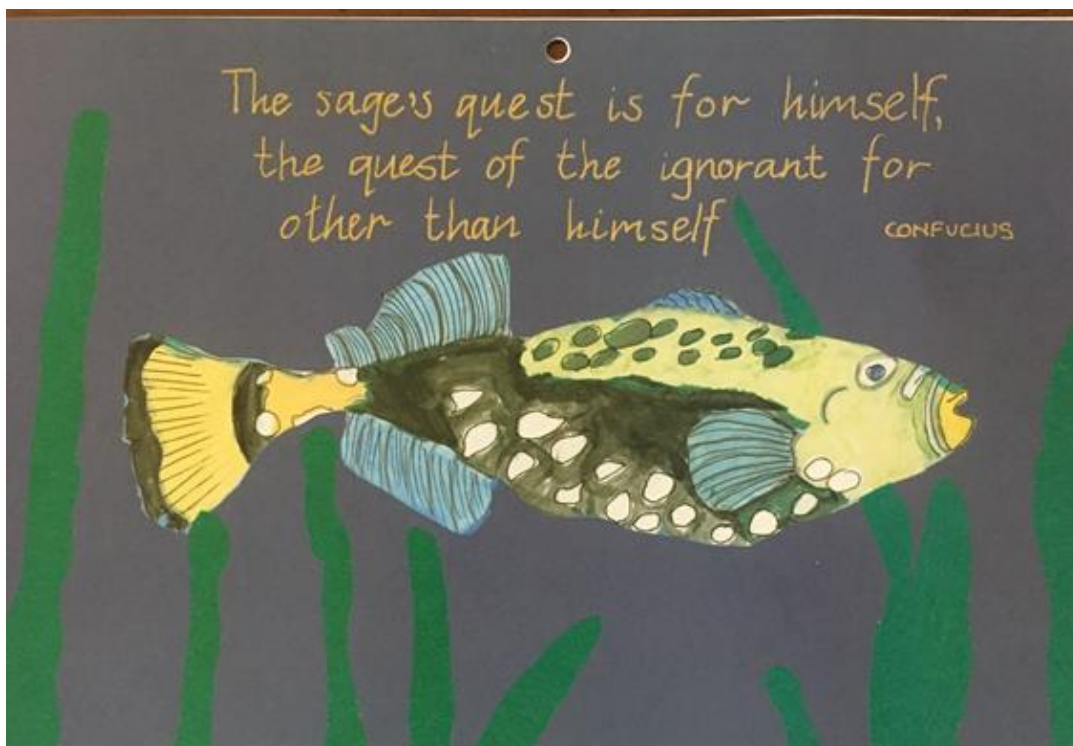
Figure 8.6: Artefact from Julia, pages from the calendar made by students.

This artistic experience for Julia's students is significant because there are multiple spiritual principles within this one activity. Binder (2016) explained the relevance of such an activity as, "the interconnection between spirituality and the arts as part of the everyday is to return to an aesthetic appreciation of life" (p. 295). The creation of the calendar could be viewed as appreciating wisdom from across the world through aesthetic drawings.

The students also spent time reflecting on these phrases and meaningful lines from the scripture passages. Scriptures are an important thread that is woven through the spiritual, religious, and cultural fabric of various world traditions. This positive impact of scriptures was highlighted by Rackley (2017), who stated that "research establishes that reading sacred texts can have a powerful influence on young people's lives" (p. 136). Sitting in silence with these lines relate to one of the spiritual aspects discussed in Sub-section 8.1.3. Furthermore, the idea of students from different countries coming together to create this artistic calendar related to connectedness beyond classrooms (see Sub-section 8.1.2). By actively implementing the calendar activity in her class, Julia brought together spirituality and art in the professional context because spirituality from the private realm of Julia and her students'

own experiences and understanding were reflected in their pedagogical practice. In this way, the public/private binary was disrupted (Spivak, 2006).

8.2.3 Literature

A teacher participant drew on her spiritual beliefs to incorporate spirituality in English literature. Amy taught at a non-denominational independent primary school, which offered an additional subject of Scripture/Philosophy. This subject aligned with the school's ethos and connected with the literature strand within the English language curriculum. Close examination of the curriculum document revealed that the Scripture/Philosophy course from Amy's primary school aligned with the Unit 1 Literature course at the secondary school level from the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016). The curriculum document states, "This unit develops knowledge and understanding of different literary conventions and storytelling traditions and their relationships with audiences" (ACARA, n.d., para.1). In this way, the aim of engaging with these stories was about learning the skills regarding literary conventions and interaction with the audience.

Amy's focus on incorporating these stories from various world traditions relates to a deeper engagement with the text and enhancing students' lives by incorporating transformation. Amy strongly believes that these stories are "non-negotiable" and not sharing these stories with students is a "disservice" to them. This is because Amy is confident that the stories of ancient wisdom are essential for character building in students. She shared her observation of her students after her sessions, "I've noticed their [students'] behaviour changing … [they] can't help but respond and want to follow … the beautiful, pure, virtuous princes". Amy's observation is supported by Adarkar and Keiser's (2007) note that Buddhist stories and parables are useful for promoting mindfulness and compassion in teaching contexts. In this way, Amy viewed the scriptural stories as being essential for the holistic development of the child.

Further, Amy believed in the student-led approach for teaching these stories. In her interview she said, "[i]t's not much good if I teach them something that, I think. They [students] need to explore it themselves". Amy invites her students into a deep conversation about the scripture passage and provides sufficient time for individual students to share their ideas. This aligns with the curriculum document that describes the incorporation of oral and written responses

to these works of literature from students (ACARA, n.d.). Yet, Amy's lesson extends beyond the written responses into the day-to-day lives of the students outside school. The following example illustrates Amy's spirituality infused pedagogy with a scripture passage.

In Amy's Year Four scripture class, her students reviewed a well-known passage from 'Mahabharata', a Hindu epic. In Amy's class, she decided to unpack the line by Krishna 'I am the Self, seated in the heart of all beings' and asked her students to discuss how this could be possible. During this discussion, Amy asked her students to suggest some possibilities that were then narrowed down to two, which everyone considered plausible, and is captured below:

> *The two great interpretations about mankind, the universe and God are*
> *that there is a Supreme Being within man's own heart (duality), or that the*
> *Supreme Being is, in truth, our own pure essence (unity) … In their own*
> *very genuine ways, they came up with them themselves. I did not tell them.*

Amy encouraged her students to apply these classroom discussions to their everyday lives and reflect on their experiences. The above classroom discussion later translated into real-life situations when Amy used the possibility of Krishna as our spirit, which means that we have the same spirit. Amy recalls asking students to "remember the Supreme Lord in your heart and see what happens". When students had a problem with another student in the playground, Amy reminded them about this essence and presented them with questions:

> *What does it mean when somebody is in the playground and you really*
> *disagree with what they're asking you to do? Or, if you don't like whatever*
> *you are seeing in someone? What does it mean if Krishna is their spirit,*
> *and you have the same spirit?*

Amy's students responded to her by taking notes concerning their feelings in light of the scripture passage that they had been discussing in class:

> *One [student] said, "Look I just felt calmer." My sister was annoying me at*
> *home, and I was trying to practise piano and she was making a lot of noise*
> *and I remembered [the Supreme Lord in your heart], and I just felt a lot*
> *calmer and I let her do what she was doing". Another boy said, "I just felt*

happier." A third one said that she and her mum had been arguing, and
then in the middle of the argument, she remembered and said, "Mum, we
are arguing with ourself!" And they both just stopped and looked at each
other and calmed right down and stopped arguing.

The above example originated from Hindu scriptural texts, however, Amy explained that the same approach applies to various texts from different world traditions. Amy's school's philosophy enabled her to bring this religious literature into the classroom in her non-denominational setting. By doing this, Amy crossed the religious/non-religious binary (Spivak, 2006) and opened up the possibility for her students to actively engage with the literature across the world. Additionally, the act of bringing in global literature related to displacing the West/East binary (Spivak, 2006). No more was the Western Eurocentric literature prioritised over Eastern literature. Rather, they all shared the same space and interaction within the classroom. This aligned with Amy's spiritual belief in unity among all. Amy believed that everything in the world was connected and all religions were the same, with this belief helping Amy interact confidently with texts from different cultures and religions. The reflection of Amy's personal beliefs in her professional teaching shows that the personal and professional are not always mutually exclusive. Amy's teaching practice showed spiritually infused pedagogy that displaced the public/private binary.

8.3 Summary

This chapter presented findings and discussion about spirituality infused pedagogy in two main areas. The first part of this chapter included the elements of spirituality influenced pedagogy: ahimsa, connectedness, and silence and stillness. This was followed by the second part about spirituality infused pedagogy in different curricular subjects. Acknowledging the spiritual aspect in education as demonstrated by these teachers is significant for the education of young minds because it encourages them to look beyond the techniques and outcomes of a particular subject area, and connects students with the subjects more deeply, extending the education outside their textbooks and digital devices, and connecting it with the real world. Therefore, through this chapter I argue that a spirituality infused pedagogy is significant if teachers are to teach as their authentic self.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This chapter begins by reflecting on this study from my own perspective as a researcher. This is followed by briefly highlighting the main aspects of this research process. Next, I present the contribution of this study to the field of education and spirituality. This leads to the conclusions drawn from the findings of this research. Based on these conclusions, the implications and recommendations are presented. Finally, this chapter concludes with some closing comments that reiterate the main argument.

9.1 Researcher's Reflection

This PhD has been a transformative process for me. I was motivated by Spivak's analysis and her caution about being critical when she wrote that "the politics or the critic [sic] of the reader should be put on the table as scrupulously as possible" (Spivak, 1990, p. 50). However, during this research, I found it difficult for my researcher's voice to come forward. I was aware that this voice existed and guided the way I conducted the study and progressed with the research. Yet, I was unable to make it explicit in the context of my thesis document. This became evident when in one of my PhD meetings my supervisor told me, "the findings are hovering there without being articulated". Landry and MacLean (1996) highlighted Spivak's words when she said, "one has to assume even the freedom of subjectivity in order to be responsible" (p. 294). This quote made me consider my role as a responsible researcher to wholeheartedly accept my own prejudices and bias, acknowledge them and exercise my freedom to voice my authentic thoughts and ideas. Eventually in this thesis, I proceeded to own my analysis and vocalise my findings, not despite my subjectivities but rather because of them. It was a truly liberating process for me.

As a researcher, viewing one of my experiences through a postcolonial lens helped me connect to the stories of my participants. As part of my reflection, I include an experience that influenced my thinking about this study. Having recently arrived in Australia, I was asked by one of my classmates, "what does it mean to be an Indian?" I remember that I was unable to answer at the time. Since being asked this question, I have realised that being an Indian was so ingrained in me, I was not able to describe my nationality as separate from others because it was the only thing I ever knew. It was much later in my life and after spending a few years outside India, that my Indianness became clear to me. One of the

prominent aspects of my Indianness concerns the fact that religious and secular spirituality formed important pillars of public life in India. When I lived in there, yoga, prayers and students displaying religious symbols such as a Bindi for Hinduism, a bracelet for Sikhs, a hijab for Muslims and a cross for Christians were quite common in schools. In Australia, I found there were restrictions on speaking about religion and spirituality in educational context in secular schools. This was intriguing and prompted me to explore the topic of spirituality in education. At the end of this study about teachers' spirituality, I found it slightly disturbing as a researcher that there is no space for teachers to express their spirituality. This resulted from the dominant ways of working and functioning not recognising the non-dominant voices (Cannella & Viruru, 2004). I realised that this was part of my silence or lack of voice that prompted me to go on a journey to recognise these unheard voices of teachers' spirituality in their teaching contexts.

9.2 Brief Review of the Research

This research aimed to explore teachers' spirituality concerning their teaching contexts, which is significant as many existing studies view teachers' spiritual beliefs as a part of their personal lives that is separate from their experiences as teachers. There is empirical research that explores the ways in which teachers can develop students' spirituality. The main aspect of the present research was to cross this personal/professional boundary by considering teachers' spiritual beliefs in their professional contexts. For addressing this particular aim, this study focused on the following research questions:

> How do primary school teachers in Australia experience and understand spirituality?

> How does their spirituality influence their experience as teachers and their pedagogical practices?

These research questions led me to this qualitative interpretive case study involving five teacher participants. The sample size made this a small-scale study, which allowed me to engage deeply with the participants' stories and experiences using semi-structured interviews and the analysis of artefacts. Such in-depth engagement with the interviews and presentation

of artefacts shared by my participants made me realise that teachers' own beliefs interacted with their teaching context and the context influenced their pedagogical decision-making.

During the participant recruitment process, I experienced first-hand the tension between teachers' spirituality and their teaching contexts through two specific instances. In this study, the participants were recruited using a snowball sampling method. When approached through a mutual friend, two teachers from a religious school showed keen interest in participating in my study. However, they could not participate because their school leadership strongly discouraged them from sharing their spiritual understandings. In another instance, a teacher who was recommended to me by a common friend declined the opportunity to participate. Although this teacher worked at a religious school, she was a non-believer and did not wish to be a part of a study that involved spirituality as she connected spirituality with religion rather than taking a holistic view. These experiences reconfirmed my conviction regarding the need to engage in a dialogue about teachers' personal spiritual beliefs within their teaching contexts.

Once the participants were recruited, and the data were collected through semi-structured interviews and the presentation of artefacts, the data were analysed using TA. Because I acknowledged my researcher subjectivities at the beginning of the thesis in *My positivity and motivation* (see Sub-section 1.1.1), it made sense to me to focus on my perspective as a researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017), which was actively involved in the coding process and generating themes. My involvement as a researcher is reflected in the generation of themes rather than emerging themes or searching for themes. The data analysis helped me answer my research questions through my findings, which are presented and discussed in Chapter 6, *Coming into One's Own Spirituality*, Chapter 7, *Teachers' Spirituality in their Teaching Contexts* and Chapter 8, *Spirituality Infused Pedagogy.* As discussed in these chapters, my research questions concerning teachers' experience and understanding spirituality were understood through their childhood influences and travel. The influence of spirituality on their experience as teachers was addressed via teachers perceiving their teaching roles through spiritual perspective and negotiating their spirituality in a conducive environment and the environment that presents challenges for their spirituality. I discussed the influence of spirituality on their pedagogy, using the term 'spirituality infused pedagogy', which emerged at the end of this study.

Considering the significance of this term, I briefly revisit it in the following section as my original contribution to knowledge. In addition to this, I draw attention to the use of a postcolonial lens in the field of education as a theoretical contribution of this study.

9.3 Contribution to Knowledge

My original contribution to knowledge is 'spirituality infused pedagogy', which relates to the pedagogical approach of teacher participants that drew on their spirituality. This study argues that the concept of spirituality infused pedagogy is separate from pedagogy for spirituality in its various forms. Pedagogical approaches, including the model of transformational learning (de Souza, 2009), dispositional framework (Hyde, 2014), engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994) and existential framework (Webster, 2004) present opportunities for teachers to address the topic of spirituality in their classrooms. In contrast, a spirituality infused pedagogy refers to teachers' own spirituality infusing their pedagogy. This study did not aim to generalise findings for all primary school teachers. The five teacher participants in this study shared that they expressed their spirituality in their teaching context either openly or covertly. On the surface, it might not be completely obvious, yet teachers who hold spiritual beliefs have internalised beliefs that infuse all aspects of their lives, including their professional lives.

Interviews from all five participants showed that their individualised spiritual beliefs influenced their pedagogical practices, and the way they expressed their spirituality was influenced by their teaching contexts. Therefore, I strongly argue that teachers' individual spirituality is not left outside their teaching contexts as implied by the current educational policies and relevant literature that was reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively. Instead, teachers' spirituality is reflected in their pedagogical approaches and must be acknowledged in their professional contexts.

My original contribution to my discipline is bringing the postcolonial theoretical perspective in the field of education to research spirituality. As highlighted in the literature, while some studies explored teachers' spirituality, this study takes a different theoretical approach by bringing in the theoretical concepts from cultural politics into education. These concepts included marginality, diaspora, homogenisation and the public/private binary (Spivak, 1990, 1993, 2006). In cultural politics, these aspects examine the Eurocentric

hegemonic position causing the marginalisation of knowledge and lifeways of the non-West. The following section presents the conclusions from this study that further discuss this marginalisation of spirituality as a topic and highlight the need to address teachers' spirituality.

9.4 Conclusions from this Study

Based on the findings, I concluded that teachers' spirituality influenced their pedagogical practices. As the review of the literature in Chapter 3 showed, the acknowledgement of teachers' spirituality in their professional lives has not been fully explored. The present literature highlighted links between teachers' spirituality and their mental wellbeing (Fisher, 1998; Fisher et al., 2000). Teachers' spirituality was an important aspect in dealing with job stress and finding meaning at the workplace, which in this case is the school (Arnold et al., 2007; Daniel, 2015). The conclusions from this study focused on acknowledging teachers' spirituality concerning their pedagogical approaches in Australian educational contexts. In the following two sub-sections, I will state some of my conclusions based on this study.

9.4.1 Understanding the marginalisation of spirituality

Spirituality as a topic is marginalised, which needs more attention in educational contexts. In this study, this marginality was evident in educational policies and teaching practices. The findings made me realise how much spirituality is marginalised, even for the First Peoples of Australia. The spirituality of the Traditional Owners of this land is ingrained in this country through their presence as the First Peoples of this nation. One of the aspects of studying spirituality in Australia that stood out for me was the absence of Indigenous spirituality in the discourse of spiritually-inclined teachers. Despite one of the teachers teaching in a school at Alice Springs, Indigenous spirituality was not mentioned in her interview or artefact. Apart from some reference in ESL classes and art lessons, the Indigenous perspective was not mentioned by participants. This experience led me to think about the marginalised position of the First Peoples in Australia and the marginalisation of Indigenous spirituality.

Despite Indigenous spirituality being woven into the fabric of Australian education, it is not visible. Traditionally, the spiritual landscape in Australia is enriched by Indigenous spirituality and lifeways that celebrate relational aspects and connection to land. As Yunkaporta (2009) stated, the Indigenous perspective views Australia as a land of 500 nations and considers the histories, cultures and traditions of all these lands. Therefore, integrating the Indigenous perspective in research about spirituality will enrich our understanding of spirituality. The studies by Indigenous intellectuals such as Karen Martin (2012) and Tyson Yunkaporta (2009) bring forward the Indigenous perspective, which allows the knowledge of different cultures to be shared at equal levels of power across Indigenous, non-Indigenous, Western and non-Western cultures. Therefore, researching spirituality from Indigenous perspective is essential in countries like Australia where First Peoples spirituality is key to reconciliation.

The invisibility of spirituality as a topic was demonstrated in the review of educational policies and documentation presented in Chapter 2, Section 2.1. This review demonstrated the absence of teachers' spirituality in APST and teacher education and professional development courses. Furthermore, the examination of educational policy documents such as the Alice Springs (Mpartwe) Declaration (DESE, 2020), APST (AITSL, 2018) and Australian Curriculum (ACARA, n.d.) demonstrated that teachers' spirituality is not visible in the professional contexts in the public domain (see Chapter 2).

This conclusion about marginality and invisibility of spirituality connected with the theoretical framework of Spivak's postcolonial marginality. The colonial past establishes Australia as a settler colony. This colonial presence introduced Christianity and marginalised Indigenous spirituality. In addition, the multicultural nature of the Australian population, which consists of various religious and secular orientations (ABS, 2018) added another layer to the consideration of spirituality in Australia. Spivak's views of marginality hold because it was evident that spirituality is marginalised based on this study of five teachers. It made me think how prevalent this might be in the larger population, and that this invisibility and marginality of spirituality is likely to be found in other areas. Therefore, I recommend future research in this area.

9.4.2 Need to better understand teachers' spirituality

My engagement with my participants' words drew my attention to the postcolonial lens. Spivak's postcolonial critique of marginality provided a voice to these spiritually inclined teachers in my study. As I interviewed my teacher participants, I became aware that they were genuinely interested in the topic of spirituality and were very willing to share their spiritual insights with me. Their spiritual beliefs prompted them to participate in this study because, at the end of their interviews, the teachers showed an appreciation of being asked about their spirituality. This was evidenced in Amy's quotation:

> *It's a real pleasure to be asked these questions ... you get sat down and asked these sorts of questions ...you hear again what's in your heart. It makes me feel very happy to be alive actually.*

Similarly, Julia thought that there was merit in research like this. Talking about our interview, she said:

> *This is so worthwhile for a human being to reflect on what we are doing. I think every teacher at my school should be interviewed ...by somebody like yourself. It would be very important to look at that.*

These quotes by my participants reconfirmed the invisibility of teachers' spirituality in educational documents as discussed in Chapter 2. As discussed in the previous section (Section 9.3.1), the marginalisation of spirituality as a topic in Australia made me think that the exploration of teachers' spirituality in teaching contexts is a meaningful endeavour.

9.5 Implications and Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, I argue that teachers should be able to acknowledge their spiritual beliefs in their professional contexts.

9.5.1 Rethinking the secular in educational contexts

One of the implications of marginalisation of spirituality in the Australian educational context relates to thinking about post secular in educational settings. This implication is based on challenging the idea that Australia has a secular political context because schools with a

religious basis are encouraged through government funding. There is a discrepancy or disjuncture between certain policies that encourage secularity in educational contexts and the accepted truths of faith-based schools being funded by the government.

The Constitution declares Australia a secular country that provides freedom for private and community practice of religion without promoting a particular religion (Australian Government, n.d.). Thus, religion does not occupy a space in the public sphere and is not in a position to exert any political influence, in theory. Yet, the presence of school sectors, including government schools, religious schools and non-denominational independent schools, provide parents with a choice to educate their children in various educational contexts. To add to the complexities, non-government schools receive government funding to some extent (Evans & Ujvari, 2009), and government schools are being privately funded through parent contributions (Ford, 2011), placing the public/private separation under scrutiny. In addition, the presence of religious instruction at government schools and the presence of spiritual but not religious beliefs at religious schools also present a criticism of the public/private binary (Cook & Jacks, 2015; Rossiter, 2010).

Therefore, I argue that while secular educational contexts have worked in the past, these are no longer relevant, particularly for spirituality in education. Instead, post secular educational contexts are becoming more relevant in today's world; therefore, spirituality can be accepted across different teaching settings, including religious and non-denominational. In this thesis, opening up a dialogue regarding teachers' personal spirituality in their teaching contexts relates to the resurgence of religion and spirituality in the public sphere (Dalferth, 2009; Fordahl, 2017). This is because teachers in this study talked about the influence of their own spirituality on their pedagogical approaches.

9.5.2 Widening the scope for future research

To better understand teachers' spirituality as discussed in Section 9.3.2, this small-scale research should be expanded into a larger participant pool in future studies, which can be achieved by recruiting a larger number of participants. This study focused on primary school teachers; further studies should be conducted in the early years, secondary school years or higher education. Additionally, this study took place in Australia; therefore, there is scope to conduct studies with teachers in different countries.

In future research, another methodology to explore this topic could be autoethnography, as this methodological approach will bring the researcher and their experience to the forefront. Adopting autoethnography as a methodology would be effective, although there is a risk that it is just seen as one personal perspective. The case study approach and interviews worked well, as seen in the above quotes. The teachers appreciated being asked about their spiritual beliefs. Adopting an autoethnography approach will bring out the researcher positionality more strongly than I have in this study. This study has given me an experience of self-reflection as part of this process. In future, adopting an autoethnography methodology would help the researcher engage more deeply while acknowledging their own experience. This engagement with a researcher's positionality would allow for exploration of the transformative nature of this study over time.

9.5.3 Including teachers' spirituality in educational contexts

To follow the line of thinking from this study, there is a need to further explore spirituality infused pedagogy and understand its influence on teaching and teacher quality. This could be achieved by first, acknowledging teachers' spirituality during initial teacher education courses and making space to discuss this aspect of pre-service teachers' personal lives to understand how it may influence their teaching and teaching contexts. This can be further extended into professional development courses for in-service teachers. Courses that focus on the spiritual aspects would provide a safe space for teachers to open up about their spirituality.

Finally, based on this study, there is an implication for APST, which can be further explored via wider research into this topic. All registered teachers are expected to demonstrate certain standards that are essential for their registration process. Thus, understanding and reflecting on one's own spiritual beliefs for those spiritually inclined teachers can be tied in with the reflective aspects of APST.

9.6 Closing the thesis

In this thesis, I drew on the work of Spivak (1990, 1993, 2006) and used postcolonial marginality to engage deeply with my study. After working with Spivak, I became aware of Eurocentrism in my field of work. I realised that I now feel more confident about including

non-Western theorists in my future research. At the beginning of this thesis, I included Krishnamurti's commentary on spirituality and education (Section 1.1.3). He recommended that teachers should provide an example through their own behaviour and provide space for students to develop new and innovative ideas for the betterment of humanity. These thoughts were added as something that influenced me in my personal life, and I did not draw any further on Krishnamurti's literature for my research. I now see my connection with Krishnamurti as a key thinker for my future research.

Furthermore, my own teaching practice reflections made me question the marginalisation of spirituality in educational contexts. As part of my PhD studies, I was invited to teach at Monash University, including teaching a unit on Health and Wellbeing for pre-service teachers. I found that introducing spirituality and talking about it in this unit opened up different thinking among the students because they appreciated having a space to talk about their spiritual aspects. This is reflected in some students' interest in spirituality as my research topic when I introduced myself as a PhD student. In these teaching experiences, I found the evidence of my own pedagogy being infused with my spiritual belief of 'oneness in all'. This was confirmed by the end of unit feedback from one of my unit coordinators as she wrote, "in our interactions you always demonstrate a high level of empathy for our pre-service teachers". While many tutors may see empathy as a part of their teaching repertoire, for me empathy connects strongly with my understanding of being spiritual as experiencing oneness among all, which infuses my interactions with others including the pre-service teachers in my unit. These insights made me rethink the invisibility of spirituality.

Based on this study, I argue that the exploration of teachers' spirituality is a meaningful endeavour and acknowledging the spirituality infused pedagogy into our classrooms will help us welcome teachers' inner worlds by going beyond the professional and personal divide.

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Appendices

Appendix A
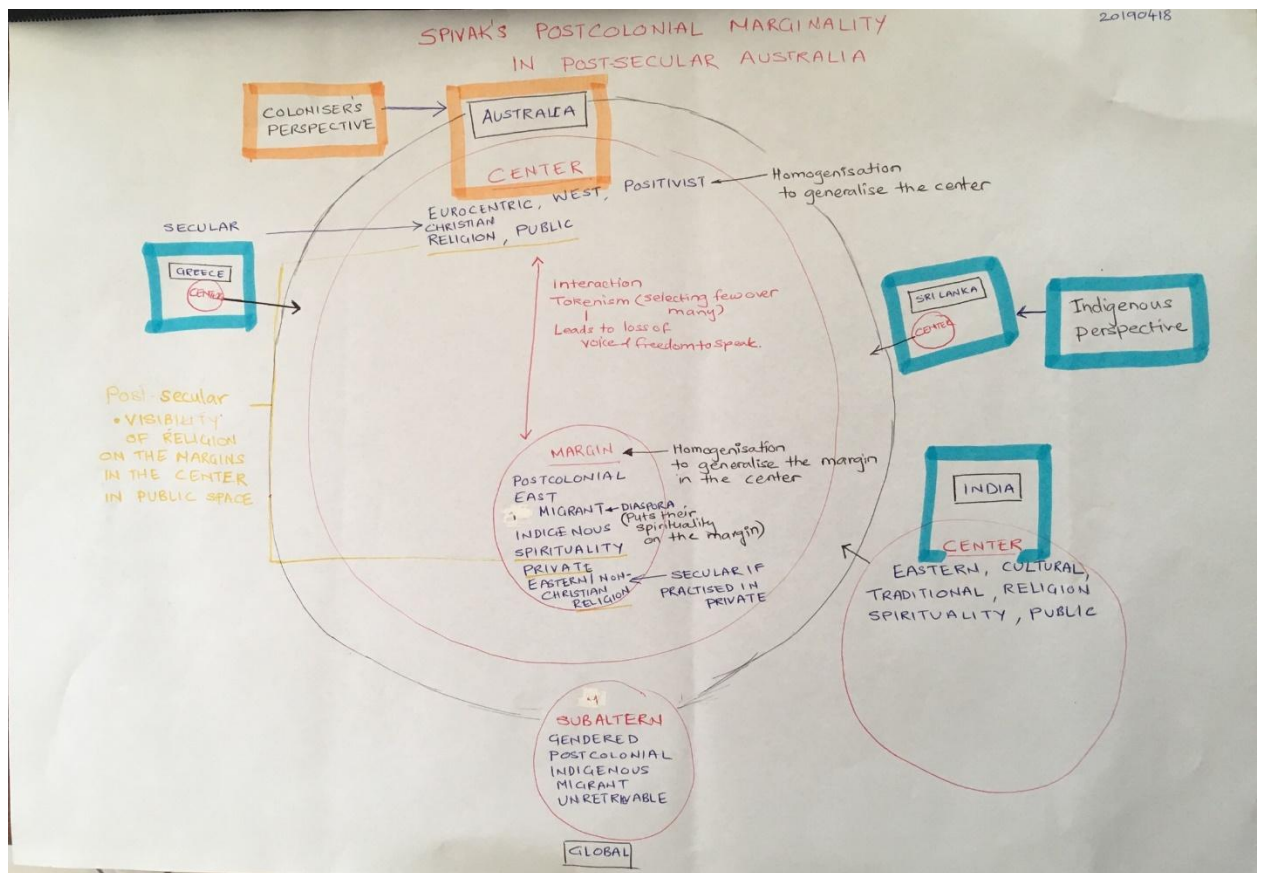
Theoretical Framework Diagram

Appendix B

Reflective Journal Entries

The last day (1ˢᵗ August 2020)

Today is the last day I am working on my First Draft. Exhausted and reluctant, I began to write here and there. I decided to buff my discussion up with theory. So, I sat on the bed with half a dozen Spivak books. Out of these three have become my favourite, Postcolonial critic, Outside in the teaching machine and In the other worlds. I find that I always find something in there. After reading through theory multiple times, at this stage, I do not go in a particular order or look for a particular topic, I just browse through the book. I locate information at random, with no particular order and after flicking through a few pages and chapters I land where I wanted. I had the same experience. I dove into this sea of knowledge and I found the pearls about indoctrination in reference to private and public. It was pure gold, I felt so thrilled. I suddenly felt that my study was not about submission rather, it was about genuine knowledge.

Getting lost (30ᵗʰ November 2013)

In the beginning, it all started well. I was reading regularly and documenting what I had read. I also wrote a journal that reflected on what I had read and connected the reading with my own experience. The books I was reading came from a variety of sources. They were very interesting to read. Each one had a convincing idea that did not necessarily agree with the one I previously read. I was very confident about the direction of my research. I intended to study all the literature about spirituality in education, in different religions and in different educational philosophies to find a common thread between them all. Once I had discovered this common theme, I was then going to explore it to find out if it can be incorporated in children's learning.

The idea was deceptively simple, because as I began reading different books, I got influenced by what was presented in the book. I was agreeing with everything that was said and so started getting confused. I went to library I borrowed books about different religions like Islam, Buddhism and books by Deepak Chopra. I also read a book about world religions and it explained the origin and general practices in each religious practice. I found more

differences than similarities as some of the religions were focused on rituals and not on spirituality. I understand spirituality as a connection between the universe and oneself or the deeper understanding of yourself.

During this time, I also met a gentleman who was working with the local school in implementing meditation practices. He encouraged me to research the effectiveness of meditation practices on children's performance at school. After speaking with him I looked up schools that adopted meditation across Melbourne and realized that there is a fair bit of work going on. There are Catholic schools that have introduced Christian meditation and there are websites that offer tailor-made meditation programme for the schools. All this made me think that there is a scope for studying effectiveness of meditation.

However, it wasn't according to my initial plan. So, I started drifting away from my focus and did not know where I was going any more. I was reading books off the shelf from bookstores and library and it wasn't giving me much of substance but was providing me with many convincing ideas. Because of this reason I wasn't able to document or journal anything.

The best way to deal with this situation, I thought, was to take guidance from my supervisors and that is exactly what I did. There, in conversation with my supervisors, it all became clear. They advised me to read research-based material and studies as off the shelf books might be based on someone's informed opinion but not necessarily research. Also, sometimes people are selling an idea and as a researcher one has to be savvy about this and have some clear understanding about what is being presented. My supervisor gave me an example of marketing people who might come to the restaurant with different products and services. We as the owners of the business are careful about who do we entertain and where we put our money.

Both my supervisors together explained the importance of having a critical eye. They also said that one should not be afraid to question the validity and effectiveness of existing and new practices in education.

In order to avoid all the confusion and to avoid getting lost, one must have a clear understanding of the latest research. In my case, I will need to read heaps of latest journal articles on related topics. I can use Monash library website to access to journal articles. I can

create a metrics to organize relevant information. Once that is done, I will then sort out all the information that I read in the metrics. I will be able to then locate useful information and disregard irrelevant information. This means that I should begin reading reliable academic research instead of or as a priority to the easy reads that seem to help and motivate. As these difficult and sometimes boring texts will in fact provide me the basis that will help form the deep understanding of the topic.

When my supervisor asked me to write about my experience about getting lost, I initially thought she wasn't serious. First of all, I wasn't sure how she expected me to write about my confused state of mind and even if she did how will I write something that is so vague and unclear. Slowly, as I began thinking about it I realized that it was in fact quite sensible because getting lost was very much a part of this journey. When I reflect back on what happened, I find that my thoughts were going in any direction presented as there was nothing to hold them in place. As there was no structure created from detailed research so what I read managed to convince me. When I came across meditation practices used in different schools I was convinced that's the way to go. I thought I will research the importance of meditation in education and may be develop yet another meditation technique that is suitable for children. The reason for my thinking is that I did not have anything concrete to check it against. After my meeting with the supervisors, I decided to concentrate on the peer- reviewed literature and then read books from public library and bookstores.

Getting lost can mean losing yourself on your way to your destination. You can get lost if you don't know how to get there while it can also mean getting lost in other commitments. This is my story. My family consists of my husband and two children. I work four and a half days as a Prep teacher and I am also doing my doctoral research. My husband works as near the Melbourne airport during the day and runs our restaurant in the evening. At present my duties include shopping, cleaning, children's' pickups and drop offs at school and outside school activities, organising play dates, teaching Preps, studies, marketing and promotion for the restaurant. I also ensure that we are socially connected to our family in India through emails, chats, viber, whatsapp, Facebook and phone calls. I have nine calendars running on my Mac. I try to look after my health by eating well and exercising. My husband is equally busy with his own commitments. We communicate with each other on Bluetooth on our way to work so that we are in touch and our driving time is well utilized.

Is it a surprise then that I got lost in all that surrounds me? I am like a juggler who has many of balls in the air. I am not the only one who is busy with their life. I am certain there are people much busier than me with more projects and many more calendars on their Macs. But the question here is am I going to let all of this stop me from getting where I want to go. The answer is no. I have embarked this journey, the destination is at a distance and I can't see it clearly but I know it exists. I am not on this journey alone there is a mother, wife, daughter, sister, a friend, a teacher and a researcher in me and I also understand that I can't leave any of them behind because all of these together make me who I am. What a magnificent journey this is! When a ray of light passes through the water droplet it turns into a rainbow. Similarly, when I think and reflect on myself all of my facets shine through.

Appendix C

Text for Snowball Sampling

Hi,

I am a PhD candidate at Monash University and currently, I am looking for research participants who are practising primary school teachers in Australia. My research topic is 'Teachers' perceptions of spirituality.' This is a case study. It aims to explore different views on spirituality and does not associate with a particular religion or spiritual beliefs. This is a wonderful opportunity to talk about your understanding of spirituality in the context of education where it's often overlooked.

More details regarding the research can be obtained by emailing me on ketki.bhandari@monash.edu

If you know someone who might be interested, please forward this message to them.

Many thanks,

Ketki

Appendix D

Interview Schedule

What is your understanding of spirituality?	Would you describe yourself as a spiritual person?
In your experience, what is it like being a spiritual person as well as a teacher?	In your experience, what is it like being a non-spiritual person in a spiritual/religious school?
Please describe the place of spirituality in education, in relation to your school and your students.	
Please share with me anything else you would like to add.	

(Make notes during the interview including body language, gestures and key words)

Appendix E

PRIYA

Spirituality for Priya
- Connecting to the soul + touches the soul
- Cooking + feeding + looking after family / meeting a new person
- Karmas
- Self-realisation

Jesus
hymns
Holy water
Ash Wednesday

Educated in / Christian school

Childhood influences
- Born in Hindu family
- prayers to god
- Offering food to god

- felt at home
- same spiritual beliefs
- Independent school in Australia

Teaching
- Private school in India
- No prayers
- Human values
- Government school, Alice Springs, Australia
- Religion was banned
- secular / Religious classes
- student connection (Indigenous students)

Different but not mutually exclusive

- live truthfully
- Honesty
- Respecting elders
- Being brave

Values Common both home & School

- Family upbringing
- English and language
- brown skin
- Through discussing family issues

PRIYA AND FOOD

Food
Cooking, feeding makes me feel spiritual, connected
In the childhood food was offered to god
Even today I offer food to god before eating it myself

SPIRITUAL CONNECTION WITH FOOD

"People throwing food. That just touched my heart."
"I tried to tell them don't throw it. But they could not connect with me saying."
"No matter how many times I tried to tell them."

NOT BEING HEARD

- Poor people/how people live
- take it back home
- be thankful to have food on your plate
- be aware of poorer countries

CONNECTION TO HUMAN VALUES THROUGH FOOD

Appendix F

MONASH University

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT FOR TEACHERS

Teachers' perceptions of spirituality: Five case studies

Project Number: CF/16/868-2016000437

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Student Research project

My name is **Ketki Bhandari** and I am conducting a research project as a part of a Doctorate in Education at Monash University with **Dr Jane Bone, Department of Education, Peninsula Campus, Monash University and Dr Judith Williams, Department of Education, Peninsula Campus, Monash University.** This means that I will be writing **a thesis which is the equivalent of 100,000 words**.

This project is about spirituality in the primary school context and it will explore teachers' understanding of spirituality. The research is not about any particular spiritual or religious system, it is open and I am interested in working with teachers who consider the spiritual dimension to be relevant to them.

Thank you for contacting me and expressing your interest in participating in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research.

What does the research involve?

This research will involve two interviews. The first interview will last for about 45-60 minutes and will focus on a discussion about your understanding of spirituality. The interviews will be audio recorded if you provide consent for this to occur. I will then invite you to write a reflective journal based on our discussion, and I will encourage you to bring a photograph that does not identify any individual student or an artefact for our next interview. The next interview will follow-up on our first interview and will take a form of an informal conversation focused on discussing and clarifying key ideas from the first interview, and also talking about your reflective journal and any artefacts or photograph relating spirituality that you bring. You will be given a transcript of data concerning you for your approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

Possible benefits and risks to participants

This research may be of benefit to you as it will provide an opportunity for you to talk about spirituality and education, and for you to reflect on this topic.

During this project, I do not foresee our conversations causing any stress. However, I understand that this will be an additional burden on your time. You might experience slight inconvenience trying to fit the interviews into your busy schedule. You will be informed well in advance about the interview times. You are welcome to change it according to your convenience. If you decline to answer any question, your decision will be respected. The interview will be terminated at any time if you indicate that this is necessary.

Being a part of this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent. However, if you do consent to participate, you may withdraw from further participation at any stage but you will only be able to withdraw prior to approving the interview transcript.

Confidentiality

A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. I will maintain the confidentiality or anonymity of the data I will collect by allocating pseudonyms, I will present the data at conferences and publications in a de-identified form. Paper-based information will be kept in locked filing cabinets. Only the aforementioned project researchers will have access to this information. Electronic information will be stored on password protected computers.

Storage of data

Research data will constitute interview transcripts, audio recordings and classroom observations. Digital data will be stored on networked drives that are managed by professional IT staff. It will only be accessible to me and other authorised users. Standard security and access controls will be in place to prevent loss, theft or unauthorised use. Non-digital data will be stored in accordance with Monash University regulations, kept on University premises, in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years.

Results

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact Ketki Bhandari via email. My email address is ketki.bhandari@monash.au.

Complaints

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: +61 3 9905 2052   Email: muhrec@monash.edu   Fax: +61 3 9905 3831

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:

Dr Jane Bone

Peninsula Campus, Monash University

jane.bone@monash.edu

+ 61 3 990 44242

Thank you,
Ketki Bhandari

Appendix G

MONASH University

CONSENT FORM

Project: 'Teachers' perceptions of spirituality: Five case studies'

Project Number: CF16/868-2016000437

Chief Investigator: Dr Jane Bone

Student Investigator: Ketki Nilesh Bhandari

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
Audio recording during the interview	☐	☐
Bringing an artefact or photograph (no students involved or identified) for the follow up interview being used as data (optional)	☐	☐
Maintaining a reflective journal between interviews (optional)	☐	☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way prior to finalising the interview transcript.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I understand that data from the interview will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5-year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Name of Participant

Participant Signature   Date